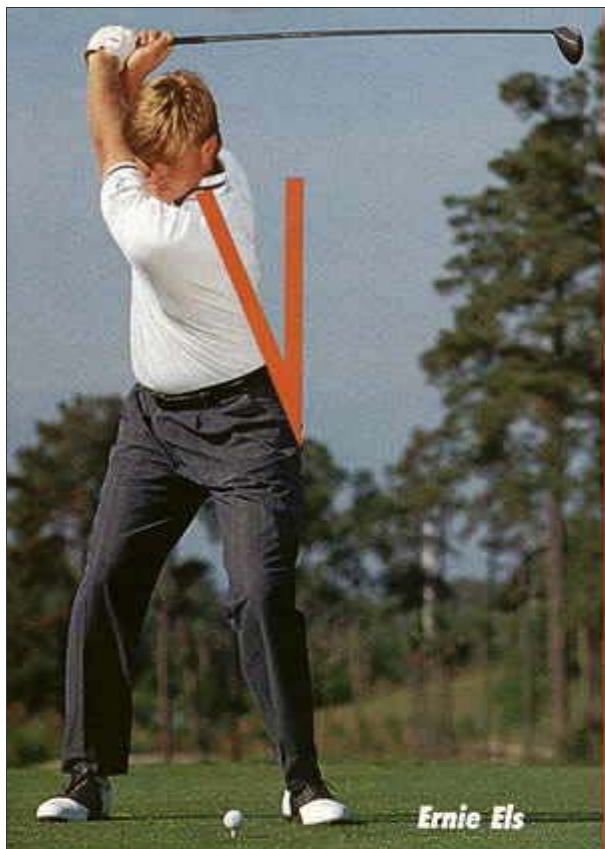


'V' For Power – widen the angle and you'll hit the ball farther

By Kip Puterbaugh

Golf Digest Cover Story – November 1994



Ernie Els



Greg Norman

COVER STORY

V FOR POWER

Widen the angle
and you'll hit the ball farther

BY KIP PUTERBAUGH
with John Huggan



It seems to me golf teachers are divided into two camps when it comes to discussing the backswing: those who state you must shift your weight to get "behind" the ball, and those who advocate swinging around a "fixed" spine. Neither is correct. If you want to hit powerful, consistent shots you must *rotate* your torso and *move* your spine.

The torso and the spine must play active roles in your backswing. If you make too much of an effort to keep your eyes and upper body static, you'll create a reverse weight shift, your weight on your left side at the top. Equally harmful is letting your hips and head slide laterally to the right in a vain attempt to make that aforementioned "weight shift" or to "get behind the ball."

If you want to get into the correct position at the top of the backswing, you must create a "V" (*left*). All great players do. The six you see here have done so by *rotating* their hips. There is no hint of lateral movement. As my pupil, tour pro Scott Simpson, demonstrates (*overleaf*), turning the hips and lower spine forces the upper body to rotate and transfers your weight to the right side automatically. Your head, upper spine and shoulders are also free to move and rotate. The end result: Your spine is angled to the right. Combine that angle with a vertical line from your left hip and you have your "V." The wider it is, the closer you are to hitting the ball as far as you can.

Puterbaugh is director of instruction, Aviana Golf Academy, Carlsbad, Calif.

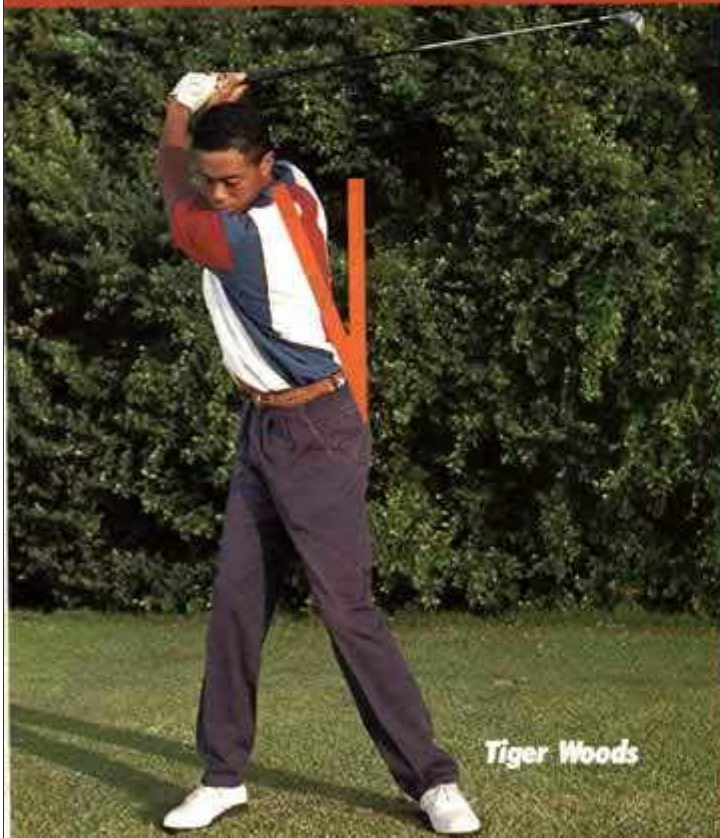
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Nick Price



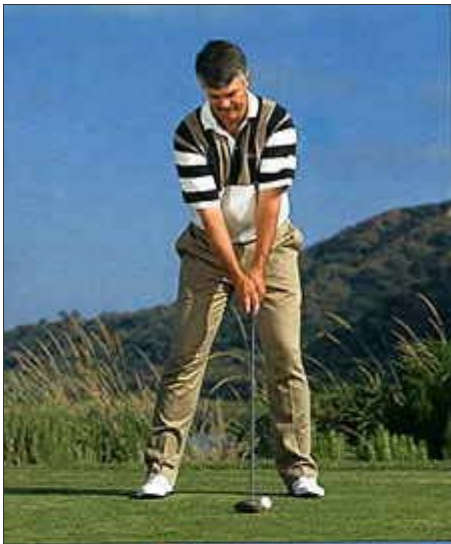
John Daly



Tiger Woods

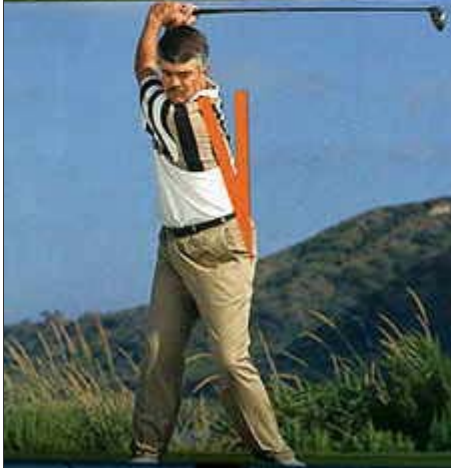


Laura Davies



Left hip higher than right

Good swings—and big “Vs”—start from sound address positions. Set up “behind” the ball as Scott Simpson does. His spine is tilted to his right, so it can rotate properly.



Turn shoulders and hips to create ‘V’

Scott has been able to create quite a sizable “V” at the top of his backswing by focusing on two things: turning his hips around while his shoulders rotate over to the right side.

Weight too far left

Here I’m leaning way too far left, my right hip higher than my left. With my hips and spine placed incorrectly, it will be hard to create the proper rotation of the torso.



No ‘V’ in reverse pivot

Because my weight started so far left, I haven’t been able to get “into” my right side at the top. So there isn’t any “V.” My chances of hitting the ball solidly

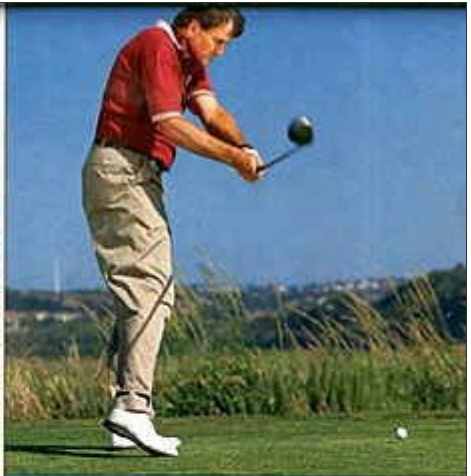


Lower body leads

By starting down with his lower body—which can only be done if a “V” has been created—Scott has shallowed the angle on which the clubhead approaches impact.

Here comes a slice

My downswing was initiated by my upper body throwing the clubhead out and over. I’m going to hit the outside of the ball a glancing blow. I’ll lose both distance and accuracy.

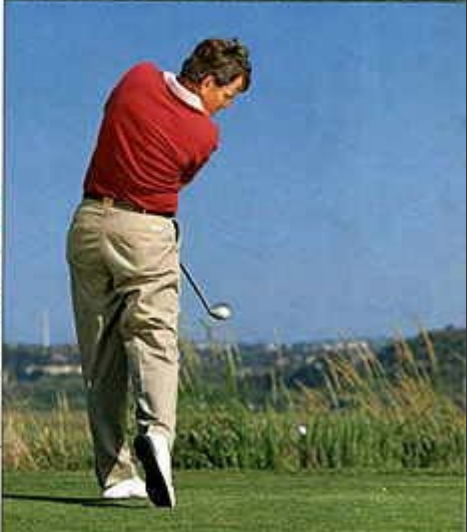


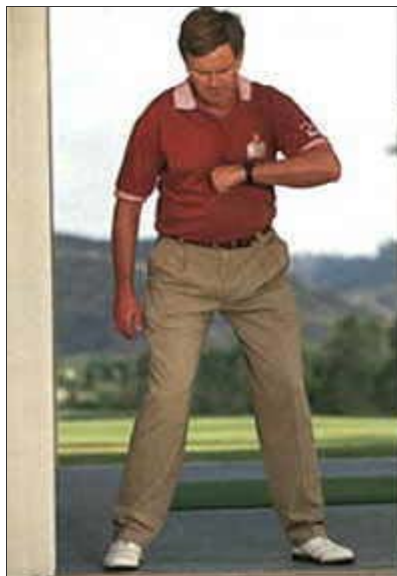
Swing—don’t hit

The end result for Scott is that he can swing the clubhead through impact. Because of all the good moves he has made, he knows the ball will fly straight—and far.

A glancing blow

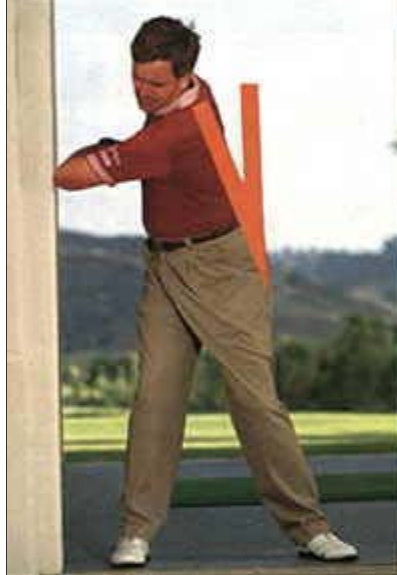
In contrast, I have tried to *hit* at the ball, the clubhead traveling across the target line from out to in. When you do that, the shot invariably starts left and slices. Not good.





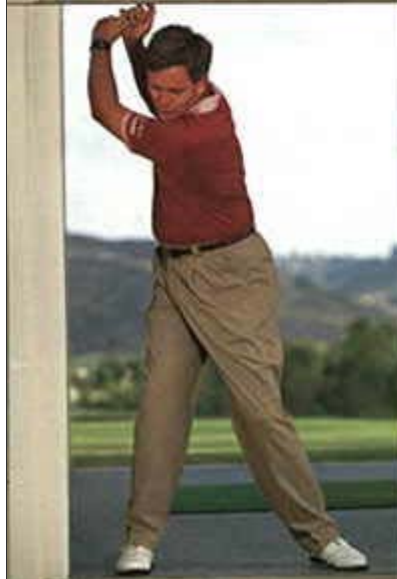
Start with thumb in chest

So far I've told you to make a big "V" at the top and I've shown you the benefits you'll derive from it. Now you need to know how it *feels*. Stand as if at address, a wall about three inches outside your right foot. Then place your left thumb against your sternum. Let your right arm hang naturally.



Turn until elbow touches wall

Turn your shoulders until your left elbow touches the wall. Forget about everything else. If you're like most people, the first time you try this drill you'll find yourself in the best top-of-the-backswing position you've ever been in. And more to the point, your "V" will be as big as it's ever been.



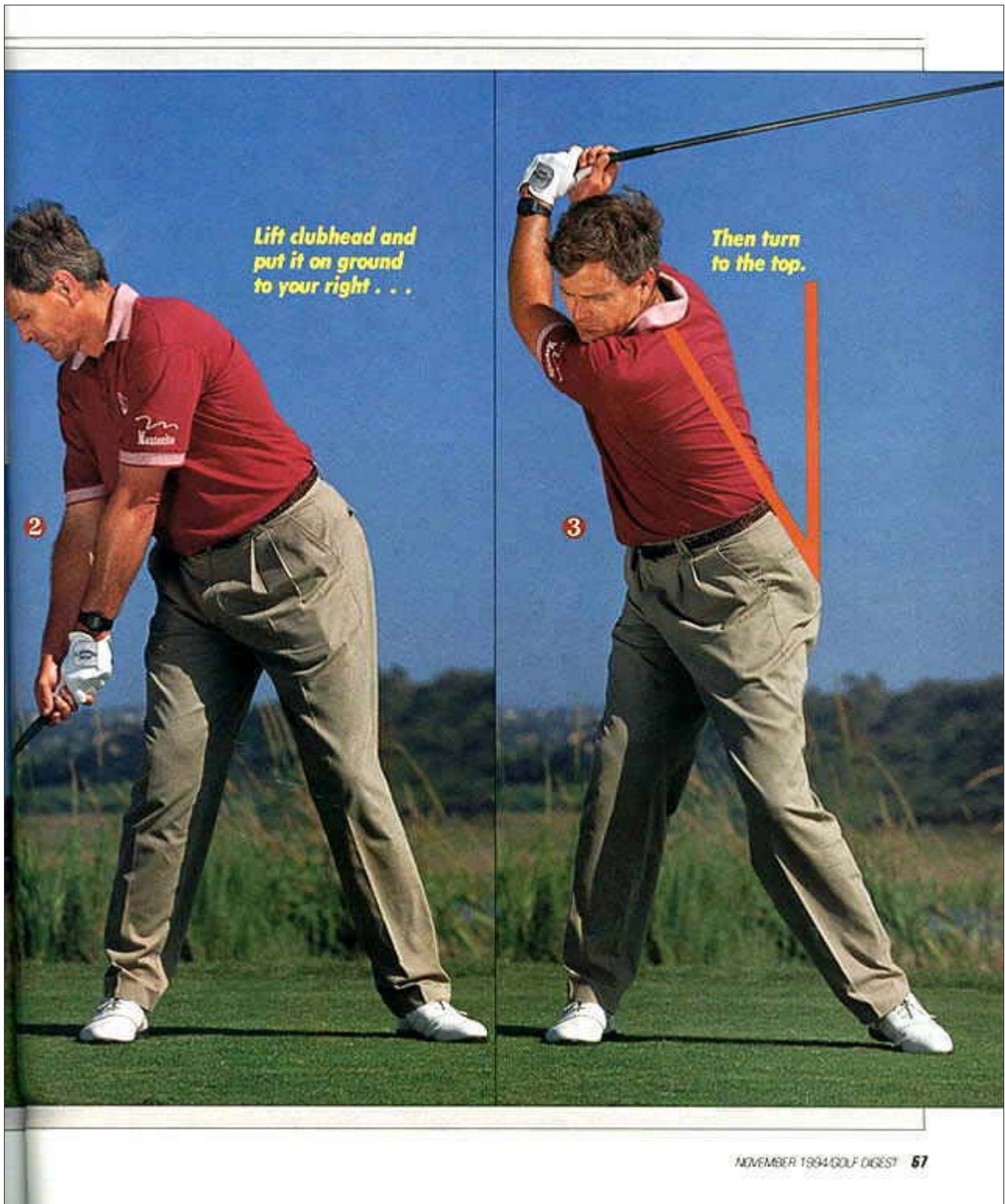
Simulate the 'top'

When your elbow touches the wall, hold your position, then lift your arms as if holding a club at the top of the backswing. Focus on how your head has moved a little to the right, how your shoulders are fully turned and how your weight has coiled into the inner part of your right thigh.

Break backswing into two pieces

This drill will further ingrain the feel of a proper backswing and allow you to make the biggest "V" you can. ❶ Without a ball, start from address. ❷ Then lift the clubhead off the ground a little, move it over to your right and replace it on the turf. How far? Just far enough that you can see where the clubhead was out of the corner of your left eye. ❸ Now turn your shoulders as if making a backswing. The club will be in perfect position at the top. And look at the size of the "V" you have created. You can hit the ball a long way from there. ■





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