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GAME CHANGER

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TALK OF THE TOWN

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THE RORY STORY

JOHN HOPKINS EXPLORES THE RISE & RISE OF THE WORLD'S BEST

The Gi Interview

MARK TOWNSEND TALKS TO KEN BROWN

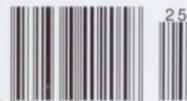
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19TH HOLE Q&A DAVID LEADBETTER

The king of prime-time instruction is enjoying a renaissance through his work with New Zealand's teenage phenomenon Lydia Ko and the record-breaking rookie winner of the BMW PGA Championship, Byeong-hun An. And with a new book out this summer - one that is set to cause more than a little controversy among the game's cognoscenti - the world's most recognisable golf coach is as influential today as he was in his heyday in partnership with Nick Faldo. Editor **Richard Simmons** talked to him

This summer will be 25 years since Faldo's victory at St Andrews - the four days he describes as the best of his career. What do you remember of that week?

The thing that stood out for me was that Nick arrived at St Andrews in really good form, and I remember saying to him on Wednesday wouldn't it be nice walking up the 72nd hole with a five-shot lead - and that's exactly what happened. I just felt everything was on song that week. I remember leaning on the rail bordering the 18th hole on Friday when he holed that little bump-and-run for a two, and I thought then this is an omen for the week.

The other thing I remember is we found a really good putting tip that week, which Faldo code-named 'Basil Brush'. What he was doing was brushing the ball, almost to the point where he felt like the putter-head was gently grazing the turf as he stroked the ball into the hole. He would practice from six to eight feet and simply brush the ball into the hole without a backswing. He putted superbly.

There were a couple of players who challenged but really it was all Faldo. At the time I was working with Ian Baker-Finch and

he played alongside Faldo in the last round. I told IBF not to expect any chit-chat, or any compliments. And that's the way it was; Faldo was in the zone.

In an eerie precursor to events at Augusta in 1996, Nick played with Greg Norman in the third round and more or less finished him, 67-76

He destroyed Greg at that point. He really did. Completely out-played him, and in so doing gave himself a nice cushion for the final round. But history was about to be made and this was Nick's Open to enjoy. At Muirfield he ground out the win, it was touch and go. This was a dominant performance, a player at the peak of his powers and totally tuned in. He had control in the wind, those little bump-and-runs going, a good frame of mind. It was very special.

Is a St Andrews Open as special for a coach as it is a player?

Absolutely. It's just a special place, you can't really put your finger on what it is - you are following in the footsteps of the legends of

the game, and the course just seems to lend itself to drama. We have all witnessed the excitement down the years, whether it's Seve or John Daly or Tiger. The thing is, from a player's perspective, you really can get it going around the Old Course, get on a run. And then all of a sudden someone charges up the leader-board. The roars roll around the course - it's a great party to be involved in.

Faldo aside, what's your favourite St Andrews memory?

I think that image of Seve on the 18th green in 1984 - just how emotional was that? Really incredible. A moment in time that will forever be looked upon as Seve's Open. The other thing I always remember, too, was Costantino Rocca in '95. He poured out his emotions, and you could sense at that point he would have nothing left to give in the play-off with Daly. You know, the only bet I've ever won in golf was on John Daly. I put a hundred quid on John Daly after watching him play in the Dunhill the previous autumn and thought he had the perfect game - long off the tee, fabulous on and around the greens.

Will you be covering for the BBC this year?

Yes, I'll be with Radio 5 Live for the week and I'm looking forward to it. It's really interesting to work alongside the pros in their field, amazing how they just adapt from sport to sport and have the ability to paint a picture - not just reporting on what they see. That's a real skill. Making a story.

I know you're a big lover of cricket, do you take any pointers from the great radio commentators?

I love listening to cricket on the radio, whether it's Geoffrey Boycott giving a lecture or, going back a few years, John Arlott and Christopher Martin Jenkins, Henry Blofeld, they are an art from bygone days almost. They were experts in the same way Peter Alliss is an expert on observation, knowing when to speak, painting a picture, adding different textures. The skill lies in anticipation of what might happen - so you need to be wide awake, alert.

Was it a conscious decision to spend more time with players on the LPGA?

It's funny how that's happened. Michelle Wie has always been a part of the stable, as was Suzann Pettersen until recently. On the men's

tour you pretty much have to be out there full time, visible at events week-in, week-out. It's a commitment. I've been there and done that. Time is precious and I do a lot of other things now. The girls seem to take on board what you tell them and appreciate the work we do. I go to tournaments periodically. They seem to follow orders more easily. Jessica Korda, England's Jodie Ewart - she will be a great player, hugely talented. I still work with a couple of European Tour players, Rafa Cabrera-Bello, Alexander Levy. And then there's the outstanding South Korean, Byeong-Hun An, the former US Amateur champion who made his breakthrough in the BMW PGA at Wentworth. That final-round 65 was the perfect illustration of a player totally in control of his game.

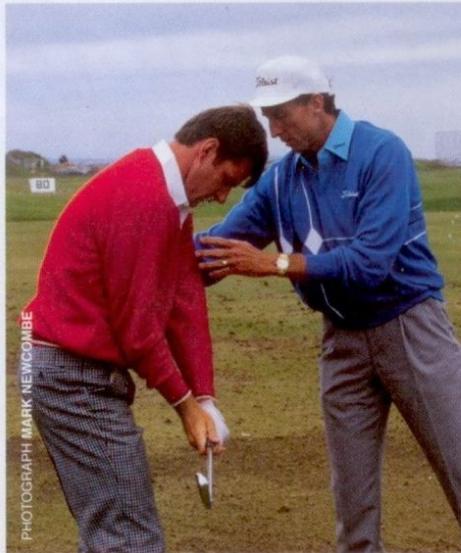
You have worked with Tom Watson on and off over the years - what is it about his swing that has enabled him to compete for so long?

Well, the thing with Tom is that his swing hasn't really changed at all. He has that quick tempo, a non-mechanical swing, up and down, no frills. His rhythm has never changed. It's almost as if he has the same look and feeling for the last 40 years or so. He is a wonderful shot-maker, too. It's almost like while Tom has gotten older, his swing hasn't. Very much in the Hale Irwin category. Nicklaus, to a large extent, was the same - his swing, ostensibly, didn't change through the years. And if you can do that, if you're comfortable with your swing D.N.A., you can always play.

One of the issues with Tiger, to my mind, is that he's made so many swing changes over the years that he's reached a point he just doesn't know which swing he's using. He has a hybrid of them all now. Tom Watson has always worked on little things but he did that within the mainframe of his own golf swing, if you like. You would say Tom Watson 'owns' his swing - Tiger doesn't recognise his these days.

Given all that's happened to his game over the last few years is there a part of you that would have liked a call from Tiger?

I was asked the other day what do I think



about Tiger, and I said that if there is a golf course in the world that might bring back memories of his creativity then maybe it's Chambers Bay - basically a links course on steroids. Maybe that will turn out a good venue for him, allowing him to use the slopes, work on visualisation and just play golf rather than play *swing* [this conversation took place on the opening day of the US Open.]

I think Tiger should figure it out for himself. You can't tell me he doesn't have enough knowledge, enough video footage, to figure out what we have to do to get the ball in play. Dig deep. He's the greatest player that ever lived for the last 25 years - why does he need a guy standing over him on every shot. Look at the greats in the past - Nicklaus, Watson, Lee Trevino, Gary Player, Arnold Palmer, these guys pretty much got on with it themselves. Ben Hogan was basically on his own, consulting occasionally with Henry Picard. And as Hogan famously said, the answers are in the dirt.

But to answer your question, sure, as a coach you'd always like to work with the most highly talented players in the game, but you have to remember it comes at a price. Yes, sure, I love what I do and I would seriously have relished the challenge. But when you're under the microscope, as you would be, what happens to the rest of the players you work with? My life? You get all this notoriety but it could be negative if it all goes wrong.

Do you think we will see Tiger come back again?

You'd never say never. If he wins another major it will be the greatest feat of his career to date. He's been to the dark side, let's face it. Look at Ian Baker-Finch, look at David Duval - once you start falling, it's a tough road back. Will he show flashes of his former brilliance? Probably. I suppose it's conceivable he could win another major but the odds are long. He doesn't putt as well, he's 39 and the nerve ends are beginning to fray. But the biggest thing in all this? The competition is simply a whole lot better now. The young guys out there now are not afraid of Tiger. They almost feel sorry for him. The aura has been broken.

At his best, Nick had an incredible aura about him. For me, he should never have taken the decision to play in the States full time. When he came over here it was as if he was a God, players would stop practising and watch Nick, to see the control he had, the shot-making he displayed. He had that power over the field. But when he came full time - and one of the reasons was that he thought it would improve his putting - he would play these long courses and he looked average. He was not a bomber, he was an artist, and that was the start of the end. Players didn't look upon him in the same light, and the player can feel that. I think Tiger's feeling that.

It was largely out of that relationship with Faldo that you became known for inventive drills and exercises - movements and feelings. Increasingly, biomechanics is taking over?

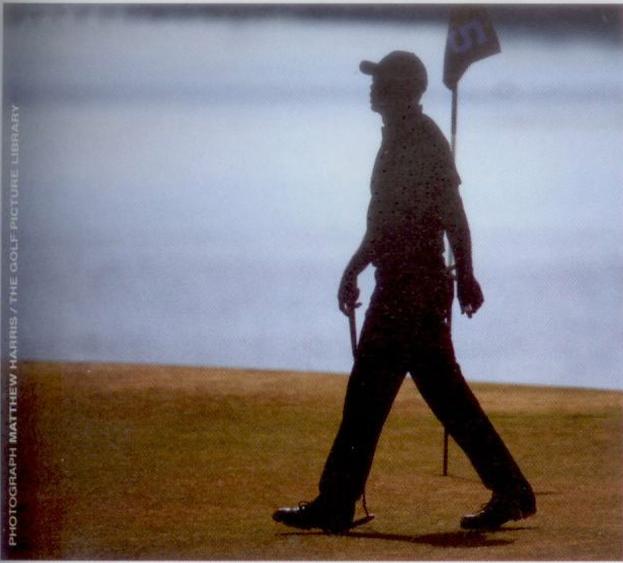
Today, with my involvement with Jean-Jacques Rivet, and getting a little more awareness of biomechanics, a lot of the drills are based around movement patterns, making the body move more efficiently. So there are a few different drills or variations on the older ones. We have this new concept, The A Swing (the A stands for alternative) with a book out this summer, which we are very excited about, as it has been very well received by players.

As a coach you are constantly coming up with new things. To me, drills are important because they help you to attach a feeling to a mechanic, they give you something tangible to work on. In essence The A Swing consists of a 7-minute practice programme, with six swing drills, none of them involve hitting balls. And through all the testing with JJ we have proved that it works.

The new book has been billed as a 'game-changer'. How do you describe it?

Well, essentially this is an evolution of what I believe in. When I look at golf today, less people are playing, less people enjoying the game, and the biggest reason is time. People these days just do not seem to have the time to devote to golf. So if you are going to spend some time and it's hard, and you're not doing well, you're going to look for something else to do - like ride a bike.

"I think Tiger should figure it out for himself. You can't tell me he doesn't have enough knowledge, enough video footage, to figure out what we have to do to get the ball in play..."



I haven't brought out an instruction book in 10 years. In that time I've been learning a lot about biomechanics, and the underlying goal was to help players to swing the club in a more simple manner which will enable them to hit more solid shots and enjoy some sort of consistency. When I look at golf instruction, there's an awful lot of wasted time and misplaced emphasis - we don't hit the ball with the backswing. It's important, obviously, as it sets the sequence up. But to me, the big word in all of this, for players of all standards, is synchronisation. When you 'sync' the arm swing with the movement of the trunk, you have something. You can get somebody to understand how the trunk moves with a pivot drill; you can explain to someone how the arms and hands work to get the club in position, but to time these together is the difficult issue that all golfers have to learn. The A Swing is designed to help people time these elements more easily and quickly.

Essentially, the A Swing simplifies the backswing. There's a bit of baseball in here, too. If you look at a baseball player the bat is cocked, the bat is pointing up at the sky and then they shallow in readiness for impact. You step into it and everything starts to move.

But this is evolution, not revolution. It's not far away from what I've always believed in - i.e. steep to shallow. Nick Faldo and Nick Price were like that. In fact, it's interesting. If you hold a club between just two fingers and thumb, take it back and let it find its balance point as you swing it freely, it will naturally swing up on quite a steep plane. It sets up and goes across the line, which I'm an advocate of (not long and across but short and across). It's all about getting the club on the right plane coming down - and most amateurs really struggle with that. They are so steep on it coming down they don't know how to handle it. That's not to say every great player is synchronised going back, but they do have the hand-eye coordination, the feel, the talent and

the ability to get it in sync coming down and into a really solid impact position. Amateurs need to make a better backswing because they don't have the skill to compensate coming down.

The beauty is that we have done a lot of testing on this over the last two years, from beginner to Tour player level. Does everybody have to do it? No, they don't. Some people can synchronise no matter what. The key here is that there is no clubface rotation going back - at least no conscious rotation. There is a little adjustment in the grip to facilitate this.

The vertical nature of the shaft plane is Nicklaus-like, Monty-like. So it looks shut going away, and then, due to the steepness of the plane, the toe hangs. One of the real facets here is the arm swing is short and a little more across the body, which I have always liked. Hey, golf instruction needs shaking up a bit, it's the same old, same old.

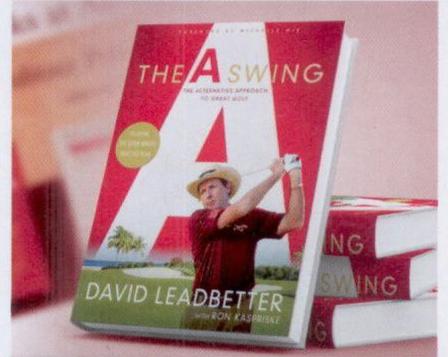
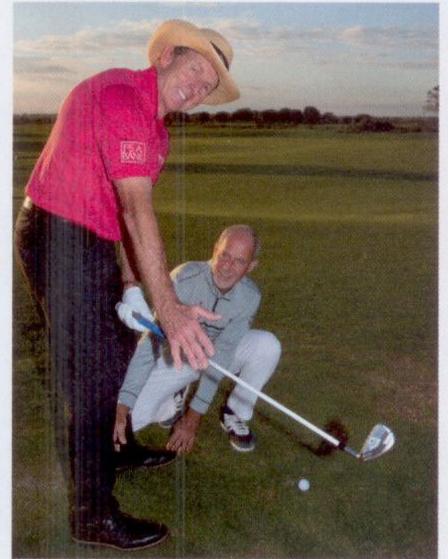
Where do you stand on technology in coaching - it seems to me that a lot of coaches out there would be lost if they didn't have TrackMan and the like

Well, technology is great if it's used in the right way but it is just a tool. Sure, we can analyse the swing to the nth degree using high-speed video, force plates, TrackMan, and so on. But you have to remember you're dealing with advanced processes and you need to be a pretty good player to fully appreciate what's going on. Plus, if you're a good player, you can cheat the numbers. If you want to hit up on the ball you can find a way of doing that - tee it up on a pencil and play it six inches outside the left foot and guess what, you'll hit up on it.

In the wrong hands, TrackMan is way too complicated for the average golfer. It's a tool to illustrate something fundamental such as swingpath - the visuals on the screen can help a player to understand what it means to swing from the inside, for example. But trust me, when a divot is running 45 degrees left of target you don't need technology to tell you where the problem lies.

The vast majority of golfers need teaching to be less complicated. And yet technology has produced a generation of coaches who are obsessed with this technology. Do you honestly think that all the great coaches in the game, the Butch Harmons, Pete Cowens, Jim Macleans of this world couldn't help a golfer without relying on all that? Of course not. What this technology is doing, to some extent, is taking instinct out of teaching. 

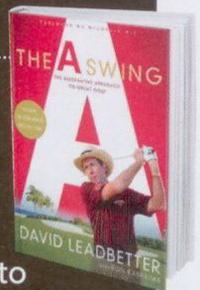
A shadow of his former self - as things turned out, Chambers Bay was not the tonic Tiger was looking for; (below): Lead and JJ - a formidable duo in the coaching world and, we're delighted to say, regular contributors to Gi



Readers of Golf International can buy a copy of David Leadbetter's The A Swing for only £10 (including p&p) - a saving of £6.99 on the RRP of £16.99.

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Jane

Hip moves

The recoil speed that we can identify in Rory McIlroy's hip action is just one of a number of phenomenal moves in an extraordinary power chain. **Jean-Jacques Rivet** explains what you can learn from the World No.1

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK NEWCOMBE



With superb athleticism, Rory has the capacity to generate incredible recoil speed controlled from the ground up via the foot, leg and hip action. At the same time he displays poise and balance throughout – he is 'grounded', engaging with the turf through the feet

THE DYNAMICS OF SPEED COIL, SETTLE, RELEASE



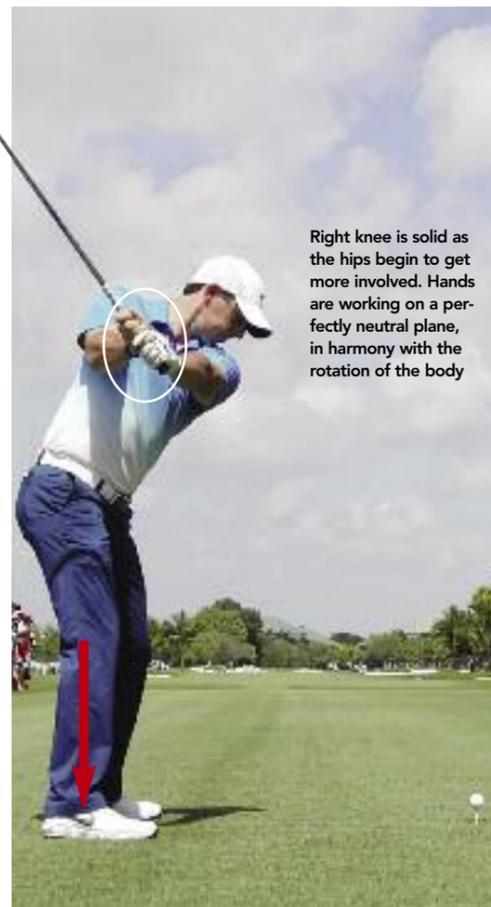
Rory is beautifully poised for athletic motion – tension free, ready to create a swing



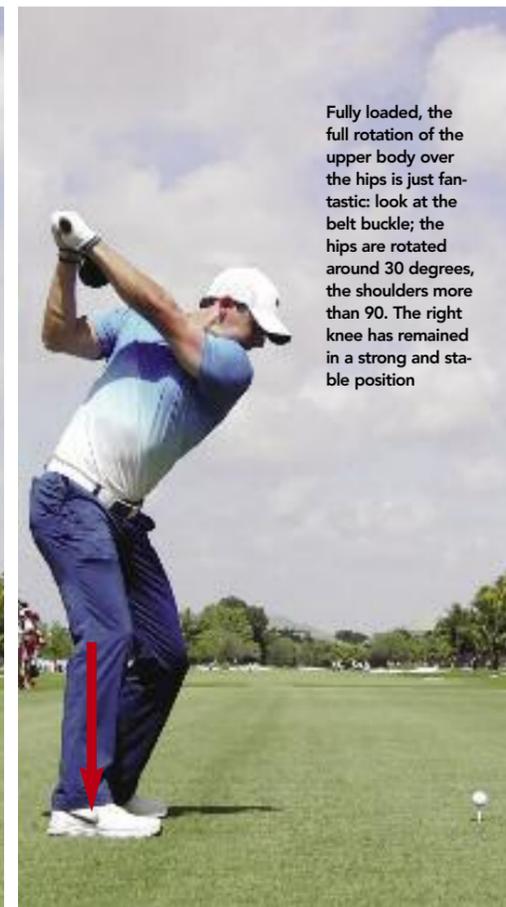
Characteristic of Rory's first move is this wide extension, the clubhead remaining outside the path of the hands (but inside the ball-to-target line)



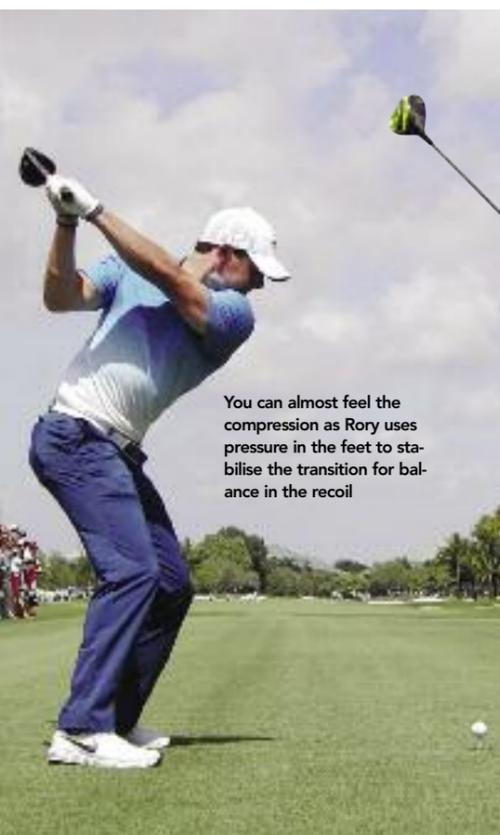
As the wrists begin to hinge so the club works up but notice that the hips have yet to really engage – the lower body is resisting the rotation of the torso



Right knee is solid as the hips begin to get more involved. Hands are working on a perfectly neutral plane, in harmony with the rotation of the body



Fully loaded, the full rotation of the upper body over the hips is just fantastic: look at the belt buckle; the hips are rotated around 30 degrees, the shoulders more than 90. The right knee has remained in a strong and stable position



You can almost feel the compression as Rory uses pressure in the feet to stabilise the transition for balance in the recoil



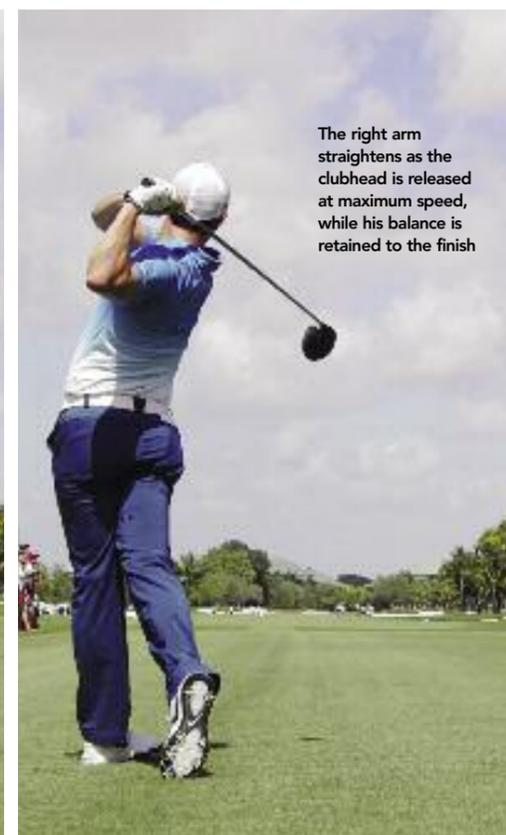
Weight is now flowing onto the front of the left foot as he 'settles'; allowing the arms and the club to swing down from the inside



As the hips clear at speed, the left foot and left knee are now providing the resistance to hit against as Rory allows the right side to 'fire'. Note the angle that is loaded in the wrists – energy about to be unleashed



Phenomenal clearance of the left side allows the full compression of the right side on the ball



The right arm straightens as the clubhead is released at maximum speed, while his balance is retained to the finish

GROUND CONTROL THE KEY INGREDIENT FOR RECOIL SPEED

There are a number of significant elements to this swing that are remarkable for the way in which they combine to generate such phenomenal speed and power – and students of technique will not be surprised to learn they are closely related.

First, look closely at the early stages of the sequence and observe the way in which Rory takes the club away from the ball on a relatively straight path – it almost appears as though he is moving his arms and the club *outside* the ball to target line, when in fact he is making a determined effort to maintain the width of his swing over the initial few feet of the movement. What this does is help set up (indeed accentuate) the natural phenomena of shallowing the plane of the arms and the club to the inside on the return journey, whereupon the arms, hands and the body 'match-up' for maximum recoil speed through impact.

Studying the backswing frame by frame, look at the way the hands work in *sequence* with the rotation of the torso, while at the same time the right knee and the hips are resisting – thus the coil is engaged (just like winding up a spring).

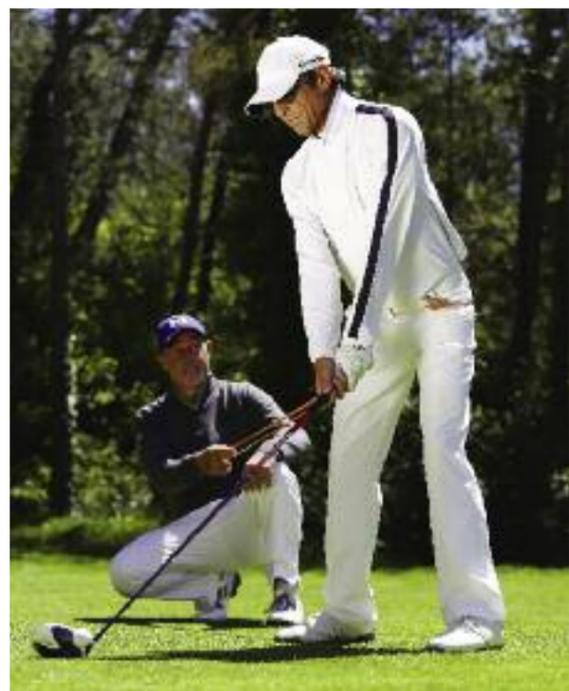
The second key element I would like to draw your attention to is the athletic movement in the lower body; study the way Rory loads his weight into his right side as he coils his backswing over the stability of the lower body (the right knee is wonderfully stable as the left knee works gently in the direction of the left toe), before then containing his initial recoil move coil in the change of direction, allowing the feet, knees and thighs to settle before the re-rotation of the hips and body core energise the downswing to the finish.

Right here is the key to storing and releasing power: what Rory actually does (and which makes for his wonderful balance in winding and unwinding his body) is to draw energy from the ground and *settle* the hips through the transition, slowing them for a split second before they 'fire' and recoil at incredible speed (measured at more than 600 degrees per second) all the way to the finish, where the hips are facing left of the target.

It is the balance Rory exhibits within his hip action that enables him to create such incredible speed while retaining his rhythm and poise.

Think of the body core as being the hub at the centre of the wheel and you begin to appreciate the importance of rotating around a stable and consistent axis in order to create and control the circular speed that is accelerated via the arms and the clubshaft to be clubhead.

Balance, of course, is vital throughout, and even at the colossal speeds Rory generates, he is a perfect example of a player who controls the golf ball via stability in the hips as he winds and unwinds his swing – so let's have a look at a way in which you can go out and learn to experience that same sensation and enjoy more speed.



All systems go: The tension that I am exerting with the elastic band helps Morgan to establish a 'ready' flex in his hips and lower body at set up (left). In the swing itself, he is then encouraged to identify with the effectiveness of rotation around a more consistent, stable axis, and unwind those hips fully

BETTER CORE STABILITY = MORE EFFICIENT RECOIL

For the majority of amateur golfers, negotiating the journey from set-up to impact is a tortuous test of balance, as much as anything else. More often than not, the root of the problems so many golfers experience can be traced to the erratic movement of the upper body – usually as a result of trying to 'muscle' the ball with the bigger muscles rather than allow the natural chain of motion to create speed.

To the question 'where does power come from', my answer is always to illustrate the effectiveness of rotation and centripetal forces over brute strength and machismo. And you can easily learn to identify with the positive sensations of a swing that turns rotational energy into clubhead speed with the simple exercise you see here.

With my old friend Morgan Mason as a model, looping a length of elastic cable to the left hip belt strap enables me to exert tension on his left hip/side at the set up (above), which he then works against as he coils his backswing. The resistance in the cable encourages Morgan to engage his core muscles for a more balanced, stable hip action, which rewards him with a much more effective backswing coil as he rotates his upper body over the 'grounded' resistance of the lower half.

In other words, Morgan is learning to stabilise his centre of gravity and harmonise it with the movement of his arms and body – and that's the key to generating more efficient and more consistent speed.

The goal, then, is to experience the sensation of the accelerating arms and clubhead working in sequence with the grounding forces in the feet as you unwind, accelerating the clubhead along a shallow, inside path to the ball for a solid strike. Using the elastic cable, I am able to remind Morgan of the importance of rotating the hips all the way to the finish, clearing the way for the upper body to unwind. This sensation of generating speed in the downswing with the re-rotation of the core muscles is one that I encourage all of my pupils to go out and experience – just one of many swing dynamics we can all learn from Rory!

Jean-Jacques Rivet is Head of Biomechanics and Sport Performance at the European Tour Performance Institute (ETPI)



SPEED DRILL HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE 'RORY FACTOR'

Focus on creating and maintaining a good athletic posture...



Rotate about a consistent spine and hip angle...



Feel the re-rotation occurs in your body core, stabilised by the knees as you allow your weight to 'settle' and shift towards the target



At the finish, your belt buckle should be pointing at or even slightly left of the target – total recoil – a la Rory!

