Golf with Tony Jacklin
Michael Barratt

Step by step, a great professional shows an enthusiastic amateur how to play every stroke of the game.
Every golfer, however good, would always like to play a little better. Michael Barratt on his own admission is just about as bad a golfer as it is possible to be but, like thousands of others, he loves the game, and in this book he gives every player the opportunity to improve by learning with the great Tony Jacklin.

The book takes a quite fresh approach to the usual teaching manuals. It follows Tony Jacklin and Michael Barratt on a round of golf – the professional and the amateur in action, contrasting their play at every stroke, with Tony Jacklin giving his expert advice throughout. Together they go through all the fundamentals of the game and the accompanying photographs bring out the difference in a startling, sometimes highly amusing way to show just how and where the amateur is going wrong.

The book thus gives every player, whether good, bad or indifferent, an invaluable practical golfing lesson from a top golfer, told in a personal and entertaining way.

Illustrations: Front jacket photographs courtesy of Sport and General
Jacket design by Behram Kapadia and Peter Theodosiou
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GOLF WITH TONY JACKLIN

TONY In a situation like this with an awkward stance, an awkward lie, I must first keep my balance. That’s the most important thing. So it’s essential not to be taking a club that I’ve got to lash at very hard. I’m taking a nine iron. The distance to the flag is about 110 yards, so I’m playing well within myself and not trying any heroics. Just a gentle swing through the ball . . .

He’s on the green.

MIKE You make it look so easy, but I’m still not sure what the basic rules are for hitting balls off sloping lies.

TONY Off an upward lie, it’s very difficult to maintain your weight forward and the tendency is for the ball to hook, or draw, off such a lie. Therefore I aim fractionally right of target, allowing for that hook to happen quite naturally.

For the downward lie, again the important thing is to ‘stay down’ on the ball (otherwise you top it) and aim to the left. It’s impossible on a down slope for you to keep going ‘through’ the ball for very long. You’d come up from it quite quickly and the ball would tend to spin off a little to the right, so in this case you want to aim slightly to the left to compensate for that.

From my position in rough grass close to the green, I study my third shot as Tony gives me advice.

TONY You’ve got to make your mind up here about just two things. You’ve got to lift the ball well enough to get it out of the long grass – and you must also imagine how the ball’s going to react when it’s out. The thing that you don’t want to do is to lob it too high from here. There’s no necessity to do that. So in a situation like this you want to be taking something like a seven or a six iron, and just feeling the distance of it, as you would a putt. Essentially it’s much the same shot as a putt but the loft on the club will just elevate it enough to . . .

Impatiently I have a stab at the ball before he’s finished talking. It bounces to the edge of the green, yards short.
Tony demonstrates how to tackle a sloping lie. Balance is the essential. Here, on an upward slope, he aims slightly right of the flag, allowing for the ball to hook (or curve to the left) quite naturally.
I putt and miss. Tony holes his and I'm one down, despite my handicap advantage of a shot a hole.

MIKE I wish you'd explain how I'm supposed to 'read' a green. I watch the experts getting down on their knees and having a look, but I'm never quite sure what they're looking for.

TONY Essentially you look for undulations, to tell you which way the land falls. The other thing you're looking for is the way the grass grows – not so important in Britain because our grasses are of a soft texture, but vital in places like Africa and South America where they grow different, coarser grasses. If it's going to slow the ball down, or if there's any particular very grassy or fluffy patch near the hole that you think might slow the ball down a bit, you give it a bit extra.

The majority of professionals, when they walk on to a green, have a pretty well-established idea in their minds on what line to hit the ball, just from the way that the green 'sits'. The shenanigans on the green, walking back and forward and under and around, is to make double-dog certain that they're right because there'a a lot at stake.

Sometimes it helps to look at the line not just from behind the ball but from the side as well. That way, you might spot a slight rise or fall in the green that you couldn't see from the other angle.

As for the way to play the stroke, putting's a very individual thing. Being comfortable is really more important than any rules about how to stand.
I take a five wood but don’t connect too well. The ball goes straight but not very far – because I moved my head and lunged at the ball, says Tony. In contrast, his wood shot goes a very long way – but in the wrong direction.

TONY Oh, I’ve done it again. I keep hitting straight to the right this morning. I must have lined it up wrong. Now there’s a lesson to be learned from my last shots and it’s something that most club golfers don’t take the time to consider in a situation like this. Remember, I hit my first tee shot to the right. My second tee shot went to the right. That shot there, with a four wood, went right. But I hit them all solidly. So from that one must deduce that technically I’m all right. It’s my stance that’s wrong.

I don’t panic into thinking that my hands may be wrong at the top of my swing or that any number of other technical faults may be to blame. It’s something more simple than that, more basic. It’s my alignment. Far too many club golfers, when they hit a shot off line, start experimenting with grip, backswing and goodness knows what else and they never really establish a basis from which to work. Often the problem is very much more simple than they realize.

MIKE Right, how far is my shot to the green?

TONY 140 yards.

MIKE You know the course, but how would I assess the distance as a stranger to it?

TONY I simply know because I could get there with an eight iron. It might be 145 yards.
Why can’t I remember to do that – stop lifting my head? Here Tony’s iron is well through the ball and his head remains down.
MIKE Right. Now my second shot is – what, 130 yards, do you reckon?

TONY Easily, 135 even. Hit a seven iron. It’s uphill, you see, to the elevated green and that always means you should take at least one club bigger than for the same distance on the level ... You’re aiming a bit left now ... That’s better. Now don’t get too excited about it; hit through it.

That’s just what I do.

TONY Oh, what a great shot! I’m not saying any more, you’ve had it now! That’s perched up there on the green beautifully.
clear that I’ve dropped into the bunker beside the green. My turn for the sand wedge now. But I need help!

TONY I think that the first thing the majority of people do when they land in a bunker is panic! The average club player immediately starts worrying about whether he’s going to get out or not. Yet it’s one of the easiest shots to execute in the whole game of golf. Get the basic technique right and you should have no problems whatsoever.

The difference between a sand wedge and other irons like a pitching wedge or a nine iron is that whereas those irons will dig into the sand, a sand wedge has a bulge on the sole which gives the club the ability to ‘bounce’ on the surface of the sand. When I was a lad learning the game, my Dad used to talk about ‘splashing’ the ball out of the bunker and that’s something I still aim to do, almost as though I am playing out of shallow water.

Open the blade and open the stance. Never hit at the ball, always through it. Never stop at it. When that feeling of panic I was talking about comes over you, the tendency is to take a hurried swipe at the ball with the result that the club digs deep into the sand instead of lifting the ball away. Instead, with that open stance and the club face nicely open, you should swing the club back freely and easily – though not for a long way – and ‘splash’ the ball out, always taking a little sand behind the ball.

We’re talking now about greenside bunker play rather than long shots out of bunkers down the fairway. In that case, say ISO yards from the hole, the objective, if the lie was decent enough, would be to take the ball first and any sand afterwards on the follow-through. In a bunker like this, with fine sand, the simple ‘splashing’ shot that I’ve described will have two effects. It’ll get the ball out of the bunker. And it will make the ball stop on the green instead of running through it, because the way the open club face meets the ball imparts the necessary backspin. However, if the ball is plugged deeply in wet sand, there’s no possibility of your getting that backspin on the ball. There’s going to be so much sand between the club face and the ball at impact that the ball must come out with overspin or no spin at all. There’s nothing you can do about that!

MIKE But in these conditions which you seem to think are ideal
... and open the stance.
24 Address for quarter swing
Note: Rigidity of left arm

25 Top of three-quarter swing
Note: Rigidity of left arm

26 Top of quarter swing
Note: Rigidity of left arm

27 Driving; half way down
Note: Rigidity of left arm
54 Pronation impact. Orthodox set of the hands

55 Supination impact. Causes excessively high trajectory, misdirection to right and slice.

56 Pronation impact. Causes smothered flight; ball starts out to left curving to left and ducks downward.

57 Collapse of left wrist. Causes immediate misdirection to right, low trajectory and slice.
THE FULL SWING - DRIVING STROKE

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moment. The golfer should do the same thing, i. e. *shift* his weight, and this shifting of the body weight must be so timed as to deliver the climax of this power at the instant of impact.

The golfer, however, must not move his head till after the impact, and therefore is free to move only the central portion of his body which centers in the hips. A study of the motion pictures on pages 107 and 109 show that the right hip has a parallel action of 18 inches from the top of the swing to the finish. This parallel hip action is plainly discernible in every long stroke illustrated, and I would emphasize the point that this is the all important essential and source of the power of the *follow thru*.

To shift the weight just exactly the wrong way, i. e. from left foot to right during the stroke instead of right to left is a very common fault. Therefore every player should look into this matter to see if he is really on the right track.

The hip action is called the parallel hip action because it is an action of the hips that is parallel with the line of play, and to differentiate it clearly from all action of a rotary character.

Illustrations 59, 60, and 61, page 86 are for the purpose of showing extent of hip action and weight shifting.
58 PUTTING THE HIPS INTO IT
The three golden rules

Develop a good grip – 'a good neutral position with both hands so that one hand is not fighting the other and taking the club away'.

Alignment. ‘Simply’ making sure that you are aiming in the right direction.
There’s a lot of fascination in the whole business of club design – especially since my American friend Karsten Solheim developed his revolutionary Ping putter, which led him and his sons on to designing a full set of woods and irons, and in turn influenced the thinking of most other club manufacturers in the world. If you ever get a chance to visit the Solheims in Phoenix, Arizona, take it: you’d learn a lot about the fundamentals of club design that might even help your game!

By one of those strokes of luck that can only be called uncanny, I found myself a few weeks later on a trip to Western America and decided to stop off at Phoenix to visit the Ping factory. There I talked to Allan Solheim about first principles.

MIKE What really matters about the design of a club for a second-rate amateur like me?

ALLAN Well, if you want to improve your play, I do feel it is very important that you’re ‘fitted’ properly. Some people are tall, some short and it’s very important that, for instance, the lie of the club is right for each individual.

MIKE What do you mean by the ‘lie’ of the club?

ALLAN Whether the toe is up or down. In other words, the sole should generally be parallel with the ground for the ball to go straight. If the toe is up in the air, then the ball will hook or will be pulled left. If the toe is down, a player will push it right and fade the ball.

MIKE So the ordinary golfer would begin by checking that when he’s in the address position, the sole of the club head is absolutely level ... What do you look for next?

ALLAN I think the next thing is the length of the shaft and the size of the grip. The length of the shaft is determined by the player’s height and his finger-tip distance to the ground. This also helps to determine the lie of the club; if the fingers are closer to the ground, use a flatter club. You might think that a tall person would need a longer club, but that wouldn’t necessarily be so if he had long arms!
The heel is too high and a more upright club lie is needed to fit this golfer’s height and stance.

This is the correct club lie for this golfer’s height and stance.

The toe is too high. This golfer needs a flatter club lie for his height and stance.
Golf with Tony Jacklin

had pointed out, it’s nonsense to think that you can play your best golf on too little sleep and too much high living.

Then, I had allowed all that advice from my friends to throw me into a state of confusion and eventual panic. How silly to forget the three golden rules: grip; alignment; ball position. I resolved to keep repeating them mentally throughout the next match, to the exclusion of everything else.

And that is how, in a star-studded field at the Variety Club’s Cel-Am in Guernsey a week later, I at last learned my lesson the Jacklin way. ‘You’re a bandit,’ someone in the gallery shouted as I picked the ball out of the hole to record my third gross par in succession – that’s to say, three net birdies taking into account my twenty-three handicap. No one has ever been so thrilled to be accused of being a bandit!

Grip. Alignment. Ball position.

For eighteen holes I recited the magic words and the effect was so marked that not only did our team amass forty-three Stableford points but I enjoyed the golf in a way that Tony said I should.

There were many bad moments in the round, of course. But almost every one was due to my concentration on the basic rules lapsing for a moment, or to my forgetting other simple tips Tony had given me. For instance, on one hole, with the ball sitting on one of those nasty uphill slopes, I omitted to compensate for the natural tendency to hook the ball – and it sailed away to the left into a gorse bush. That time, or to be honest, time and time again, a blob on the card was quite unnecessary. If only I’d done what he’d told me …

I suppose all our rounds of golf will forever be sprinkled with ‘if onlys’, but I also know that rabbits like me could play much better golf than we do by paying attention not to the subtle and complex advice of the armchair experts but to words like these:

‘Feel as free as possible. Uninhibited … At the end of the day, when the talking has to stop, when you’ve absorbed the basic essentials that we’ve been discussing, playing better golf is a matter of common sense.’

Yes, Tony, I believe you!
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GOLF FUNDAMENTALS

SEYMOUR DUNN
Michael Barratt is well known as a television personality and for his appearances on ‘Nationwide’. He is also a journalist and the author of two books on gardening.

Tony Jacklin is the only British golfer to have held both the British Open and the US Open titles at the same time. He has won numerous American and European championships and has also established his reputation as an outstanding teacher.

Arthur Barker
11 St John’s Hill London SW11
AUTHOR’S GENEALOGY

The articles contained herein are the result of the life study handed down by many generations.

“Old” Willie Dunn, the famous Professional Golfer of Musselborough, Scotland, who played in the Great Golf Match of 1849, with his brother Jamie Dunn against Allen Robinson and Tom Morris for four hundred pounds sterling a side, was the father of the yet more famous Tom Dunn of North Berwick, Scotland, who from the time he was 20 years old till he died at the age of 52 was universally acknowledged the leading authority on golf. I am the youngest son of Tom Dunn. I was born at North Berwick, Scotland, March 11th, in the year of 1882 and, as my forefathers did, I cut my first teeth on a golf club.

On my mother’s side were the Gourlays of Musselborough, and my mother Isabella Gourlay, true to her family traditions, was the greatest woman golfer of her day. Her father, John Gourlay, was the famous leather and feather golf ball maker. He was also a golfer of great renown.

“Old” Willie Dunn, Musselborough  
Father of  
Tom Dunn, North Berwick  
Father of  
Seymour Dunn

Back farther still on my mother’s side there was a Douglas Gourlay, who was appointed teacher of golf to James V of Scotland. All these family connections have been a great help in preparing me for the great object of my life, which is to get down to the very root of this great problem, “The Fundamentals of Golf”. I have not indulged in practicing my own play for the capture of championship honors but have devoted myself to studying the science of the game, and analyzing every detail connected with it. I chose the work of a teacher as the best field for study for there all manner of questions arise and have to be met with a perfectly clear, correct and understandable explanation. In the twenty years that I have been teaching Golf, I must have given as many if not more golf lessons than any other teacher that ever lived, and I hope among you, my dear children, there will arise at least one, a wielder of the club able to uphold the name of Dunn.

*Musselborough was the original center of Golf, much older than St. Andrews.