

Your weekly
golf lesson
in the Sun



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TeeItUp

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Putting it all together

...just like former Illinois teammate and PGA star Steve Stricker

Steve Stricker has won twice on the PGA Tour this year and is ranked second in FedEx Cup points. He's won more than \$21 million in his career, and played on two President's Cup teams and a Ryder Cup team.

Pretty impressive stuff.

He owes most of his success to his putting.

I know firsthand because we were teammates at the University of Illinois. I played more than 100 rounds with Stricker and saw up close how putting can lower scores.

None of us on the team ever felt out of place playing with Stricker, even though he always beat us.

A putt or two per round made him an all-American and separated him from the competition.

Better putting makes a difference at every skill level, even for average golfers. It's the easiest way to lower your scores because the putting stroke is a lot simpler than the golf swing and requires no physical strength or flexibility.

I also preach that your putts are your most important shots during a round of golf because you can recover from a bad shot, but you can't recover from a missed putt. You just add a stroke to your score and move to the next hole.

There are a few things all great putters, including Stricker, do well. Here are four things to work on if you want to improve your putting and shoot lower scores:

1. Take aim

At least four out of five golfers I work with at my school have poor aim. It's pretty hard to ever make a putt if

you don't aim properly. Great putters are meticulous about how they aim their putter and place their ball. I recommend you draw an alignment aid on your ball and always set your putter behind the ball before you set your body into position.

2. It's all in the wrists

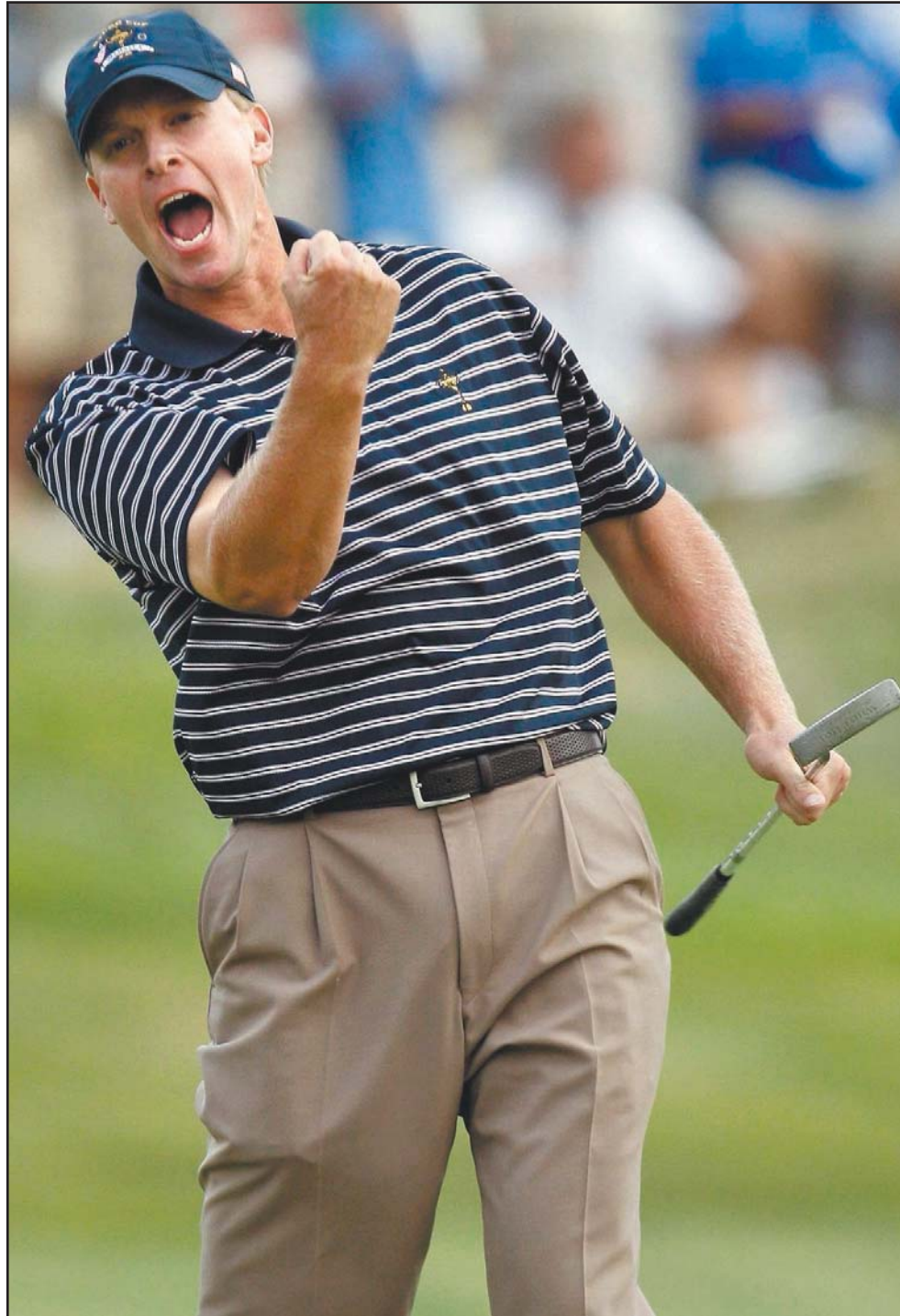
Great putters swing the putter with their arms and shoulders. Next time you watch Stricker putt, pay close attention to his hands and wrists. They look soft on the putter. Your wrists and hands must remain neutral during the stroke — no wrist rotation or hinging.

3. Stay still

Most golfers are over-anxious to see where their ball ends up, so they lift their head too quickly or even turn their body before their putting stroke is finished. Movement is a stroke killer. It will cause your putter to either open or close, and could even cause a miss-hit. You'll get much better results if you keep your body still and keep head down until your putting stroke is finished.

4. Pace yourself

Mechanics and aim are important in putting, but nothing is more important than controlling the distance you roll the ball. Many more three-putts are caused with poor distance control than poor aim. The rhythm of the stroke should be the same for any length putt. The only variable in putting is the length of the stroke. Great putters like Stricker look to have a flowing stroke. Nothing ever looks forced or rushed.



FILE PHOTO

Steve Stricker, celebrating after making a key putt at last year's Ryder Cup, ranked sixth this year in putts per round on the PGA Tour with an average of only 28.06.

Top putter models to look for

Ping Redwood

Ping founder Karsten Solheim engineered and designed many of the top putters used in golf today. Ping's high-end Redwood series putters are available in five models. They are 100% milled putters made from very soft 303 stainless steel. Classic shapes and terrific feel make Redwood putters a top pick.

Scotty Cameron

Scotty Cameron is the putter designer to the stars.

More professional golfers use Cameron putters than any others. His Studio Select Series putters are a can't-miss choice. Cameron putters are also precision milled and made from 303 stainless steel.

Odyssey Two Ball Putter

If you're looking for more of a mallet design, check out Odyssey putters. The Two Ball design is by far the most popular putter design of recent times. Annika Sorenstam won all of her titles using this classic putter. Odyssey now makes

many other models, but you can't beat the original Two Ball.

TaylorMade Rossa Monza Spider

The mother of all mallet putters. If you're looking for a very forgiving putter and prefer a mallet style, check out the Spider, or slightly smaller Itsy Bitsy Spider models. The Spider's steel wire-frame head construction adds stability on miss-hits. It won't suit everyone's eye, but it does put a really nice roll on your ball.

GOLF ROUNDUP

wrapup of yesterday's action

Back-nine 29 gets Fritsch in hunt

Brad Fritsch has waited all year to be in this position. The 31-year-old Manotick native is finally in contention heading into a final round.

Fritsch fired a sizzling 7-under 64 yesterday — tied for low round of the day — and is one shot back of leader Lucas Lee, who also shot 64, at the \$200,000 Canadian Tour Players Cup in Winnipeg.

Fritsch's third round was an eventful one. He hit only six fairways, but rallied to fire a 29 on the back nine.

"I didn't hit many fairways, but I had the putter rolling, for sure," said Fritsch, who shot 68-73 in the first two rounds. "It's the first time I've done it (broke 30 on nine holes), but it wasn't something I thought about until I knocked it in on the last."

Fritsch, who lives in Raleigh, N.C., area and plays mostly on the Nationwide Tour, has his eyes on a bigger prize.

"I'm not in the Canadian Open (next week) and I want to be. I came here to win. It's been since last summer since I've contended, so it will be interesting.

"I've never won out here and I'd like to, especially because of the Canadian Open exemption. There's nothing to lose."

Ottawa's Quinn 3rd

At Stateline, Nev., NHL Hall of Famer **Grant Fuhr** had two eagles and seven-time champion **Rick Rhoden** birdied five of the last seven holes to tie for the second-round lead at the American Century Celebrity Golf Championship. Both shot a 5-under 67 for a two-day total of 56 points in the modified Stableford scoring system. Cowboys QB **Tony Romo**, the first-round leader with 27 points, slipped back into a tie with former NHLer **Dan Quinn** — an Ottawa native — with a total of 49 points.

— Sun staff, wire services

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