

The evolution of the golf swing *Part 1*

In this first of a two-part feature, golf pro Joshua Willard talks about how much the golf swing has changed over the years

golf is no different from other sports. It is constantly evolving. Just as Formula One racing cars set faster and faster lap times every season, and elite athletes shave seconds off World Records at each Olympics, professional golfers are today hitting golf balls further than ever before, and are turning in score cards with ever decreasing numbers. While some of the improvements in the modern game can be attributed to advances in equipment technology, the roles played by coaches and players alike in developing a more refined swing cannot be underestimated.

Looking back at some of the swings that have been captured on film over the past century, we can see how the golf swing has evolved from a loose, undisciplined movement to a tight, efficient motion.

Take a look at *Photo 1*, of the great Bobby Jones, who was one of the great players of the 20's and 30's. We can see that there is a lot of movement in the legs, especially the left foot (note how it comes off the ground). There is also excessive turn and weight shift back, which all feels like power, even to players today.

Now look at *photo 2*, Tom Watson, one of the great players of the 70's and 80's, and we can see how the swing is starting to evolve. There is still a lot of weight shift back, a lot of turn and a long back



Photo 1

swing, which isn't too far off how Bob Jones swung the club, but the action is a little more refined.

Finally, looking at *photo 3*, we have one of the current superstars of the US Tour, Stuart Appleby. If we look at Appleby's action we can see how the motion is a lot more efficient, with less extraneous movement. We can see that the left foot is firmly planted on the ground, there is minimal weight shift back, less turn, and a shorter back swing. This is quite a common theme that you will see more and more of the top players working towards, to create less moving parts in their swing, which adds up to more consistency and a repeatable swing.

So while some of the extra

Tee-time with Josh 

Joshua Willard



Photo 2



Photo 3

length being achieved by professional golfers on tour today can be attributed to the latest generation of drivers and other advances in equipment technology, we cannot ignore the impact made by advancements in video technology and swing analysis techniques, which over the last couple of decades have enabled coaches and players to examine the underlying mechanics of the golf swing in increased detail. This has led to the ongoing development of a more refined and efficient swing, which not only creates greater length through the generation of more power, but also improves accuracy through improved consistency in the swing.

To be continued in October Islander