

No need to go into overdrive

Swinging too hard off the tee all-too-common flaw

Everybody wants to drive the golf ball better.

Not a day goes by at my golf school that I don't hear, "I'm hitting my irons pretty well, but I'm struggling with my driver."

Everybody wants to hit their driver farther and more consistently, but there are some things you must remember.

First, understand that hitting your driver consistently well is not easy. Even the best players in the world hit only between 50% and 70% of the fairways with their driver. Most golfers need to seriously re-evaluate their expectations.

Over-rotating

To drive the ball consistently well, you'll need a properly fit driver, a pretty good swing and plenty of practice. Hitting a little round ball straight with a four-foot-long club that is moving 100 miles an hour takes some work.

Second, most golfers have it all wrong when it comes to swinging a driver. Almost everyone is trying too hard to hit the ball farther.

Golfers are over-rotating, they're lifting, they're shifting, they're tilting, they're doing all kinds of crazy things trying to generate speed. The truth is most golfers are actually doing too much. I spend my days simplifying swings, not adding motion or moving parts to them.



KEVIN HAIME
Tee It Up

Here are some keys to hitting your driver longer and straighter:

The setup

Your driver swing is different than every other swing because your ball is teed up two to three inches off the ground. You need to hit the ball on the upswing to launch it into the air.

Make sure to position the ball opposite your forward heel and keep your weight in the middle of your stance. Your forward ear should be five to six inches behind the ball and your hands should be at least that far behind the ball.

Try to keep everything centered and balanced. Lastly, don't reach for the ball. Your hands should be the same distance from your slacks that they are with a 5-iron.

Watch your legwork

Quiet legs are a real secret to consistency. Make sure both of your legs stay flexed during your backswing so they can stabilize you and keep you athletic.

Straightening the back leg during the backswing is a driver swing killer. You

just can't pivot forward off a straight leg. Also, keep your feet on the ground. Dancing feet always lead to too much motion. When it comes to your legs and feet, stay flexed and grounded.

Don't overturn

Power in the golf swing is based on flexibility and torque. When you swing your driver, turn your shoulders, but try not to turn your hips too much.

Turning your upper body against a flexed back leg creates leverage so you can unwind with speed and power. Most long hitters only turn their hips 30-40 degrees in their backswing. If your belt buckle is moving more than six inches in your backswing, it's too much. A big hip turn may feel productive, but it's a power killer.

Maintain your posture

It's really important not to lift or shift during your backswing. When golfers try to overswing, they stand up, slide and even tilt instead of winding up like a spring. Just turn your front shoulder under your chin and you're in the right position. It sounds pretty simple, because it is. If you stay in your posture as you turn, you'll feel wound up and ready for power.

Control your arm swing

Try not to overswing as



FILE PHOTO

Tiger Woods displays the form that has helped him win more majors than anyone but Jack Nicklaus. His backswing is textbook, his lower body is quiet and flexed, his hip rotation is moderate and his arms are connected perfectly, while both elbows point down.

you swing your arms up over your back shoulder. Keep your elbows pointed down and keep them close together.

Most golfers overswing when it comes to their arms. Some players lift their arms

and even more wrap their arms in behind their head.

At the top of your swing, your arms should be in front of your chest, not pulled across your chest and in behind you. It's really tough to deliver the

club to the ball if your arms are in a wacky position.

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Piece of U.S. golf history on the market for \$4.5M

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — West Virginia's Oakhurst Links is up for sale — the birthplace of American golf, where sheep roam the fairways and modern technology takes a back seat to hickory-shafted clubs.

Owner Lewis Keller said that after 50 years, it's time for someone else to oversee the White Sulphur Springs course that held its first competition in 1884.

The asking price for the nine-hole course and its

museum — \$4.5 million US.

Keller hopes a new owner can be found to maintain Oakhurst Links in its current playable state.

"I think I've been custodian long enough," Keller, 86, said Friday. "I think a new one would step up and it would be very nice."

Oakhurst Links is on the National Register of Historic Places. It has been closed to public play this year, although a tournament was held earlier

this summer.

It's the history that makes Oakhurst Links worth the trip.

Visitors are required to use replica hickory clubs, hit gutta-percha balls moulded from the sap of the sapodilla tree, and form tees from a mound of wet sand. Electric carts are unavailable.

Keller first learned about Oakhurst Links in the early 1950s from friend and golf pro Sam Snead, who lived just across the Virginia bor-

der. It was first owned by Russell Montague, who became addicted to golf while studying in Great Britain.

As Keller tells it, Montague's doctor advised him in 1878 to move from Boston to a healthier climate. Montague chose White Sulphur Springs, partly because of stories about its so-called healing waters.

Montague and a small group of colleagues built the course and held the first golf competition around 1884 in

the Scottish match play tradition.

Founders moved

Montague and most of the original members eventually moved away. Play on the course stopped after 1910. The course faded until Keller, a New York native, bought the property in 1959.

Keller had a vision about restoring the course but didn't act until some coaxing from golf writer Dick Taylor. Golf

designer Bob Cupp heard about the course and volunteered with the restoration.

Work started in 1991 and was done by hand, with newspaper and magazine clippings and course photos serving as guides. The 2,235-yard course reopened in October 1994.

Keller said the course's preservation is key to the sale.

"We personally feel it's very important to our state, our town and everyone in golf," he said. — The Associated Press