

The next dimension

Mark Townsend gives his game the ultimate MOT at Selsdon Park's excellent Total Golf Analysis centre



THE first time I saw my swing came in 1985 when a kindly dad spent the day of the all-important 'Junior Cup' behind a hand-held video. The second was this summer at a pro-am when everyone's opening tee-shot was caught on camera. Both had similar results – squirms from me and a few unwelcome titters from others.

My last lesson had also been around the time of the first video nasty (it was the week after the Junior Cup) so, despite being mildly concerned at having my swing broken down into pieces, there would be no need to view my 1980s swing, and similar outfit, in all its glory.

And this was a lesson with a difference. This would be a 3D analysis, using the Golf BioDynamics system founded by Dr Robert Neal in Australia, so rather than having a video camera pointed at you, a collection of receivers and sensors are attached to various parts of your body and the distortion is proportional to the position of the sensor.

You would imagine a harness-type arrangement, over your back and round your head, and another sensor tucked neatly into your glove, would be restrictive but after a couple of shots you have quickly forgotten that anything is out of the ordinary and you are happily banging balls into the distance.

Total Golf Analysis (TGA) is another example of the direction in which Selsdon Park, near Croydon, is moving. The course was left to its own devices under previous management but over the past two years it has been revamped and revitalised, with the teaching facilities following suit.

The TGA team, made up of Stewart Corstorphine and Mark Bull, possess a wealth of teaching experience and expertise and, as importantly, relay the information in an easy-to-digest manner. After a dozen or so shots a report has been compiled and divided into four sections: Set-up foundations, backswing, downswing and dynamics.

Under each section there are headings like alignment, tilting and body speeds and these are broken down into 'corridors'. These are the parameters that a person of your height, sex and age should fall into and the ideal 'swing model' is taken from those of professionals studied on the European and Australasian Tours. These are then measured to one degree or one millimetre so any problems in your action will soon be magnified.

The colour coding for the report is green for good, amber for nearly there and red for major issues. Mine started off with a mixture of greens and ambers before descending into a mist of reds due to, among other things, my head barely moving throughout the swing, my body being under-rotated and my hips not shifting. My timing sequence also made for unique analysis – what should have read (in order that peak speeds occur in the downswing) hips-shoulders-hands – came out instead as shoulders-hands-hips!

Another aspect where I came up well short on

was the X-factor and the X-factor stretch. The first is a term coined by leading teacher Jim McLean and describes the rotation of pelvis and torso during the swing while the latter is the increased stretch at the start of the downswing. These can only be measured in 3D and the X-factor stretch is a good indicator of a skilled player – ideally you would want to be scoring between -15 to -25°. My figure sadly read -2°.

Onwards and upwards, we set about 'engaging the pelvis, lower bum and stomach muscles more' together with an improved forward bend at address. Like anything new it felt a bit alien but after a short time, and some gentle persuasion, things started to fall into place and more corridors were found.

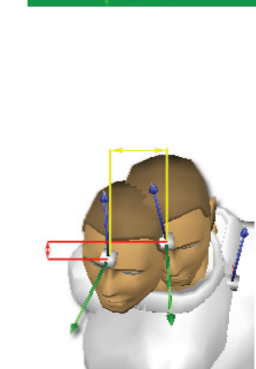
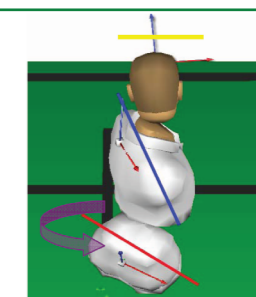
The second report made for slightly more pleasing reading and a few more greens had begun to appear. Furthermore, my timing sequence was now more in line with the rest of the golfing planet.

Another interesting aspect of the day came within the first 10 minutes when I was told what my main physical limitations were and where, exactly, any parts of my body which might be a cause for concern. All were spot on and a set of exercises were passed on to help with these long-standing problems.

All of this was completed in less than an hour. Every last degree or millimetre was explained in a clear, easy-to-understand way with the positives of an ancient golf swing accentuated while the negatives were not seen as impossible obstacles to overcome.

You would think that it would be easy to get lost in a load of 'technical talk' which is aimed at just a lucky few who play off low single figures but it's not. Anyone with a passion for the game and a desire to improve will get a huge amount from a visit to Selsdon Park.

Rotations		
	Corridor	You
Hip Turn	-35 to -45°	-38 Closed
Shoulder Turn	-85 to -95°	-84 Closed
X-Factor	-40 to -50°	-46 Closed
X-Factor Stretch	-15 to -25°	-2 Closed
Head Turn	-20 to -40°	-13 Closed
Stability		
	Corridor	You
Head sway (Address to top)	3 to 4½"	0.1 Away
Head lift (Address to top)	-1½ to ½"	0.3 Up
Head thrust (Address to top)	-½ to ½"	1.8 Forward
Hip drop (Address to top)	-1½ to ½"	-1.1 Down
Hip sway (Address to top)	-1½ to -3"	-3.8 Toward



FACTFILE

For more information on Selsdon Park, visit www.selsdonparkgolf.co.uk or call **0208 768 3116**. To learn more about Total Golf Analysis visit www.totalgolfanalysis.co.uk