

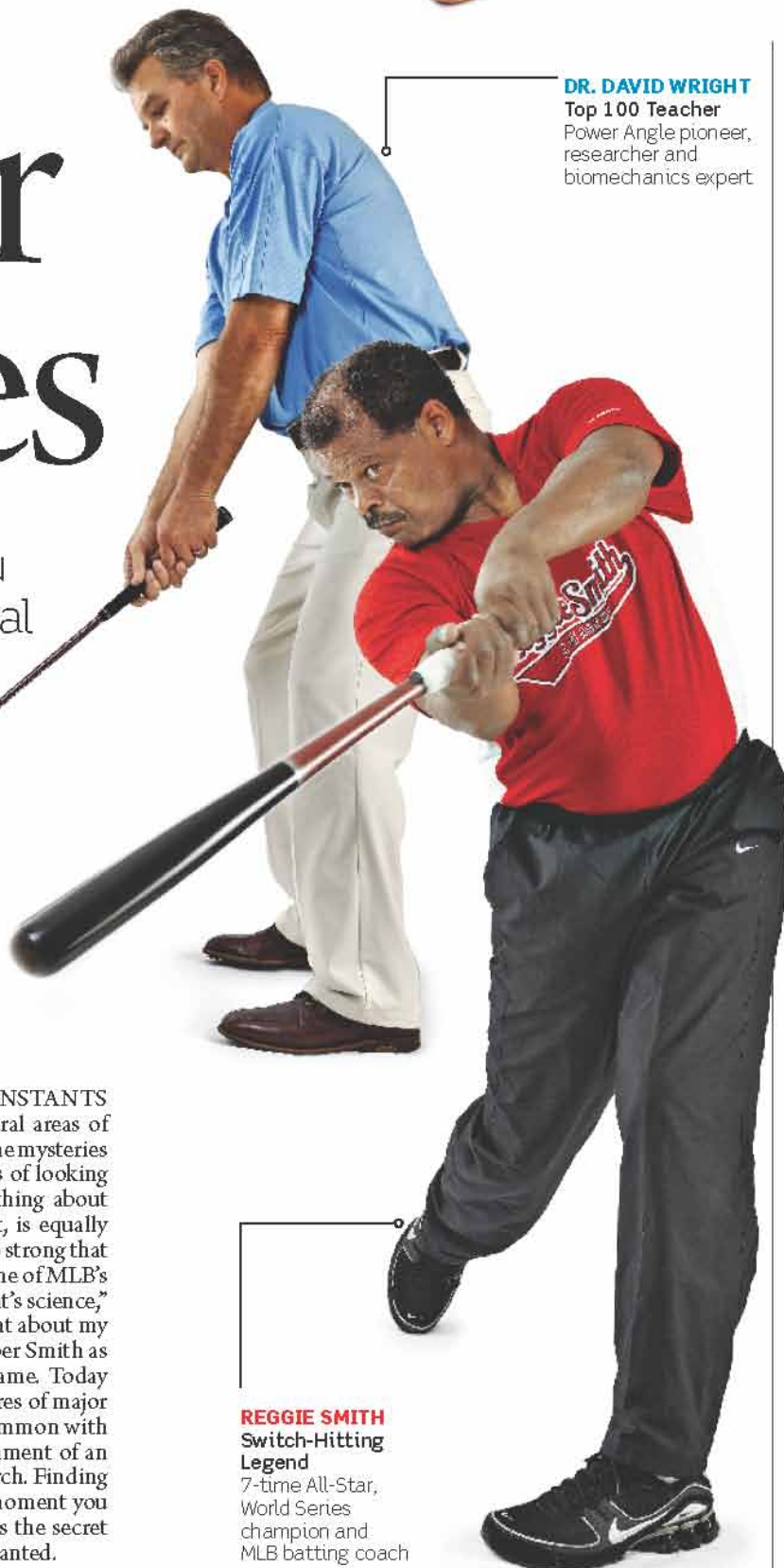


The Power of Angles

In just a few seconds you can discover your personal key to a powerful and efficient swing

BY DR. DAVID WRIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGUS MURRAY

JUST AS SCIENTISTS LOOK FOR CONSTANTS as part of determining laws across several areas of research, those who pursue insight into the mysteries of the golf swing search for similar ways of looking at it. Several years ago I noticed something about how we hit a golf ball that, it turns out, is equally valuable in hitting a baseball. The connection is so strong that these ideas have been unequivocally adopted by one of MLB's hottest batting coaches, Reggie Smith ("Dr. Wright's science," Smith says, "proved everything I thought was right about my swing.") Readers of a certain vintage will remember Smith as one of the best switch-hitters to ever play the game. Today he operates his own batting clinics and tutors scores of major leaguers using a swing model that has much in common with the moves you see on Tour, namely the establishment of an individual's "Power Angle"—the core of my research. Finding this Power Angle—and maintaining it from the moment you take your stance until you follow through—holds the secret to the powerful, consistent swing you've always wanted.



DR. DAVID WRIGHT
Top 100 Teacher
Power Angle pioneer,
researcher and
biomechanics expert

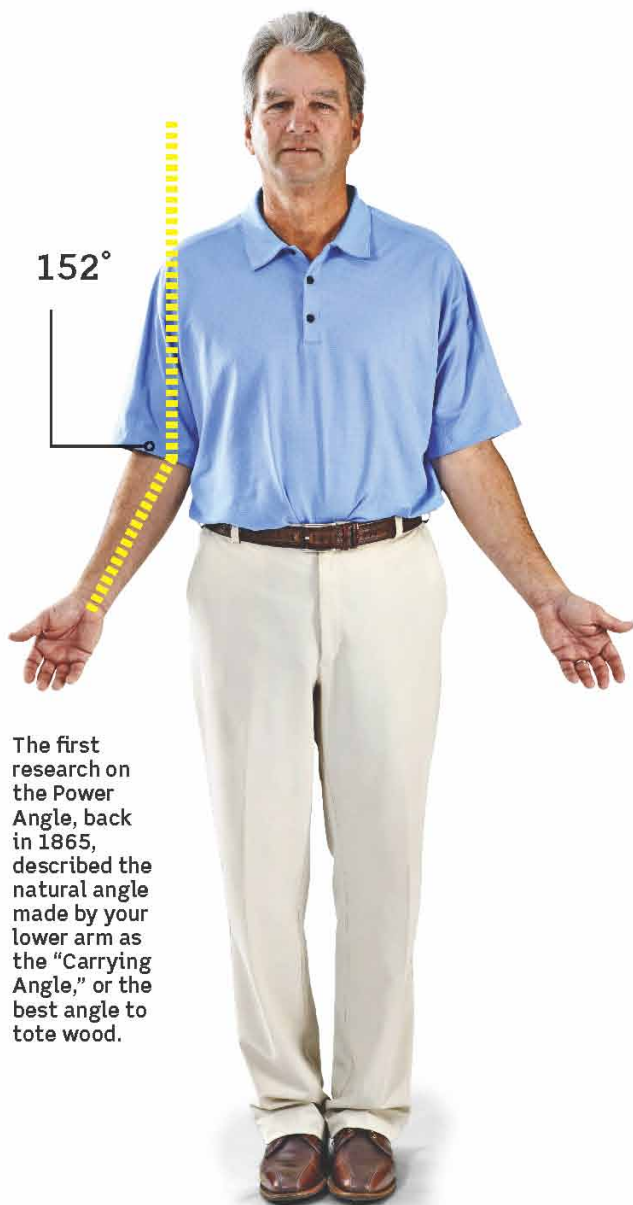
REGGIE SMITH
Switch-Hitting
Legend
7-time All-Star,
World Series
champion and
MLB batting coach



DISCOVER YOUR POWER ANGLE

Even if your swing lacks power, you have a Power Angle. It's part of you, embedded in your DNA and in your physique. To locate it, stand with your feet together and your arms hanging freely at your sides. Now turn your palms so that they face directly away from you. Notice how this causes your forearms to angle away from vertical. This angle—as you see illustrated below—is your personal, constant Power Angle. You'll notice that Reggie and I have slight differences in our angles, based on our different bodies. That's the key—everyone has their own unique Power Angle.

I call it the Power Angle because it's the arm position that allows you to generate—you guessed it—the most power, whether you're lifting weights, carrying wood or swinging a club. It's important to understand that your Power Angle isn't a simple static measurement. It pops up all over your swing—in your arms, legs, spine and in your clubshaft. Good players have found a way to repeat their Power Angle without even knowing it existed (for reference, see the Lee Westwood sequence on page 42). My research puts you one step ahead, whether your goal is more home runs or longer, more accurate drives.

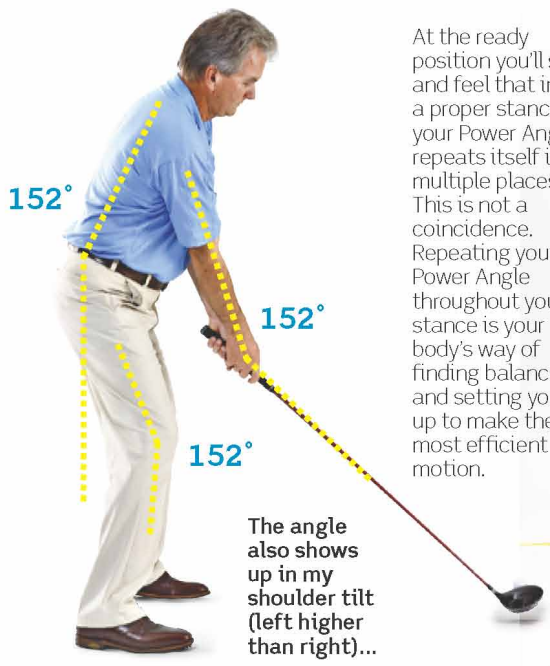


The first research on the Power Angle, back in 1865, described the natural angle made by your lower arm as the "Carrying Angle," or the best angle to tote wood.

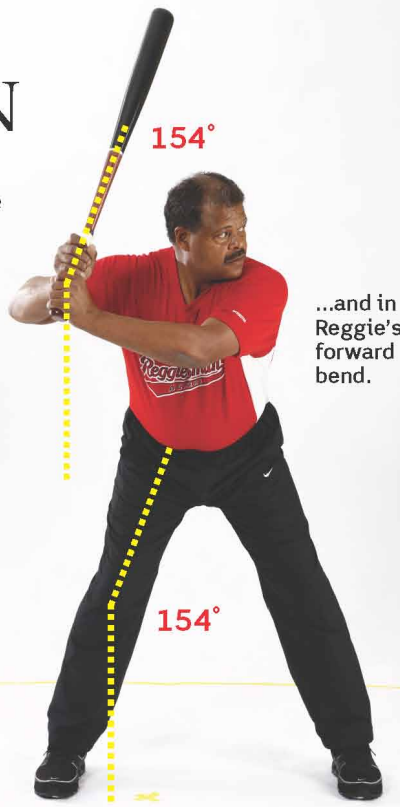


Reggie's Power Angle is different than mine—and yours. Everyone has their own unique, constant angle.

START POSITION

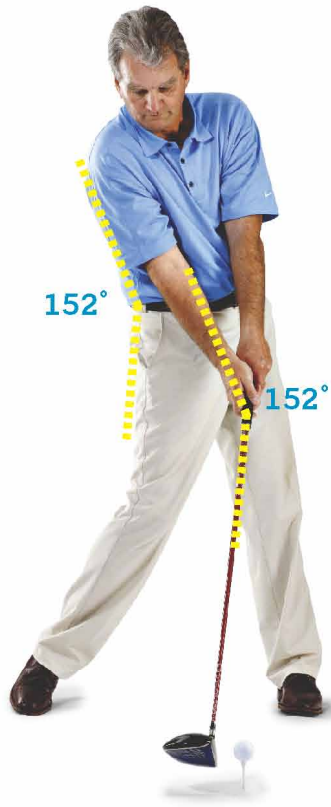


At the ready position you'll see and feel that in a proper stance your Power Angle repeats itself in multiple places. This is not a coincidence. Repeating your Power Angle throughout your stance is your body's way of finding balance and setting you up to make the most efficient motion.



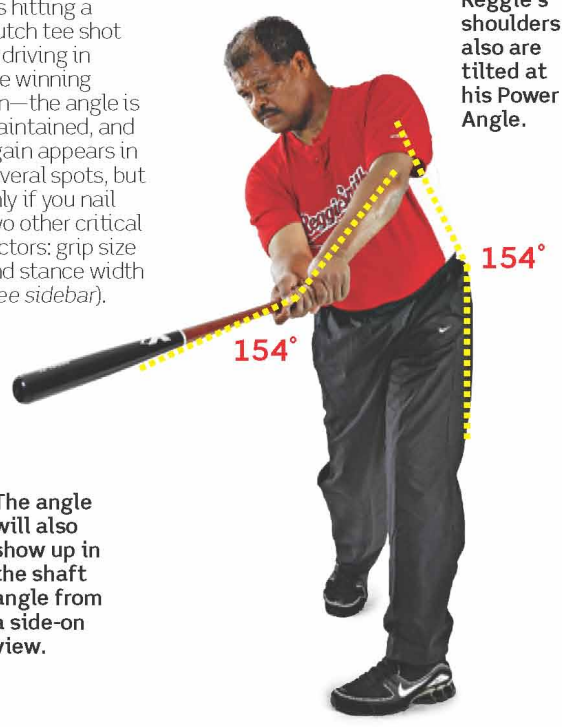
...and in Reggie's forward bend.

IMPACT



At the moment of truth—whether it's hitting a clutch tee shot or driving in the winning run—the angle is maintained, and again appears in several spots, but only if you nail two other critical factors: grip size and stance width (see sidebar).

The angle will also show up in the shaft angle from a side-on view.



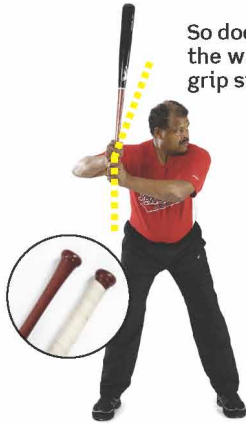
Reggie's shoulders also are tilted at his Power Angle.

Missing Links



Improper stance width ruins your balance and Power Angle.

In the photo above I've slightly narrowed my stance (about 1 1/2 inches). In the photo below, Reggie is swinging a bat without any tape wrap (his gripped is wrapped in the photos at left). Notice how we've both lost some of our Power Angles as a result. Correct stance width and grip size are critical elements to finding and tapping the energy of your Power Angle. Without them, your Power Angle means nothing. If you don't know your correct stance width and grip size, we've developed a formula to guide you through the process. Follow the online directions and you'll be on your way to a faster, more efficient swing.



So does the wrong grip size.

For more Power Angle tips and directions to find your ideal stance width and grip size, visit golf.com/powerangle.



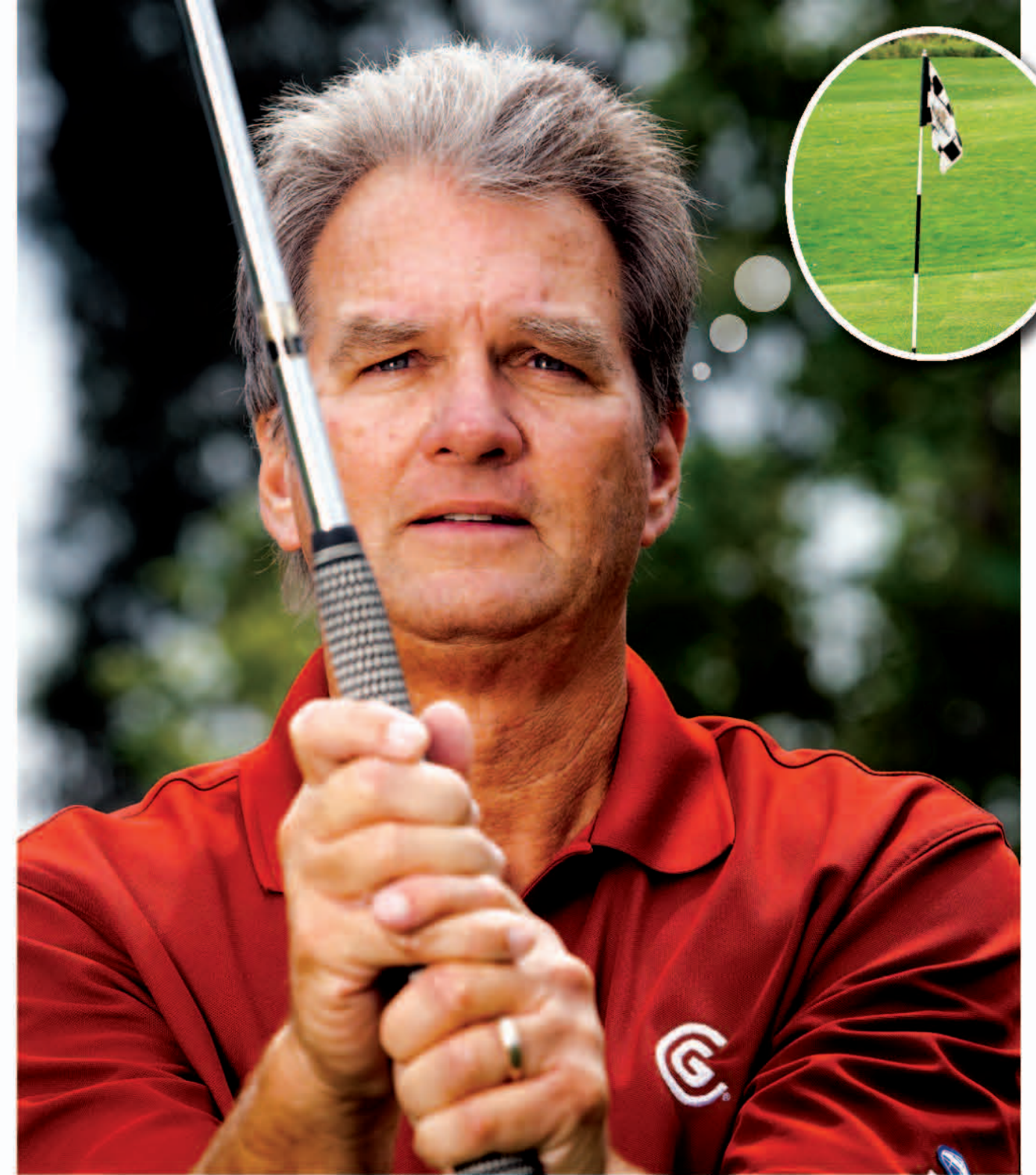
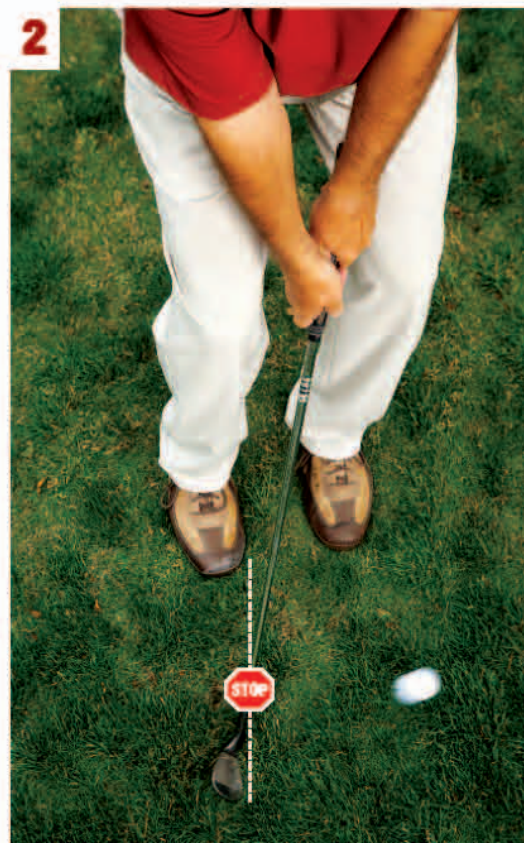
10. Fluffy Lie. When your ball is sitting up in the grass, the goal is to “pick” it off the top. Although you can use any club you want, I suggest you hit either an 8- or 9-iron. (Hitting a sand or pitching wedge increases the chances that the club’s toe will rotate in. Ultimately which club you use depends on how long your shot is.)

Hold the club as you would a putter because a regular grip tends to dig the toe in the ground, and a putter grip will produce a softer shot. Point the club’s butt end at your belt buckle and stand about the same distance away as you would a putt. Keep your shoulders level and make a putting stroke using your larger muscles. It’s really that simple.



11. Down Lie. When grass gets between your ball and the clubhead, it slows down your clubhead and produces a shot with little, if any, spin. This not only makes it harder to finish your swing, but also makes the ball fly farther than usual (and harder to control).

To combat these so-called “flier lies,” make a steeper swing so you leave the club on the ground to make it pop out. To do this, hinge your wrists steeply in the backswing and come back down steeply. Turn your shoulders slightly, and simply return the club to the ground.



PITCHING

12. Visualize Your Shot Before You Swing.

When you visualize an action (hitting a golf shot, driving a car, etc.), you use up to 80% of your brain’s neural structures that you use to perform the rehearsed action or behavior. Consider that Jack Nicklaus first visualized his ballflight, then the swing that would produce that flight. I want my students to do the same.

Too often, golfers think of what they should *not* do (“don’t chunk it,” “don’t slice it”) when they should really think about what *to* do (“draw it” “hit it at the pin”). Unfortunately our brains don’t discriminate between “do” and “don’t”; they just recognize the images of what we say.

The next time you play, whether you’re pitching or hitting a tee shot, work on visualizing your shot. Pick very specific targets (the corner of the flag, a leaf in the distance) and imagine the shot you want to hit toward that intended target.