

Articles and Tips - The Zach Attack



◀ This is one of my favorite times of the year. Azaleas blooming, golf weather returns in earnest and the pros play a major championship like no other, the Masters. I learned this month's tip from last year's Masters champion, Zach Johnson.

He gave me the drill at the Mercedes Championship in 2005, and many of my students have been using it effectively ever since. The Mercedes marks the start of the PGA Tour season with an elite field of only the PGA Tour winners from the previous year. I was on the range in Maui watching Ryan Palmer on a practice round day. Zach Johnson asked me to take a look at him; by his own omission he was struggling with hitting balls on the sweet spot of his club face. He was a little stressed because he was minutes away from being photographed for a full-page, frame-by-frame, pull-out feature in Golf Digest, and his coach, Mike Bender, was not there.

I had my laptop and camera, shot a few swings and loved what he was doing with the exception of his hip movement in the takeaway. I helped him stabilize his lower body, and the photo shoot went well.

Whenever I'm around great players, I love to pick their brains. I ask them what they think about, what they've done to develop their progress as players, both mentally and physically. I asked Zach these questions and he ended up giving me this drill—I call it "The Zach Attack."

Mike Bender had Zach do it in his early years when Zach was playing mini-tour events. From the comfort of his hotel rooms, Zach worked on his backswing every night with this drill.



◀ Here's how it works: Stand at a right angle to the wall with your forward foot 6 inches from the baseboard. Grip a 7-iron upside down and take your swing to the top so the grip end touches the wall. In order to get the grip end to touch the wall, you need proper spine direction in rotation, as well as correct width in your arms and wrist hinge. At first, try this drill slowly and experience where the wall is in relation to your awareness of it. With this drill, most people hit the wall a lot sooner than they think and have little awareness to the length and width of their backswing. Three symptoms of a narrow backswing with poor spine direction in rotation lead will lead golfers to abruptly and repeatedly hitting the wall with the grip end of the club: 1) If the spine direction moves forward during the swing; 2) if the arms out-swing the body at the top; 3) if the wrists over-hinge.

With any combination of those three swing faults, you'll hit the wall harder and even more quickly.

If you find that you can't find the wall—you don't hit it at all at the top of your swing—then your swing is too lateral in rotation and/or there's not enough wrist hinge.

The Zach Attack drill will help you develop a wide position at the top of the backswing and create power on the downswing. It'll allow you to get the club from the inside with the amount of proper lag, which leads to a powerful, controlled draw ball flight.