

## BOOK PREVIEWS — LAST IN OUR SUMMER SERIES

# EXCLUSIVE: EXCERPTS FROM “REALIZE YOUR GOLFING POTENTIAL”

*The writing bug having recently bitten many a Proponent Group member, we've found ourselves stocked with a series of new books for fellow members to sample this summer in the newsletter. Beginning in June with Jeff and Cate Ritter's co-written "LEAN 18" e-book on nutrition, plus "Better, Faster: The Modern Golfer's Blueprint for Getting More from Less," by Corey Lundberg and Matt Wilson, newsletter readers have been the first audience for these new contributions to the literature of golf improvement.*

*In July you got first-looks at "Be a Player : A Breakthrough Approach to Playing Better on the Golf Course," by Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott of Vision54 fame. Then in August along came our excerpt from "A True Swing," by Erika Larkin. To round out the series, we now offer you a look inside **Claude Brousseau's** new*

*how-to book on scoring shots, "Realize Your Golfing Potential: Unlock the SECRETS of a PROficient Short Game!" The book is available on Claude's website, [www.mauischoolofgolf.com](http://www.mauischoolofgolf.com), and also on Amazon.com*



*Trust us that no golf instruction book has ever come at its readers with less chit-chat or small talk than this one. The section on chipping we excerpt here starts immediately with its first situational challenge and simply flows along into the subtleties of technique Claude has gathered in his long and distinguished career. The book is wonderfully illustrated with vibrant photos and lots of helpful props. We hope to do it justice in this brief sampling.*

**T**here are many paths to success while you're chipping. As with most golf swings, if the club travels along an inside-square-inside path you will make great strides. Simplicity is the mother of comprehension. It's all about fewer variables and more predictability.

When chipping, many amateurs believe they have to swing the club in a "straight line." This means making the club head follow along the intended target line on the backswing and on the follow through after the impact. This technique is not particularly natural and demands unnecessary motions. It can often produce poor contact with the ball. You have all experienced blading it over the green or topping it, and it rolls only a few feet. Even worse, you hit the "big ball" before the "little ball" and chunk it badly.

But if you let the club and your body move as naturally as possible during the backswing, the club head will follow the target line for only a few inches and will ultimately come inside the intended target line. The same goes for the follow through where the club tracks the intended target line just a few inches before and after impact, then turns slightly inward. In fact, the club head travels on a straight line for a very short period of time. Following this path will minimize the risks of a poor contact and increase the odds of getting the ball near the hole.



A simple way to verify your swing path is to **place an aiming rod on the ground pointing toward your target (above)**. Tee up a ball, with the tee on the player side of the aiming rod, touching the rod so that the ball is almost directly over the rod.

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Take a natural backswing. You will find that the club comes progressively inside the target line. We learn by experiencing the difference between several sensations. If you attempt to produce a backswing by forcing the club head to move over the aiming rod, you will feel it's a much more complicated and difficult movement.

Make the forward swing feeling the weight of the club dropping on the ball. Let the club swing inside the target line. Again you should feel this swing path produces a more efficient and effortless motion. It's unnatural to push or direct the club straight over the aiming rod. If you do, you will generate wasted motions and introduce unnecessary variables.

This very efficient path allows you to maximize the benefit of the bounce angle formed by the sole of the club. One of the best designers of wedges in the world, Bob Vokey, always tells me, "Claude, bounce is your best friend!" You have to understand that the bounce is your best "insurance policy" against bad contact.

With all the shots played around the green, amateurs are often solely fixated on the ball. The following exercise has a dual objective — "forgetting" the ball and achieving a downward angle of attack, which is a prerequisite for making good contact with the ball in the rough.

**The principle is simple (photo below):** Plant a tee 3 inches in front of the ball and make a chip shot with the intention to either send the tee flying or push it deeper into the ground. If the exercise is done well, your ball will lift perfectly in the air!



During the backswing, the wrists and hands remain passive. The club head sends the tee flying and the ball takes off perfectly. Your focus is on the process of swinging the club efficiently instead of lifting the ball. The loft of the club is doing all the work for you. Your ball will end up close to the hole and you will need only one putt. One more par saved! This is good for your score and even better, it's fun!

**Y**ou've often been told that to hit effective chip shots your hands must be ahead of the ball. **That's true, but they shouldn't be too far ahead (below left).** In fact, given the design of the club, they're *already* in front of the ball.



If you place your hands too far forward, you're introducing unnecessary variables. You're creating too much forward shaft lean. This action reduces the bounce angle designed into the sole of the club. You increase the probability of digging the leading edge of your club into the ground. You're also reducing the loft of the club. It makes it more difficult for the ball to get airborne, and you risk changing the orientation of the clubface either to the left or the right of your target. All these actions increase the chances of chunking, topping and shanking it. In other words, everything you want to avoid.

To assume the more efficient stance at address, you have to place the club's original loft and bounce angles as naturally as possible. These are your two best friends. They are your greatest

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assets and your best insurance policy against bad shots. Automatically your hands will end up slightly ahead of the ball. As for your weight, it's shifted 60 percent to the leading/target leg. From this set-up position, it will be a lot easier to contact the ball correctly.

**A**round the green you don't always have the possibility to play approaches with your feet level. It's common to find yourself on a slope uphill, downhill, ball above the feet or ball below the feet. **The approach on a steep downhill** is one of the most dreaded shots



for amateurs. The secret of this shot resides primarily in how to set up efficiently. You must adapt to the type of slope you are dealing with. You want to adjust your body to be in the same direction as the slope.

It is essential that your shoulders and hips be parallel to the slope. We often see amateurs place their hips in line with the slope, but the

shoulders aren't at the same angle. This mismatch can often result in either topping or blading the ball.

We recommend playing the ball slightly closer to the trailing foot. You don't have too many options with the body weight. It's primarily shifted to the leading foot.

Avoid the temptation to lift the ball. Once in position, just rock your arms slightly back and forth. Wrist action must be reduced to a bare minimum. The ball will follow a low trajectory because the slope reduces the club's loft angle. Ball contact is the same as for a normal stroke: ball first, ground second. You need to adjust your club selection, generally taking a club with more loft. The ball will fly lower than if you were on an even lie and will roll a longer distance when it hits the green—select a landing zone closer to you.

When practicing, a simple way to check if your posture is PROficient is to use an alignment stick. Once you're in position at address, put the stick at your hips and then at your shoulders to verify that they're *both* parallel to the slope. **(See photos at left)** It's very uncomfortable to have the shoulders tilted in the same direction as the slope. This is why golfers forget to adjust the shoulders. Hips and shoulders *must* be aligned with the angle of the slope.

For any shots played on a slope, the basic rule to be effective is to adapt your address and your swing to the landscape. If the ball is above your feet, it is closer to you. The ball always flies in the same direction as the slope.

There are a few basic adjustments: Aim will be slightly to the right, your body a bit more upright and your hands lower on the grip. Once in position, execute your swing while paying attention to two things: Keep the wrists relatively passive, and perform a more "rounded" swing, which will "hug" the slope more. Finally, be aware that the ball will travel in the direction of the slope, in this case, to the left. It is more pronounced if you have more loft on the club.

To maintain balance, the body is a bit more upright than for a standard swing. Hands are placed lower on the club grip because the ball is a bit closer to you. If you keep the same length as a regular swing on a flat landscape, you will increase the probability to hit the ground before the ball. The body is aligned slightly to the right because the ball will go to the left in the direction of the slope. We recommend playing the ball slightly closer to the trailing foot.

Golf is a game in which you have to adapt. Every shot is a new adventure. Learn how to adjust with the different slopes around the green. **PG**