

# Golf Insider

By T.J. TOMASI

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

## A flare for the game

Here's a question for you: Do you need a complete swing reconstruction or just a custom re-matching?

If your swing is really bad and you have the time and dedication for a complete overhaul, find a teacher who's going to be around for at least the next year, agree on a blueprint and stick with it. It took Tiger a year plus each time he retooled his swing.

But if a complete overhaul is more than you need, you can also improve dramatically by understanding how to customize your golf swing.

There are some combinations of swing elements (ball position, grip, clubface position, etc.) that match up well and some that don't. The problem is that being mismatched creates a "golfing Frankenstein" by combining swing parts that just don't fit together. For example, a forward ball position and a shut clubface don't match well,

and neither do a weak grip and quiet hands.

Playing with mismatched elements makes golf hard, so you and your teacher need to scout your swing to make sure you have the correct matchups.

**Foot Flare/Release Match**

One of the most important matchups is foot flare and release. If you're hooking the ball, your clubface is too closed at impact, so flare your front foot out to delay the release and keep the clubface open longer. If you're slicing, do the opposite: Decreasing the flare of your target foot makes the toe of the club rotate over the heel sooner, something a slicer can use to square the face at impact.

**ABOUT THE WRITER**



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Very little front foot flare.



Normal amount of flare.



A lot of flare.

**ASK THE PRO**

### The do-do system

**Q:** I am just beginning and I'm taking lessons from a good instructor, but I play every Sunday with my mother and her boyfriend, who is a good player. He gives me advice and I try to do it, but then I can't do anything right. He's an accountant, not a teacher, but he said he's just a set of eyes to help me. What should I do? — S.A.

**A:** Unfortunately, with every set of eyes comes a mouth, and once he opens it, out comes a flow of "do this, do that," aka the do-do system. And if you listen to him that's exactly how you'll play — like do-do.

Ask your mom to ask her boyfriend to button up.

(To Ask the Pro a question about golf e-mail him at: [TJInsider@aol.com](mailto:TJInsider@aol.com).)

**BIRDIES AND BOGEYS**

### Wie's woes continue

Last year, Michelle Wie was putting well after she hired a new coach. Then at the beginning of this year, she inexplicably dropped him and skipped to another coach — and has since putted poorly. Most people quit just before something good happens, but she quits while something good is happening.

Wie did the same thing when she left swing coach Casey Nakama for David Leadbetter several years ago. In an interview, golf writer Jennifer Mario asked Nakama, who had been Wie's teacher since she was 9, if he saw any changes in her swing after working with other coaches.

"Yeah," said Nakama, "I think they've mechanized her swing a little bit more. I always want players to have feel in their movement. I want their swing to be a little bit more flowing. They seem to be real mechanical and position-oriented. So it's a lot stiffer now in how she's swinging it."

Her first teacher built Wie into a star — the youngest to qualify for the U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links at age 10, winning the prestigious Jennie K. Wilson Invitational at 11, qualifying for an LPGA event at 12 and winning Pub Links at 13.

Since then Wie has won once — on the LPGA Tour in 2009. Incredibly, it's her only victory since she was a 13-year-old, and she is now 20.

In this year's U.S. Open, Wie, who hasn't recorded a top-10 finish in a major since 2006, three-putted four greens on her first nine holes on the way to an 82. She followed her opening round with a 76. Her 36-hole total of plus-16 left her six shots outside the cut line.

She took 69 putts for two rounds — a disastrous 34.5 average. In 2009, the tour average was about 30. In a four-round tournament Wie gives up 18 shots to the field.

Sounds like she should fly back to her first coach in Hawaii, and on the way stop off to see her new/old putting coach of last year.

**TEEING OFF**

### Treat your brain well

There are two important networks that deal with how your brain pays attention to something. Neuroscientist Marcus Raichle at Washington University in St. Louis discovered there is one for focusing on specific tasks, the task-positive network (TPN), and another for thinking about nothing in particular, the default-mode network (DMN). The default network switches on when you stop focusing on a task. Like many of your body's systems, the two networks are antagonistic in that when one turns on, the other switches off.

When your mind begins to wander, you are not only switching brain areas, but also using different amounts of brain energy. There is a substantial reduction of energy usage in the default mode — basically, you use more for specific thinking and less for scanning. Put another way Paul E. Gold, of the University of Illinois College of Medicine, reports that energy drainage due to tasking accounts for a 30 percent drop in energy in the hippocampus area of the brain.

**Cost of paying attention**  
Where does the brain get its energy? Since it can't make its own, brain fuel must be imported. The fuel is delivered by the blood in the form of a sugar called glucose, and if you concentrate for five hours straight during a round of golf, at some point you are going to run low. It costs you a lot to pay attention.

Since cell damage occurs if you run your brain too long under low-glucose conditions, the default network acts as an off-load on your power grid. When fuel is low, you go on scan to save energy, unless of course, through training, you force yourself to stay on task.

**Brain damage**

The problem is that subjecting your neurons to deprivation by grinding away round after round can injure your

brain. Neurons are physical structures, and like anything else, they wear out with usage. Even during sleep, neurons are still at work repairing and rebuilding their worn-out structural components, including their physical connections to other neurons in their network.

Treat your neurons well and they grow interconnections that conduct fast and efficient electrical impulses. But treat them harshly and over time the transmission highways wither and die.

Could spending too much time in TPN have contributed to the burnout suffered by the great Ben Hogan? His work ethic was a perfect storm when it came to the yips. Late in his career it got so bad that he would stand frozen, unable to draw the putter back. This could have been a result of frayed brain interconnections whose signals were garbled in the transmission.

**Too much practice**

Of course we won't ever know, but remember that in addition to the intense focus he played with, Hogan drove himself to over-practice to train himself to play while exhausted. Hogan wanted to know how he would hit the ball when he was tired, so it was not unusual for him to hit thousands of balls in grueling all-day practice sessions — and he didn't stop along the way for tea and crumpets.

Given his symptoms and his lifestyle, it is possible that Hogan unknowingly damaged his circuits by purposely traumatizing them.

On the flip side is John Daly, who may have damaged his brain circuits not by starving them, but by doing the opposite, i.e., inundating them with a tsunami of sugar. Before his gastric surgery he would eat four giant bags of M&M's during a round of golf, then go home and munch Oreo cookies and drink beer.

**GOLF BY THE NUMBERS**

### Tiger is shorter and less accurate

Tiger has lost 32 yards on his average drive from 2005 to 2010, and he's missing fairways by wider margins. In past seasons, his miss was a block to the right. In 2010, it has been both sides — left and right. Not even Tiger can get away with a two-way miss pattern.

### Don't rush to see this show either

Hank Haney's next TV project is ultra-conservative Rush Limbaugh. Haney's first two projects were bad golfers with likable personalities — NBA Hall-of-Famer Charles Barkley and Emmy Award-winner Ray Romano. Limbaugh is more controversial than these two with the ability to polarize an audience — a dangerous situation where ratings are at stake.

Limbaugh's last stint on TV ended badly when he was kicked off ESPN for saying that Philadelphia quarterback Donovan McNabb wasn't that good but received undue attention because he is black.

I wish Haney good luck on what could be a tough slog.



WIE

**THE GOLF DOCTOR**

### Why you should wear sunglasses

If you play golf, you run the risk of bright sunlight damaging your eyes. The sunlight strikes the retina on the back of your eye, which is composed of neurons that transmit the information to your brain. These eye cells can actually be bleached out by the sun's rays, garbling the transmission lines to the visual centers.

The damage is both cumulative and progressive, so you may not develop any symptoms for 15 or 20 years, and this latency period makes sun-damaged vision a tricky malady to manage. Nonetheless, the rule of thumb that guides your damage profile is clear: The more time you spend absorbing the sun's rays, the higher the probability your vision will deteriorate.

The solution, of course, is to wear sunglasses, and to help you with your choice I tried 10 brands and have chosen the top three, which I have been wearing for the last three months.

The first thing I can tell you is that these ain't your grandfather's sunglasses. You don't just buy a pair of sunglasses; you buy a system composed of eye protection, convenience and good looks.

The Native Larimer system includes multiple-colored lenses that easily clip in and out, a prime-time storage case, a drawstring carrying bag that doubles as a cleaning cloth, and a sturdy hang tie that keeps your sunglasses tied to you when not on your nose. Off-course these are a great-looking pair of sunglasses with hinges that keep the fit tight and, for comfort, an adjustable nose pad. They are so light I'd forget I had them on.

See them at [www.nativeeyewear.com](http://www.nativeeyewear.com). Price is \$129/\$159.

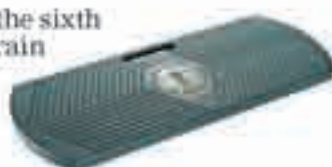
Next week: The other winners



**DON'T MISS IT**

### Swing on the level

Balance in golf is the sixth sense, and you can train yourself for better balance by working with a balance board like this one, available from Golfsmith.com. It weighs only two pounds and has a built-in handle for easy transport. Standing on the board while taking practice swings will help you develop a smooth, balanced stroke. The price is \$50.



**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"The American guys who have won all the tournaments over the past few years are getting older. ... The talent to replace them is very young and needs a bit more experience, so we have a 15-year window. The Americans have a gap, and that gap is being filled by European guys right now, guys who are in their late 20s, early 30s and who are doing the job right now."

—England's Ian Poulter, who is the world's 10th ranked golfer

**GOLF SPOKEN HERE**

### U-turn

n.: a putt that rolls all the way around the edge of the cup before lipping out