



DAVID MARTIN'S BACKSWING

David Martin, California Amateur Champion, is shown at the approximate limit of the backswing in the above picture. Note, how, as indicated by the lines drawn on the picture, the body has been coiled up in the backswing much after the fashion of a spiral spring, the winding beginning with a point well down in the lower part of the spine

CLEARING UP TIPS ABOUT BODY ACTION

What "Keeping the Body Back of the Blow" Really Means

By ALEX J. MORRISON

KEEP your body behind the blow" says one golf expert. Another comes along and tells you to "shift your hips to the left in the downswing before your arms and hands come down." One apparently tells you the exact opposite of what the other has told you. Such directions, along with many others given in connection with the body action, are indeed misleading. No doubt, you have already had enough trouble with this part of your swing without the added handicap of misleading instructions.

In an effort to remove this additional handicap, let me try to show you just how these bits of advice are misleading. At the same time I'll try to explain their real meaning, hoping thereby to give you a better understanding of the proper body action, and also to make it much easier for you to execute.

First of all, let's check up on the misleading part of these "tips." In order to remove any doubt from your mind about the body action that should take place in the early part of the downswing, you need only look at the accompanying illustrations. To simplify the analysis of the swing I feel that I must again make use of my phrase "the order of movement." These action pictures of David Martin, Amateur Champion of California, are mighty fine examples of the "correct order of movement" in the downswing. They show quite clearly that the movement of the body leads that of the arms and hands.

"If the body really leads the arms and hands in the downswing, as you say, and as the pictures show, then that certainly makes the advice about keeping the body back of the blow misleading," you rise to remark.

Well, since you have expressed yourself in this way, it is quite evident that you have gained the wrong impression from this tip. By the very wording of your remark, you show that, when the instructor told you to keep your body "behind" the blow, you took it to mean "back" of the blow. The words "behind" and "back" probably bring to your mind a picture of a prizefighter in

action. You visualize the fighter following the punch with his body, and you gather that the golf instructor wants you to do the same thing in your swing. No, that is not what he means, because, by holding your body back during your downswing, you make it work directly against your arms and hands. Naturally this conflict cuts down the power of your swing. Your instructor knows this and you could hardly expect him to tell you to do anything that might lessen the power.

On the contrary, in order that you may develop more power, he tries to get you to move your body in such a way that it will harmonize with the rest of your swing. He may not go so far as to tell you, as I have many times, that your body should be a source of power for your swing, nevertheless he knows this to be true. He knows that the body is a source of power in his own swing as well as in that of every good player. Likewise he knows that the body action produced by the average player is nothing but a source of worry. Therefore, I think I am fairly safe in saying that the real significance of most directions offered concerning body action is to establish the body as a source of power.

When an instructor tells you to keep your body behind the blow, he simply means for you to keep only your head and shoulders, not your whole body, behind the ball. He certainly doesn't want you to keep most of your weight on your right foot during the downswing as you would, if you prevented the forward shifting of your hips. The mere fact that so few players master it proves the proper body action to be the most difficult part of the swing. At that, it's not so easy to control the head and shoulders, so that they don't sway back and forth or bob up and down, and at the same time allow the mid-section to move freely from side to side. Yet it is upon this latter sort of action, or the correct order of movement, that the power of your swing depends.

The correct order of movement produces a wind-up in the backswing and an unwinding in the downswing. The power derived from the proper "uncoiling motion" is clearly in evidence in the accompanying pictures.

"Well then, knowing that the body should lead the action of the downswing, why not stick to the dope about shifting the hips first, that should be simple enough for anyone?" you ask.

Yes, it seems simple enough, but I claim that this tip is also confusing. You can be sure that the very first move in the downswing should be a forward shifting of your hips, but here is another thing of which you can be just as *(Continued on page 55)*



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DAVID MARTIN STARTING DOWN

This picture shows the process of uncoiling the spring explained under the picture on the opposite page. Observe how the hips have squared around, and how the shoulders are turning toward the left in a manner which indicates that there is a strong pull from the point of the left shoulder. The shift of the hips toward the left started the downswing

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sure. Even though you know exactly how your body should move in the downswing even though your mental picture of this part of the swing is absolutely perfect, you cannot execute the proper movements, *if you consciously try to direct your body movements during the downswing.*

I mean by this that, if you set your mind on shifting your hips to the left at the start of your downswing, you will not produce anything like the proper body action. Not only will you fail to bring about the desired body action, but you will also spoil the action of your arms and hands. You don't have to accept my word for this; you can try it in your own swing. Just take up any club and, before you go to make your swing, say to yourself, "I must keep my mind on the forward shifting; of my hips." If you are wholly conscious of your hip action at the start of your downswing, I'll guarantee that this direct consciousness completely upsets your swing. At least it will demonstrate that the tip about shifting your hips is rather misleading. As I have stated before, the movements of the body during the downswing must be left to subconscious control.

This brings up a point about golf instruction, which I feel I must call to your attention in this connection. Golf advice or instruction, especially written instruction, where the instructor is deprived of the chance to demonstrate physically the point he seeks to emphasize, should be divided into two main classes. One class should deal with all statements made in attempting to describe the physical action of swinging the club. Another class should be made up of such directions and instructions as are intended to bring about the desired action. The first class is a diagnosis of the ailment; the second is a prescription aimed toward curing or correcting it.

Obviously the first class would be given over almost entirely to information about the various movements of the muscles and joints during the swing. The second class would be a list of tips or suggestions as to likely ways of producing the right swing. Golfers frequently are handicapped terribly by the general failure to make any distinction between the two kinds of instruction. It is a fact that the statement concerning only the physical action of the swing, no matter how much it may go into detail about the movements of your body, arms and hands, gives no guarantee of affording the particular mental process before you can produce the proper physical action. But an understanding of the correct action may make it easier to apply the proper methods in acquiring the action. Your muscles need certain "cues" before they will respond properly. Just as an actor on the stage depends on the right cue to send him into his lines, so your entire performance with a golf club should be properly cued. In other words, the instruction that is most valuable to you is that which affords you the right mental process before and during the time you are swinging the club.

I should like to go back again to the pictures of David Martin long enough to say that, since I have never had an opportunity to see him swing, I get a great deal of satisfaction from finding him with a swing so technically sound. For surely young Martin should prove an exceptionally good golfer. He is a son of Ernest Martin who hails from Carnoustie, Scotland, and who has been one of the leading professionals on the Pacific Coast for a great many years. I won't say just how many, but it was under Ernest Martin that I served my apprenticeship as a golf professional.



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