

Unlock your power potential

One of the biggest sources of power in the golf swing is the ground beneath your feet. Learn how to use it and you can add yards to every drive

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Sports science has identified the optimal movement pattern to create power. It is basically a speeding then slowing of body segments, each transferring increasing force to the next. Rory McIlroy does it better than anyone – and that's why he's one of the best drivers in the world.

It works from your big core muscles outward into the hands, arms and club. The more efficiently you can use those core muscles, the more force, speed and power you can create.

And the way to get these big core muscles properly engaged is to use the ground. Work the turf correctly and you recruit the biggest muscles in your body, the thighs (quads), stomach (abs) and rear (glutes), allowing you to harness this powerful movement sequence.

This feature will show you how to do just that. Put its tips and drills into action and you'll be pleasantly surprised – and perhaps a little miffed – to discover how much of your power was going untapped.

USING THE GROUND IS EASY!

For a less sciency way to understand what using the ground means, let's forget golf for a moment and focus on two simple actions – throwing a ball, or hitting one with a bat.

In both activities we use the ground instinctively, coiling down and against it to create and store force, before pushing off it aggressively to build speed.

You naturally push off from the correct parts of your feet, the ones that recruit the correct muscles to create a powerful chain reaction. In both activities the release of the ball or bat comes last and fastest in the sequence, just as you want in a powerful golf swing.

Using the ground like this in the golf swing doesn't come quite so naturally, perhaps because the club swings up and away from it, often weakening our connection with the turf. So over these six pages we will work through four key swing positions to explain how you can enhance your relationship with the turf... and release your power potential.



Set-up: How to feel balanced and ready

Using the ground properly starts at address, by creating a balanced and grippy relationship with the turf. Achieving this is all about your weight under the right parts of your feet. Do this and you will not only feel more stable – you will also be readying those big leg and core muscles for action. Here are two ways to achieve that, and how they fit in to your overall set-up position.

Hips over your ankles

A well balanced address puts your hips over your ankles. Ensure your knee flex retains that feeling of readiness. Overbend them and the muscles become tensed and immobile.



Lift your toes to spread your weight

To feel the correct weight distribution through your feet, curl your toes up off the ground inside your shoes. You'll feel weight spreading evenly through each foot, centred under the laces or where your foot is widest.



Underneath the arches

You can also use a balancing rod, a practice aid now widely available. Stand so the rod is under the arches of both feet; again, this will help you find that spread-out distribution, weight neither in the toes or heels. A shaft can do a similar job.

Feel ready to explode

Coaches like to talk about a feeling of 'readiness' at address. The feeling is of being grounded and balanced, but also alive and ready to move. When you place your weight evenly under the arches of both feet, you should feel a state of slight tension in your lower leg muscles.

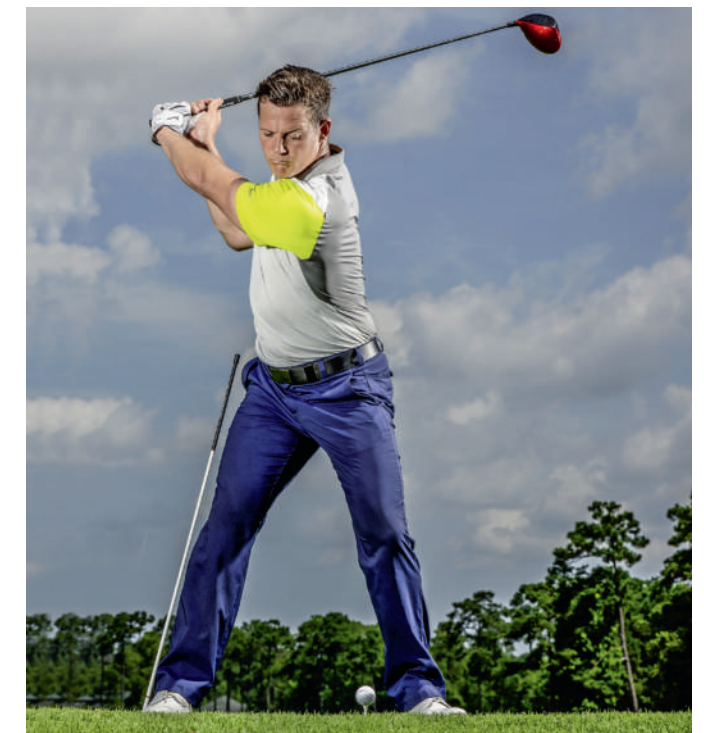
Backswing: Feel your ground pressure increase

During the backswing, the ground can build power by helping you create a powerful coil. If you were swinging on ice, backswing rotation would see your back foot and hip corkscrew; the ground keeps your back foot

locked, restricting knee and hip rotation and building torque. Hogan famously added a stud in his right shoe to increase the effect. But it will only do this if you shift weight into the correct part of the back foot.



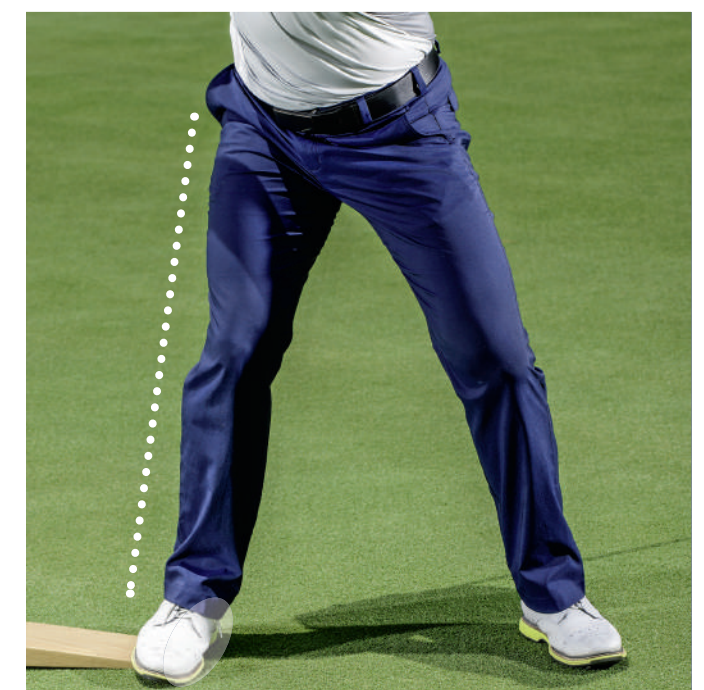
Use a cane Stick an alignment cane or old shaft into the ground, just off your back foot. Make sure it's angled to follow the line of your back leg at address. Take your address position, feeling weight under the arches of both feet.



Swing back, making sure your trail hip rotates within the cane. At the top, your back leg should have retained its set-up angle. Feel pressure build under the inside of the back foot. This move activates your leg muscles, priming them to play their part in the downswing power sequence.



Wedge your foot For a second way to feel where your weight needs to be at the top to use the resistance offered by the ground, place a piece of wood or an old grip under the outside of your trail foot. It will pitch your weight forwards onto the inside of the foot.

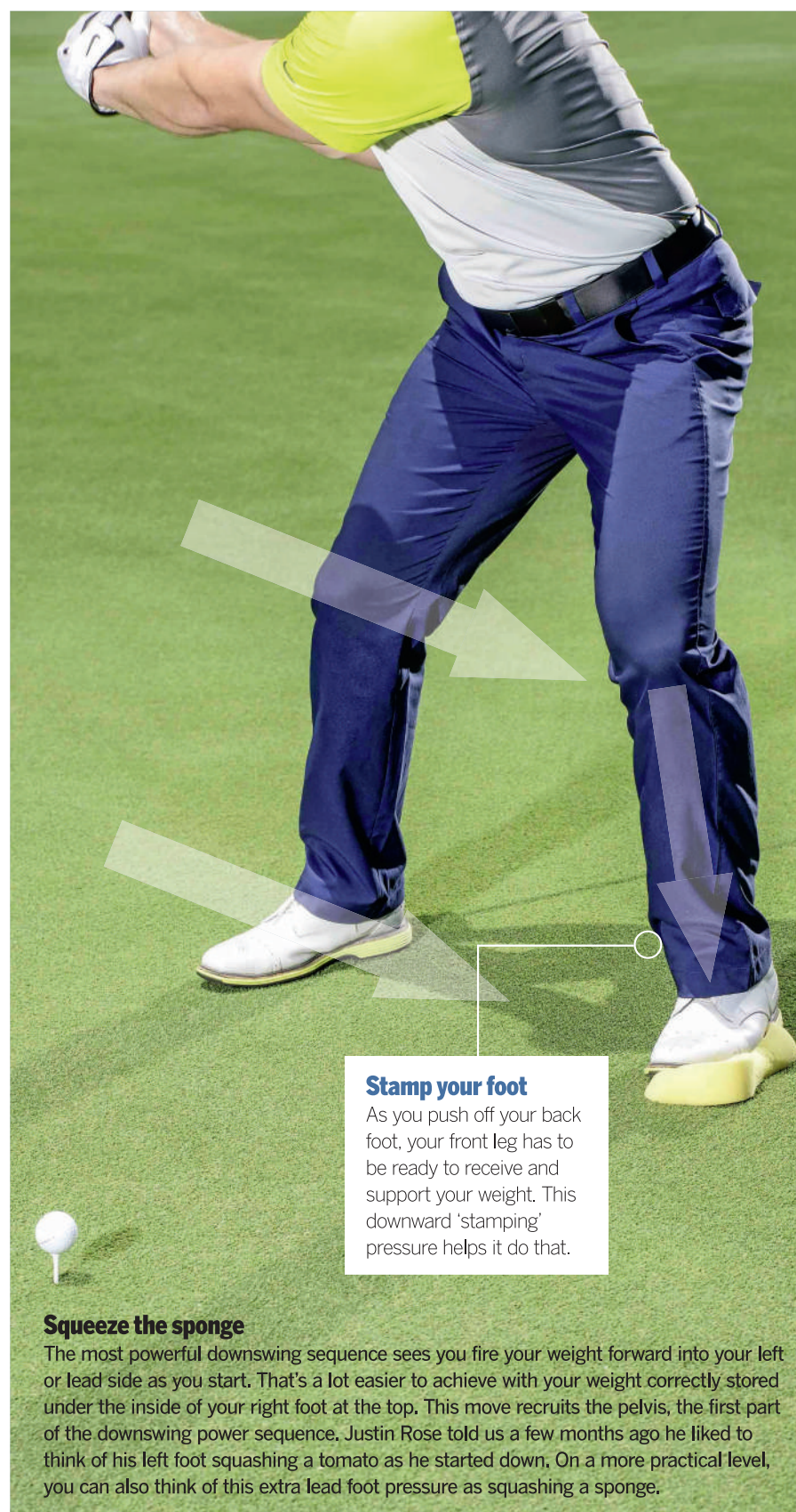


Make your backswing, feeling how the wedge holds the weight on to the inside of the foot. Make yourself aware too of how you feel much more coiled and powerful when it is. Allow the weight to shift into the outside of your trail foot and you can build no ground pressure.

First move down: Push off against the ground

Setting your weight into the inside of your back foot at the top does not just help create powerful coil; it also gives you something to push forward from to start the downswing... like a sprinter pushing off the

blocks. This push from the ground sets your weight and momentum working forwards, the key to creating a power. It also promotes the power sequence with the lower core muscles leading your upper half.

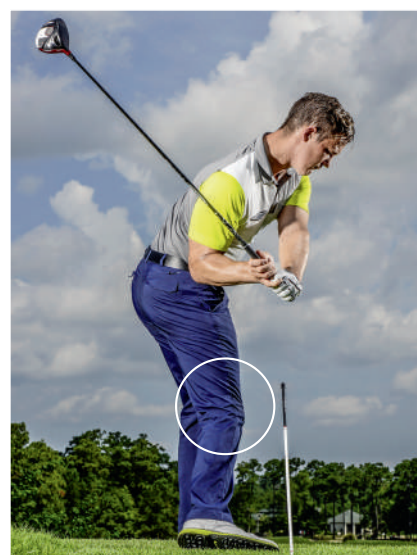


Stamp your foot

As you push off your back foot, your front leg has to be ready to receive and support your weight. This downward 'stamping' pressure helps it do that.

Squeeze the sponge

The most powerful downswing sequence sees you fire your weight forward into your left or lead side as you start. That's a lot easier to achieve with your weight correctly stored under the inside of your right foot at the top. This move recruits the pelvis, the first part of the downswing power sequence. Justin Rose told us a few months ago he liked to think of his left foot squashing a tomato as he started down. On a more practical level, you can also think of this extra lead foot pressure as squashing a sponge.



Right knee moves to the target

As you push off your trail instep to start the downswing, feel that weight shift into your lead side towards the target, never towards the ball. Your trail knee should work down the target line, towards the lead knee. Check this by placing a cane or shaft on your toe line, parallel to the ball target line and angled up past your knees. Your trail knee should work within it.



Avoid the dreaded 'disco legs'

Beware of letting that drive off your back foot take your weight out, towards the ball. Your upper half instinctively straightens to create some balance, thrusting your hips forwards, and pulling you off-plane. Watch for your trail knee working out towards the cane/shaft and your back heel lifting.

Moment of impact: Keep moving forwards

The work we've just done on starting the downswing – pushing off the back instep, weight moving to the target – sets up an efficient power sequence. As the back knee drives forward, the hips rotate and the lead leg

begins to straighten, providing support for the strike. As the power chain unfolds, the pelvis passes its power to the chest, and from there to your hands and arms. This is how to ensure the weight keeps driving forwards.



Weight shift down the target line

As an intention, feel the length of your trail instep is still in contact with the ground at impact. Your lead heel is now taking most of the weight. This footwork ensures strong, aggressive weight shift down the target line.



Tee up a ball to check your position

Check you're moving correctly by teeing up a ball against your trail ankle. When the foot rolls on to its instep properly, the heel moves away from the ball. Knocking the ball off is a sure sign your weight has stayed back.

Weight into lead heel

Good weight movement sees your weight move into your lead heel as the hips rotate. Justin Rose also says he feels his left toe is off the ground at impact – that's a good feeling to create.

