

Peter Thompson

“The Golf Expert”

The Swing Shape

Peter explains how the Concorde, the Spitfire and a Jumbo Jet are used to explain the shape of a golf swing. His unique 100-degree line will also be used.



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The Swing Shape

The swing shape is my term for a normal golf swing.

You might think that everyone has a different swing shape but you would be wrong, as there is a definitive swing shape which nearly all great golfers use.

Before we can describe the shape of the golf swing we need to understand what the word shape actually means.

The dictionary describes a shape as **‘the external form or appearance of someone or something; the outline of an area or figure’**

Outline is the keyword.

Imagine the basic outline of the magnificent supersonic aeroplane the Concorde and then perhaps the outline of a Spitfire or a Boeing 747 (the Jumbo jet) the basic outline/shape is the same. Of course there are differences but overall the basic shape is the same because it has to be.

For example they all have wings that are symmetrical and they are all aerodynamic.

A further example could be a motorcar. The wonderful Ferrari California has the same basic shape as the highly practical Nissan Micra.

For example they both have four wheels, an engine, seats, gears etc and they both perform the same basic function albeit at different speeds and costs.

So what do aeroplanes and cars have to do with our understanding of a swing shape?

Well quite simply most golfers are the same basic shape and because of this the golf swing has to have a basic shape.

Photograph no.1 Shows a basic stance. There will always be slight variations but there are photographs and films from the past hundred years which prove that the basic stance has not changed.



Many golfers fall into the trap of believing that because they are unique they will therefore have a unique swing. There are, however, far more basic positions and movements than there are differences.

Golf can be boring when you become more proficient. One of my favourite sayings to my pupils is 'boring scoring shots'. This means you can play a complete round with boring scoring shots from a basic swing shape which produces extremely good scores.

Two of my pupils sent me a text recently saying '**won 4&3 playing boring golf as instructed.**' They had just won the Winter League final at the wonderful Brockenhurst Golf Club in the New Forest.

I became aware of how boring golf can be successful in 1971 when I was playing in a tournament at the Kensington Golf Club in Johannesburg.

Ever keen to learn, I went back onto the course after my round to watch the great Gary Player, a player I had admired for many years (and still do). Gary had won the Open at Carnoustie three years earlier for the second time and was to win it again at Royal Lytham three years later, so he was at the height of his career.

When I found Gary I was amazed at how few spectators there were so I asked one of them why this was the case. '**He's boring**', was the reply. '**He's always on the fairway, always on the green in regulation, and he always seems to win.**'

How great to be as boring as that.

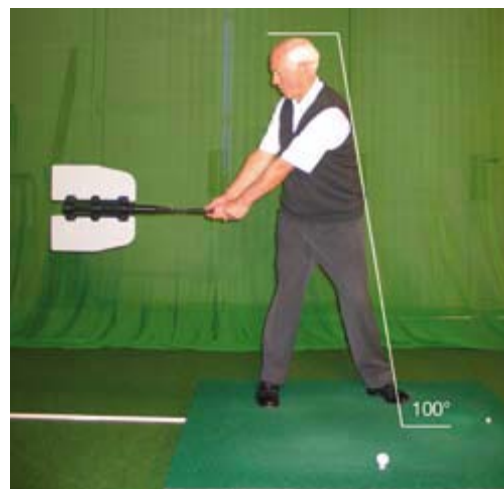
This reminds me of a story that is almost certainly true of a spectator who, having watched Gary hole a sand bunker shot, turned round to his friend and said, **‘that was a lucky shot’**. Gary overheard the comment and turned to the spectator and said, **‘did you know, sir, the more I practice the luckier I seem to get.’**

The basic shape of the swing is defined by the following.

1. Most people's arms are the same length so when the right hand is positioned on the club below the left the right side of the body moves down and the left side is moved upwards to create a tilt to the right of approximately 10 degrees.
2. This tilt will move the hips to the left and the head to the right with the weight remaining central.
3. The golf ball for all full shots will be within a three-inch span from the left heel to three inches inside the left heel.

So for all full shots the basic stance for the average golfer will be the same and if the golfer then turns the hips and chest correctly the basic shape of the backswing is established.

Photograph no.2 Shows this basic shape with the tilt to the right being maintained and the head remaining under the top line.



I use the 100-degree line on all of my pupils and it definitely produces results for all standards of golfers.

One of my pupils who had been playing for 18 years prior to having lessons with me had not broken 100 with a highest score of 136.

This was because he was nowhere near the basic shape as his hips had moved at least 12" to the right making a good movement down and through impossible.

The same pupil can now stay on the 100-degree line and to date his best score is 82- 54 shots less than his previous worst score – that is three shots per hole! Needless to say, we are both delighted.

Another pupil reduced his handicap from +1 to +5 by ensuring, amongst other changes we made, that he stayed on the 100-degree line and had therefore maintained the correct basic shape.

Yet another pupil, a PhD student living in Australia and playing off a handicap of 5, has improved his ball striking immeasurably by following the basic shape.

A lady pupil drew the 100 degree line on a mirror (a fantastic way to improve) and her handicap was reduced from 20 to 8.

If you maintain the basic shape you will improve but if you go off on a tangent looking for the secret you will be disappointed.

Jim White who won the Open at Sandwich in 1904 and Tiger Woods both have the same swing shape.

Vijay Singh practices avidly, not to improve his swing but to ensure he retains the same basic shape on the practice ground so he can take it to the golf course.

Conclusion

We are all different but there are far more similarities than differences so follow the principle of the basic shape and the 100-degree line and let your natural talent flow through the ball and you will improve.

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