

Less Slide, More Rotation, Less Thought

Part two of a two part article on Hip Sequencing

In Part one I presented a technique used to get both separation and connection in the movements of the hips and trunk. These movements were taken into a pattern very similar to the golf swing, and introduced the motor skills of connecting the upper torso with the hips at the crucial point through the hitting zone. We now need to take this “motor learning” process into the swing itself, but the fear is as soon as we put a club back in the hands, and a ball on the floor, the previously “learned” and dominant movement characteristic will return. As discussed in part one, the most inefficient and inhibiting pattern can be to see far to much slide **past** the ball of the pelvis, and not enough rotation **into** the ball... energy wasted, and a swing plane distorted.

What I like about the age old technique to combat excessive hip slide that I am going to present is that it speaks the language of “motor learning”. Thinking about movement whilst you are doing it is a natural process. Thinking **too much** about movement whilst you are doing it is a destructive process. When executing a dynamic and skilful athletic movement, it is best to shift as much of the thought process that accompanies this movement into your sub-conscious as you can. Take this scenario:

- Roger Federer, one of the most celebrated and gifted “movers” in sport, is at the back court and his opponent has just executed a precise drop shot that is just about to make it’s way over the net.
- Roger is on the move, he is eating up the grass, his brain is working out a physical question... can I get there? Can I make that ball?
- Can I push harder, can I get one more step in, the ball is coming down, it’s just about down, I’m there....
- The shot is a cushioned lift, racket head angled, tickling the net tape, deftly directed cross court, and dropping with a spin free dead bounce... break point won.
- Here is the conundrum. It takes a decade of practice to acquire the motor skills to execute an exquisite shot like that, but Roger was thinking along much simpler lines... can I get there? Once he did the rest was auto-pilot.

That is the thing about the brain and movement... the brain wants to think in terms of physical and environmental constraints before it starts worrying about the technicalities of how the body it is controlling is actually moving. When a goal keeper is flying across his goal it is because his brain has made 2 fundamental decisions... that ball is going in, I am going to stop it.

Of course Federer, goal keepers and cricket batsmen etc have it easy. They have a luxury. The moving ball. Golfers (and Jonny Wilkinson) are much worse off because the stiller the ball, the more the mind is freed... and this can be a bad thing.

Which is why I like a golf drill which presents a physical challenge/constraint that dictates how a movement can be done successfully, and gives the brain less thinking time to mess up the process.

This drill poses a simple physical question, if you hit the roller you fail, now swing your club and don’t hit the foam-roll. If you succeed there is a fair chance you did it by rolling your hips out of the way rather than sliding your hips into the foam-roll... job done. Now do it a few dozen times, then do it without the foam-roll, but instead of thinking “I must turn my hips”, just visualise that the foam-roll is still there and it will still do the job of creating the correct physical reaction in your swing.

The Foam Roll Drill

- This drill has been done many times before... usually with an umbrella or a stand-bag taking the place of the roll. Problem is, you can't stick an umbrella in a range mat, and golf bags are a right commotion when you knock them over. The foam-roll is perfect. It is safe in that you can comfortably whack into it with your hip, but it may as well be a brick wall in that it has the physical presence to create the reaction that we want. (also useful for lots of other drills and balance exercises)
- Set up with the roll standing 2 inches outside your lead foot.
- Swing and miss it.
- To do so you are going to have to get your hips out of the way, and pretty much the only option you now have is to rotate them rather than excessively slide them.



Linking Part One with Part Two

Take a look at article one of this series and you will see how the physical drill and this swing drill talk to each other. Cross-reference the orientation of the hip and shoulder rotation in this golfer at the 5 different points seen above with those seen as he performs the cane drill. You can clearly see how he “separates” at the top of his backswing, and then “re-connects” shoulder and hip planes as he drives through the hitting zone... absolutely nailed golfing fundamentals.

Foam –rolls are inexpensive and available from on-line gym suppliers.

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