The Approach - Lesson 5

Playing situations often demand a less than full swing execution. Upon approaching the green, emphasis in the swing must shift from long range power to short range accuracy. To achieve this only a degree of the full swing need be used, with the objective of lofting the ball through the air, onto the green and rolling it toward the cup. Such a shortened swing transcribes a given degree of the full swing arc, depending upon club selected and distance the ball must travel. Characteristics of basic swinging movement are preserved—a constant arc and plane with the same back-and-through rhythm of the full swing—but this time over a shorter distance. No longer is there need for the full body coil so essential for power in the full swing. Instead we want to feel a more compact, controlled swinging action through the upper body while maintaining greater stability in the lower body.

In Figure 47 note the triangle formed by the shoulders, arms and hands which is retained throughout the stroke. The movement thus becomes a pendular action.

To help accomplish this feeling adjustments must be made first in the address position. Note in both front and side views of figures 48 and 49 the apparent changes from the full swing in stance, grip placement and body position. Stance is narrowed, hands are closer to the body and gripping farther down the shaft (Fig. 49A), allowing the body to settle into a more compact position ready to execute a portion of the full swing.

Let us learn the pendular swing technique. Address routine and stroke execution follow the same pattern of movement as that for full swing described in Lessons three and four. When assuming your narrowed stance flare the target foot outward as before, so that the ball is now positioned opposite the target heel. Feel your body weight along the inner borders of both feet but favoring the target side. This adjustment of weight will automatically move the hands slightly ahead of the clubhead to insure a crisp descending hit through the ball. Notice in Figure 48 how repositioning the hands has moved the familiar triangle of hands and arms forward, creating a feeling of target side dominance and leadership which will be felt throughout the entire swing.

During stroke execution, feel your shoulders moving the triangle firmly away from the target while the lower body is kept relatively stable. There is a slight hinging of the rear elbow and wrists as the backswing reaches its furthest point. The forward swing is initiated and sustained by a strong pulling force from the target side which swings the triangle down along the line of flight, through the ball, and outward toward the target, where it is held firmly in that position for accuracy and control. (Fig. 47)