

THE POWER ISSUE: Get Longer Through The Bag

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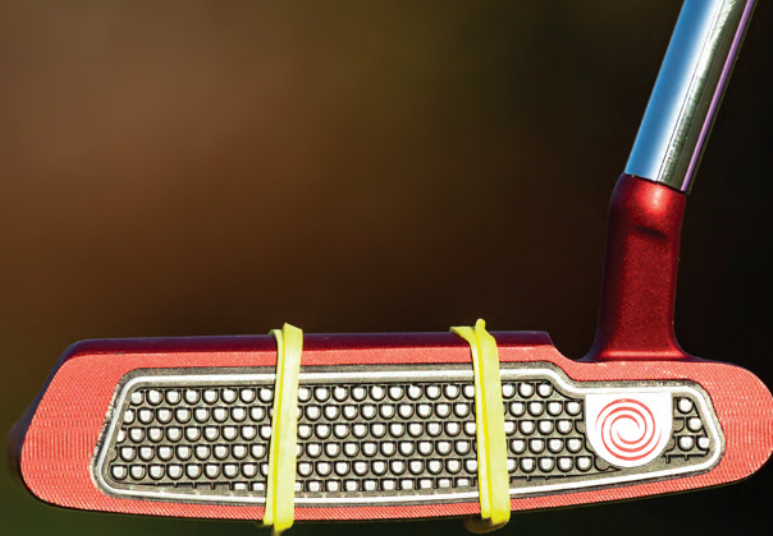
- » NEMACOLIN WOODLANDS:  
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OCTOBER 2018



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# — GET CENTERED —

On The Clubface For Great Putting and Driving

By John Hughes, PGA

Photos by Russell Kirk

**A**rguably the two most important clubs in your bag are the driver and the putter. You must put the ball in play with your driver to enable you to score with your putter on the green. The extreme opposites of each other in your golf bag have one thing in common when it comes to playing to your potential: you must hit the center of the face of each club, the sweet spot, all the time.

How do you do that? It's relatively easy to learn to hit the sweet spot of both your putter and your driver using simple household props. Used correctly, rubber bands and water bottles can be some of the best swing aids you'll ever use.

## THE SWEET SPOT OF THE PUTTER

### Never Hit = Never In

As you may already know, distance control with your putter is the No. 1 objective to achieve. As you control your distance, so shall you control direction. But both distance and direction have one thing in common. You guessed it, hitting the center of the putter's club face. Being just micro fractions off center can cause the ball to not roll as far as you intend — or, have the ball roll as much as several inches off direction.

There are many different products on the market to emphasize striking the center of your putter as you increase your putting skill level.



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But you have something already at home or in your office that will do the job — rubber bands.

You'll need two rubber bands, preferably wide and not very long. Rubber bands the post office uses are ideal. Place both rubber bands around your putter (**Photo 1**), ensuring that as you wrap each band around that it remains flat on the face of your putter. Spread the bands out far enough to allow a golf ball to strike the center of the face, leaving the smallest margin of distance between each rubber band as possible, based upon your current skill level. The objective of this drill is to see how small you can make the distance between each band while still striking the center of the club face (**Photo 2**) and not striking either rubber band.

#### **HOW DO I PRACTICE WITH YOUR RUBBER BANDS?**

Start from 2-3 feet away from the hole and work your way around the

hole and start making putts. Right away you'll notice if you are wishing the ball into the hole or striking with acceleration through the ball to the hole. Most likely, if you're wishing the ball into the hole, the ball is hitting the rubber bands causing the ball to roll off line (**Photos 3 & 4**).

As you increase the number of putts you make from that distance, start venturing away from the hole in one-foot increments, again emphasizing striking the center of your putter. As you get further from the hole, your stroke gets a little longer, introducing the possibility of you changing the direction of the putter's path as you make each stroke. The rubber bands will assist you with keeping your putter path more consistent as well as insuring you are accelerating with each stroke.

When you start making 80-90 percent of your putts using the rubber bands from as much as 10 feet from the hole, you'll know you are grooving a putting stroke that is more consistent, allows you to control your distances more precisely, and your aim lines become more vivid.



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## **WALK YOUR DRIVER THROUGH THE GATE**


As with using the rubber bands to create a more consistent path as you stroke putts, your driver needs to have a consistent path to ensure it is striking the golf ball in the center of the club face. Equipment manufacturers are all telling us the same thing, hit the ball off center and you'll lose distance and the direction the ball travels could be on another planet. The manufacturers are making more forgiving clubs than ever before, but this does not excuse you from being sloppy when hitting a driver.

You're going to need to invite your driver to pass through a gate — similar to you walking through a gate into someone's yard— to enhance your ability to swing the driver for maximum speed at impact on a very consistent path.


## **WATER BOTTLES ARE THE POSTS TO YOUR GATE**

You most likely have a couple of 16-ounce water bottles in your home. And they can be readily available at most all golf courses or practice facilities. You'll need to hydrate after your round or practice session, so why not have the water available to build the gate you need to make your driver path more consistent?

There are three different ways you can set this drill up; all depend upon your alignment being spot-on to an exact target. I suggest using at least one alignment stick, if not two, when setting up this drill to a realistic target down range. This drill also depends upon your tee height being the same for all shots. Adjusting tee height will drastically change where the ball strikes your drive club face.



**USED CORRECTLY, RUBBER BANDS AND  
WATER BOTTLES CAN BE SOME OF THE  
BEST SWING AIDS YOU'LL EVER USE.**



### **METHOD 1:**

#### **ONE BOTTLE OUTSIDE AND JUST BEHIND THE BALL**

This method is fantastic for the person who swings “over the top” or outside to in. You're going to need to avoid hitting the bottle as your club makes its way down to the golf ball. The closer you can place the bottle to the ball, just outside the ball, the better. If you know you have a vertical angle of attack or someone has told you your swing looks like a helicopter, this method is for you. With the bottle outside the ball, you'll begin to feel the driver path start to flatten as it approaches the ball, requiring the club path to come more from the inside.

### **METHOD 3:**

#### **BOTH BOTTLES MAKES FOR MAXIMUM IMPROVEMENT**

This method is for the more advanced player looking to fine tune your swing. (I'm demonstrating it in **Photos 5-8**). The “Double Gate Drill” as it's sometimes called is very popular on tour for both the men and women. And the distance these tour players place the water bottles is the minimum amount possible to create the smallest margins of error. Starting with this method will only frustrate you if you're of average skill. I suggest you work your way into this method by practicing either or both Methods 1 and 2.

The Gate Drill is a very effective, low cost way to create a more consistent swing path, which in turn will assist you with hitting the center of your driver more often. No matter what method you choose, start out with swings that are 50 percent of the effort you normally swing the club. Doing so will allow your brain and body to feel the difference the drill creates and feel the ball hitting the center of the club face more often.

### **METHOD 2:**

#### **ONE BOTTLE INSIDE AND IN FRONT OF THE BALL**

You already have a decent downward path with your driver as you swing through your shots, but if you'd like to add a bit more distance and better initial trajectory to your shot pattern, this method is for you. When swinging a driver, missing the water bottle going through and in front of the ball will require the club to keep working on a path that extends a little further towards your target. In turn, you'll release the club a bit later in the swing, creating more advantageous dynamic loft positions to bring trajectory to its ideal angle and assist with hitting “up” on the ball as the club passes through impact.

Look at any tour player's golf clubs and you'll see little marks on club faces, about the size of a dime or smaller, that indicate how important hitting the center of any club is to more consistent and better ball striking. And this applies to all clubs, including the putter. Some professionals replace their wedges 3-4 times a season because they have not only worn out the grooves, they've also made an indentation into the club face due to hitting the center all the time.

Your objective should be to start hitting the center of each club face so over time you may see a wear spot appear the size of a quarter or better yet, a nickel. When you can accomplish that, the days of inconsistency are close to coming to an end. **GT**

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