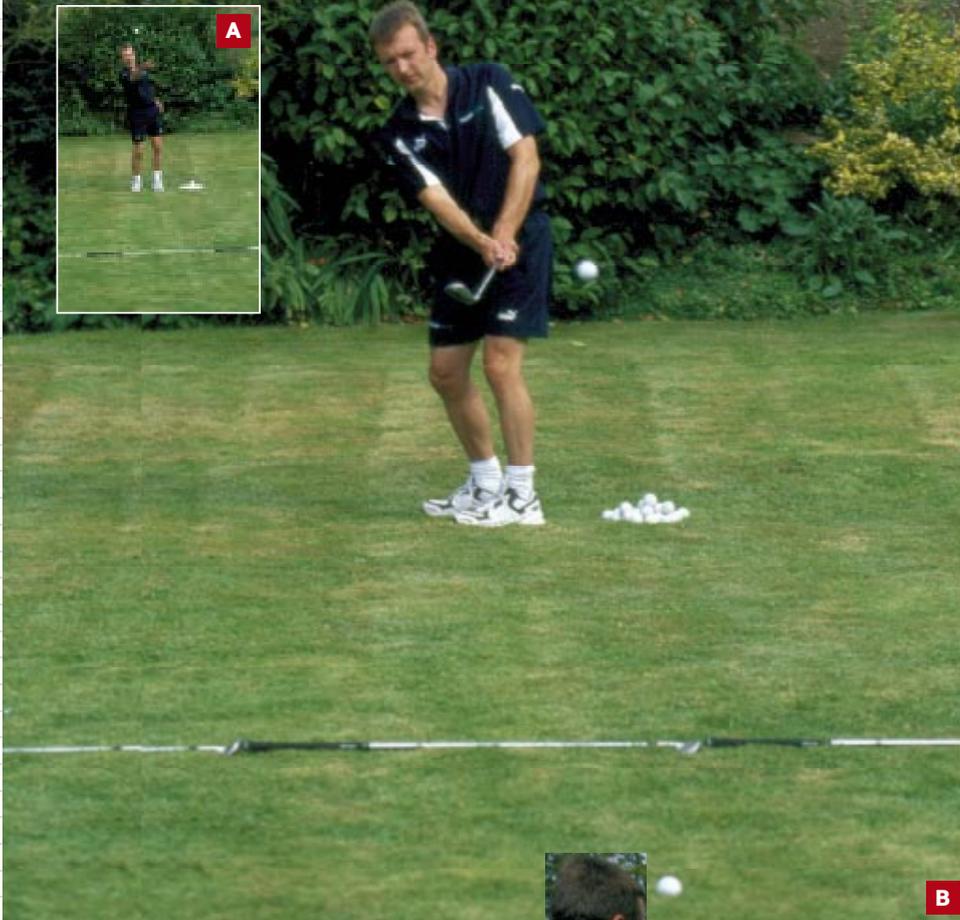


SURE TOUCH

Build the feel of a Tour pro in your garden, with top physio Bob Wood



TEST YOUR TOUCH

You have an awkward little pitch over a bunker with no green to work with. You can pick a club and a line, but how hard should you hit the ball? You can alter swing length or speed, but ultimately that isn't going to help you. That's because touch is controlled by your nervous system, not your muscles. It is an unconscious, instinctive reflex that appears to make its own choice; all you have to do is train so that good touch almost takes care of itself...

A Take four clubs. Place them end to end in a line, across you and 10 feet away. Collect five balls. Take one in your dominant hand and throw it so it carries the line of clubs, but pulls up as quickly as possible. The first ball is your personal best; try to beat it with four more throws. If one goes past a previous ball, start again.

B Repeat the exercise with a golf club and five balls - it's always a good idea to check your line for greenhouses and ponds! Lob the first ball so it pitches past the clubs but stops as soon as you can. Again, try to beat that target with your next ball, and so on with the next three. Keep going until each of the five shots carries the line of clubs but stops short of the previous one.

BOOST YOUR TOUCH

As we've seen, touch is a product of your nervous system control, not muscles. So if you are to train feel into your game, you need to work on building an instinctive reflex skill, rather than a mechanical one. Here's a great way to do that - you'll need a friend to help you.

A Place three targets in a line (ideally different colours). Position them six strides apart, the first one six strides from you. Gather 10 balls and a chipping club. Now this is where your friend comes in. Make a backswing. As you are doing so, your friend calls out a colour, your target for this shot (make it a number - one, two or three - if your targets are all the same colour). With no time to plan or fret about swing length, you must rely on your brain to translate the instruction into force reflexively. Keep doing this until you are landing the balls by the right target on a regular basis.

