

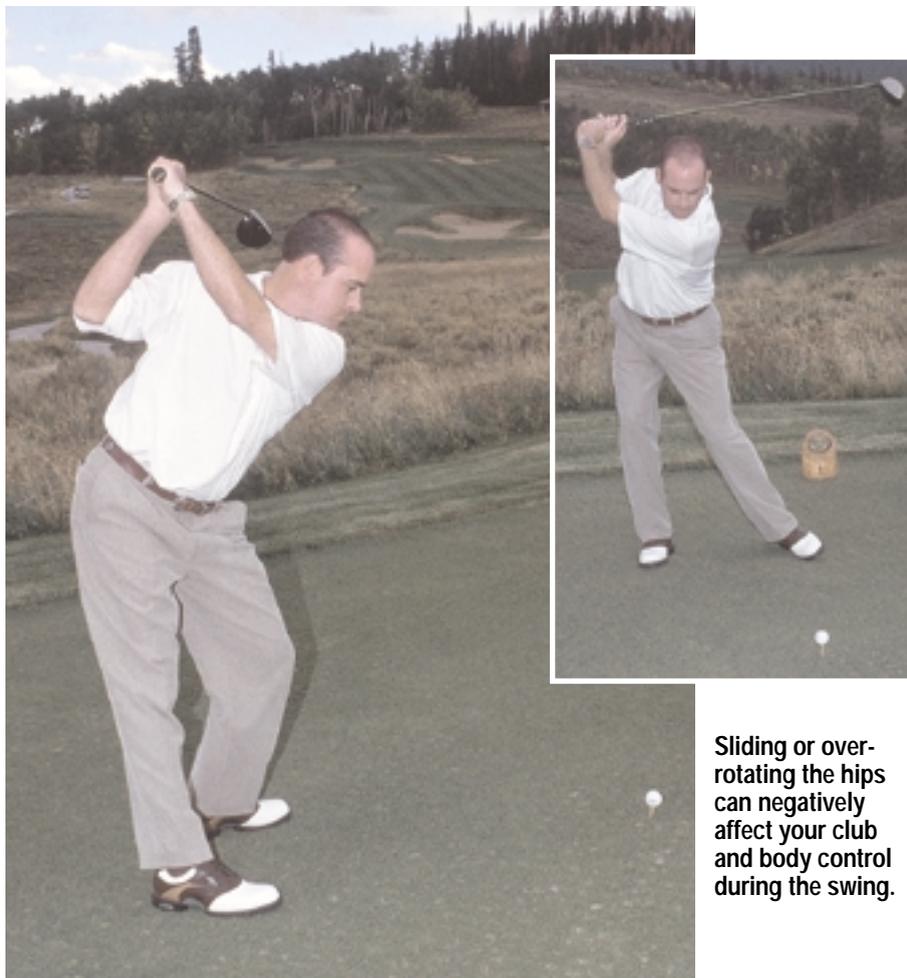
HOW TO BOOST YOUR **X-FACTOR** **POWER**

By Tom F. Stickney II

Most recreational golfers marvel at the way tour professionals move throughout their swing. They wonder how these players can hit the ball so far with what seems like so little effort. The secret is that the pros are in great control of the way their body moves back and forth during the swing, which affects how they displace and move their “effective weight” through the ball.

While there are many techniques to hit the ball farther, the most important factor lies in the ability to maximize the effectiveness of the body’s pivot motion to impart more pressure into the ground during the transition. Remember, the motions of the hips are a major factor of club and body control. If you watch a PGA Tour event, you will never see a professional with sloppy hip motions like sliding or over-rotating. Instead you’ll witness only tight, efficient motions. This allows the pros to make a more powerful transitional motion, forcing pressure into the ground.

This motion is apparent in viewing John Daly’s change of direction, as he stomps his left heel back to the ground, or Sam Snead’s famous “squat” or “sitting” during the transition. Both of these actions allow the player to



Sliding or over-rotating the hips can negatively affect your club and body control during the swing.

The hips must not be allowed to over-rotate from the start of the takeaway (left). For a powerful transition motion, you must control the rate and amount the hips turn to the top (below).



become “heavier” during the transitional phase of the swing, effectively releasing all the stored power accumulated during the backswing.

To control your pivot, you must remember the following three keys to put yourself in the proper position to get heavier during the downswing.

Control Your Hips

This concept may be the most overlooked aspect of golf instruction today. While everyone knows the hips must not be allowed to overturn at the top, over-rotation of the hips during the takeaway can also set you up for disaster.

Consider that four professionals average approximately 18 to 20 degrees of hip turn at belt high in their swings



Squatting or sitting during the transition can allow you to become heavier through impact, effectively releasing all the stored power you’ve accumulated in the backswing.

and only 46 degrees to the top. This is only a micro-movement of the hips, not the free turn you usually think of. In contrast, most amateurs have between 27 to 40 degrees of hip turn during the takeaway and 57 to 65 degrees to the top.

These numbers indicate how professionals allow the shoulders to pull the hips into motion during the backswing, while amateurs tend to allow the hips to lead and power the backswing.

This overturning of the hips can pull the whole right side of the pelvis and base of your spine backward as your shoulders turn to the top. Keep in mind that anytime the bottom of your spine moves backward, the top portion of the spine will fall forward to counterbalance your body. This allows the left shoulder to dip too low in the backswing, setting up an unlevel turn to the top and an over-the-top motion.

Overturning the hips also causes a reverse-pivot to the top, with your weight loading into your left foot at the top instead of the right. As your hips spin out of control at the start of your backswing, your weight does not have time to be displaced into your right foot. This reverse weight shift or reverse-pivot can result in major consistency problems.

The key is to not only control your rate of hip rotation at the top of your backswing but also to 9 o’clock as well. I’ve never seen a player get too far out of position if the rate of the hip turn was slow and gradual. Thus, what you’re looking for is an even



For tour professionals, the average hip rotation to the top is only about 45 degrees. This is only a micro-movement of the hips, not the free turn you might think occurs.

motion of the hips to the top. Remember, slow and even are the secrets to consistency.

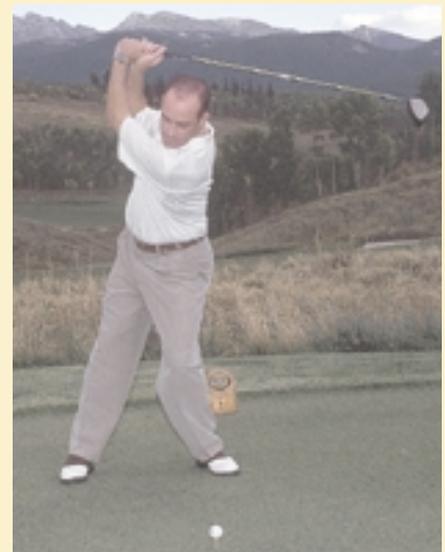
Control The Right Knee

The amount of hip turn is influenced tremendously by the actions of your



Overturning the hips can cause the left shoulder to dip too low in the backswing (left), setting up an unlevel turn to the top and an over-the-top motion. It can also lead to a reverse-pivot (right), with your weight loading into your left foot at the top instead of the right.

right knee from address to the top. If your right knee locks up, you will overturn your hips to the top. If your right knee slides laterally, you will sway. With the proper right knee control, you should be able to achieve a consistent and tight hip rotation.



It's also important to keep your center of gravity, which is located near your belt buckle, as centered and stable as possible. Of course, if your hips are rotating too fast, too much and sliding laterally at the same time, your chances of achieving this are not good.



You can help keep your hip rotation tight by controlling your right knee flex.

Getting Heavy

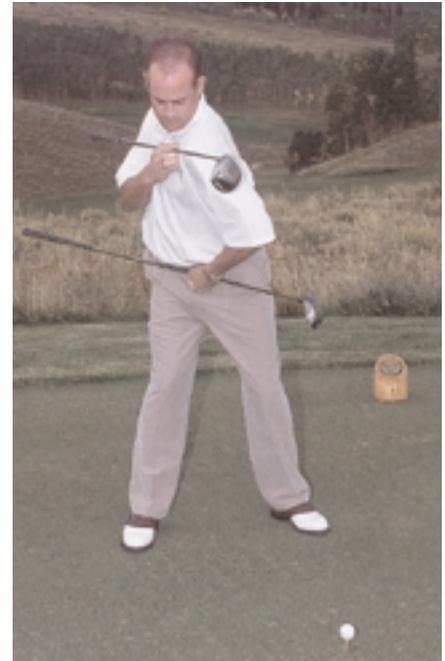
Your X-Factor is the torque derived from turning your upper body against a relatively stable lower body. This is the spring-like windup that all long-hitters have. This tension and torque

are the catalysts for the “bionic” hip motions that players like Fred Couples, John Daly and Tiger Woods all have in common.

This action would not be possible without a tight and controlled hip motion to the top. When you “torque up,” you are loading the body like a gun. The only way to release this tension is to slightly move the hips laterally to start the downswing, making you “heavier” on your left foot transitionally. This promotes clubhead lag, the proper downswing plane, etc.

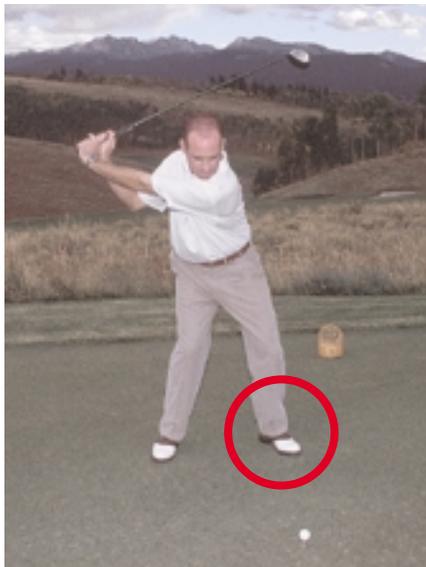
The “delayed” hip action enables the hips to lead the downswing and transfer energy to the shoulders, forming the basis for maximum power and a high X-Factor. It effectively allows the pivot of the body to move the club on plane throughout the hitting area.

Once you learn to control your body to the top, the final phase is to become “heavier” throughout the downswing. This “heavy” motion is best learned by hitting 30- to 50-yard pitch shots while letting your weight move left laterally as your body rotates through the ball into the finish. You will feel as if you are leaning into the shot with some rotation through the ball.



To get heavier during the transition, try to maintain the highest possible X-Factor. This is the torque derived from turning your upper body against a relatively stable lower body.

This motion will also cause you to feel more pressure being placed onto the front of your left foot as it drives



With the proper pressure on the left foot, the left side will lead the downswing, pulling the arms and hands through impact and into the finish.



If you spin the hips too rapidly during the downswing, the effective pressure that should be put into the ground will be decreased and may leak into the inside of your left heel.

your spikes into the ground. If you spin the hips too rapidly, your pressure will leak into the inside of your left heel, decreasing the “effective pressure” you put into the ground. When you watch a player get “heavier” during the transition properly, he will “sit down” or “squat” like Snead did so well in his prime.

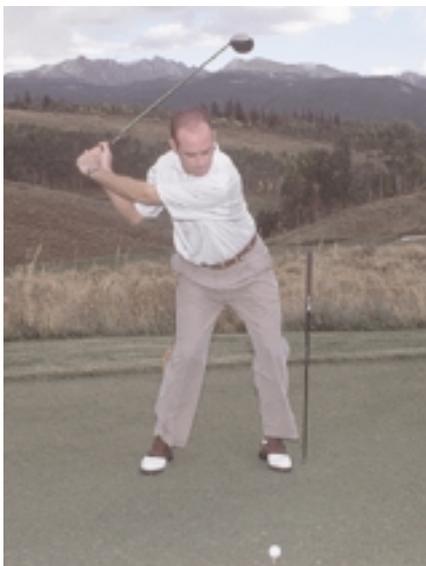
The pressure applied by your left foot can be seen by placing a normal bathroom scale under the foot while you swing. You will see the numbers move up and down as your weight moves back and forth during your

transition. If you make the proper transition, you will see a huge spike as the weight moves into the left foot during the downswing transition. The higher the spike above your actual body weight, the farther you will hit the ball. Thus, the earlier you put pressure on your left foot before the club finishes the backswing, the greater the distance you will achieve with the shot.

This pressure on the left foot causes the body to move in two directions at once — the arms and shoulders moving back, while the left foot, left knee and left hip are moving forward and putting pressure into the ground. The proper pressure will also cause the left side to lead the downswing, pulling the arms and hands through impact and into the finish.

The pressure-filled downswing creates the delayed hit with the shaft leaning forward. This delofts the club-head during impact and separation, and gives you more distance. In this phase, the right shoulder is also moving or rotating “through.” However, the key is to allow the pressure into the left foot to lead the motion of the arms and hands in the transition.

So if you want to hit the ball farther, learn to control your hips to the top, then put as much pressure as possible into your left foot during the transition. The net result will be added distance. Try it for yourself with pitch shots first, then don’t be surprised when your shots begin flying longer. GI



To get heavy during the transition, allow your weight to move left laterally as your body rotates through the downswing.