

Peter Thompson

“The Golf Expert”

Speed Not Power

One of the worlds most powerful trucks is the Caterpillar 797B with a top speed of 42 miles per hour and a 3,500 horse power engine. A Bugatti Veyron is one of the fastest cars in the world with a top speed of 253 miles per hour and a 987 horse power engine (a little over a quarter of the Caterpillar's horse power)

Find out why these intriguing facts will help you to hit the ball further.



PGA Fellow Professional

**Peter Thompson is a Fellow of the
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Alvaros Quiros is currently the longest driver on the European Tour and the USA Tour with an average drive of 315.50 yards. To achieve these distances Alvaros creates a club head speed of 123 mph and the ball leaves the club head at a speed of 185 mph.

One of the world's most powerful trucks is the Caterpillar 797B. It has a top speed of 42 mph and has a 3,550-horse power engine. One of the fastest cars in the world is the Bugatti Veyron. It has a top speed of 253 mph and has a 987 horse power engine.

You may be wondering what this has to do with the distance a golf ball travels but it is important that a concept of speed rather than power is understood and how this relates to producing YOUR maximum distance.

I never use the word power in my lessons as it creates an illusion that strength is the dominant factor in creating distance, and whilst being strong does have advantages it is not as important as creating club head speed.

One would not describe the former world's no.1 lady golfer Lorena Ochoa as being strong or muscle-bound yet she consistently hits a golf ball far enough to be ranked the world's best lady golfer.

Interestingly she retired aged 28 and this was the same age the great Bobby Jones ceased playing competitive golf in 1930, having won, as an amateur, the British Amateur once, the British Open three times, the US Open on four occasions and the US Amateur five times.

I show all of my pupils Bobby Jones's swing as he produced great club head speed from a beautifully controlled sequence of movements. A golfing genius.

The speed of the club head is related to the weight of the golf club and also the length of the shaft. The longer the shaft the greater the club head speed and the further the ball will travel. However if the shaft is too long, especially with a driver, you will lose control of the golf club and actually lose distance.

One of my assistants experimented by adding a 12" extension to his driver. I can still recall this very able golfer attempting to hit shots with his super long driver and miss hitting almost every shot and on one occasion he missed the ball altogether. Even the shots hit in the centre of the club did not travel as far as normal. He soon abandoned the experiment but it had taught him a valuable lesson.

Over the centuries golfers have experimented with longer and shorter clubs and a length of 43" became the accepted length of a driver as it combines distance with control.

Alvaros Quiros uses a driver with a 45 ½" shaft. I would encourage all golfers to visit a club maker who will ascertain the correct length and loft angle of a driver for YOU.

We need to create club head speed but where does this come from? I have heard many thousands of times 'let the club do the work' but in reality the club does absolutely nothing, as it is a static object. The golfer has to do all of the work. A good address position and a good backswing are essential if the club head is to be moved at speed through the shot leading to a balanced finish.

Balance is vitally important to directing the club head to the ball at the correct angle as a club head moving at 100 mph in the wrong direction will not send the ball as far as a club head moving at less speed in the right direction will. The club head must contact the ball pointing exactly at the target. Your feet are your only contact with the ground and they will allow your hips, chest and arms to move correctly in the backswing and through the ball.

From the top of the backswing your hips, chest and arms should all move down together but at different speeds. There is simply not enough time to move one part of your body and then another part. I have a super slow motion swing of Tiger Woods on my excellent teaching system and I show all of my pupils the way he starts down to hit the ball. I draw circles on his knees, and lines on the club and his arms and hips, and then I move him down to the ball one frame at a time. I then ask my pupils what part of his body and club did not move and the answer is always the same: everything moves.

Tiger Woods says in the October 2008 edition of *Golf World* 'into my through swing my shoulders and hips reveal my upper body and lower body are uncoiling simultaneously. This tells me neither will have to do any catching up at impact.' Spot on Tiger.

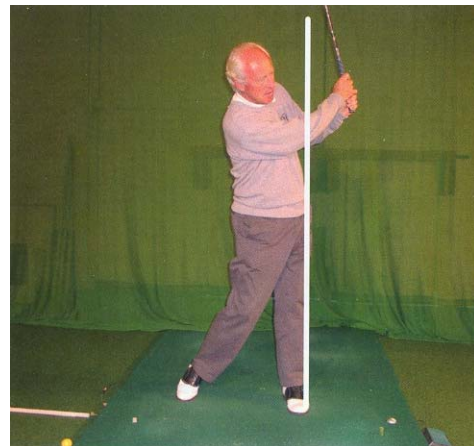
We are all different and there will always be huge differences between the longest hitters and the shortest hitters. The excellent handicap system takes this into consideration.

The longest hitters, incidentally, are never the best golfers. I had a discussion with one of my pupils, who recently had a gross 65 – 6 = net 59 in a medal at the very popular Canford Magna golf complex in Dorset, about the longest hitters on the European and US golf tours and I quoted the names of the five longest hitters on each tour.

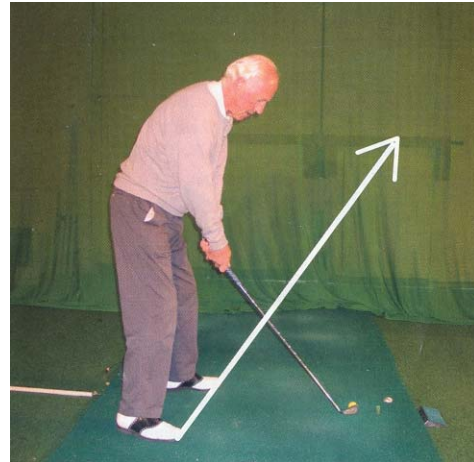
Out of the ten names he had only heard of three of them!

It is not a good idea to strive for more and more distance and if a magic formula became available to add 10% more distance to a drive then a person with an average drive of 200 yards would then average 210 yards, and a player who averaged 300 yards would then average 330 yards and be even further ahead.

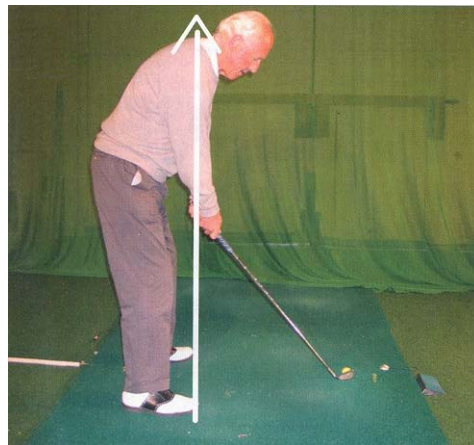
Photograph No. 1 shows my toes pointing to the right of the target line and from this stance it is physically impossible to move the club head directly to the target at impact, as you cannot turn correctly.



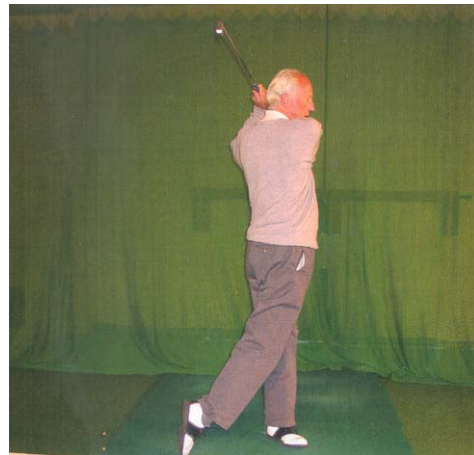
Photograph No.2 shows a very restricted turn through the shot as a result of the poor alignment of the feet so there is a loss of club head speed and the club head cannot be moved down the target line.



Photograph No. 3 shows my toes pointing to the left of the target line and from here I can turn freely, creating tremendous club head speed through the e shot with the club head moving directly along the target line at and beyond impact.



Photograph No.4 shows a beautifully balanced finish as a result of the toes pointing to left of the target line at address.



The faster you can turn through the further the ball will go. Think of the speed a discus thrower generates prior to letting go of the discus.

Lorena Ochoa has a swing thought of turning continuously from the backswing to the finish. This a great swing thought. The late Leslie King taught the movement from address to the finish before teaching the backswing to ensure his pupils moved the club head through rather than at the ball. I often use the same technique.

Conclusion

Think speed rather than power and imagine a Bugatti Veyron rather than a Caterpillar.

A good technique is crucial. As a fellow coach once said: “Anyone who thinks psychology is more important than a good technique ought to see a Psychiatrist”.

I wish I had said that - it is so true.

Remember the club and ball are static, so you are in complete control.

Best Wishes and Keep Golfing