



Interview by Southland Golf Magazine with [Jason Denaro](#)

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### HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE RHYTHM IN THE GOLF SWING?

Firstly let me make a very valid point. If you are a type "A" personality, a person who rushes through daily chores, then odds are you'll have a quick rhythm to your golf swing. If you're laid back and easy going in every day life...you'll most likely have a Fred Couples/Ernie Els lazy rhythm to your swing. A good instructor would quickly become aware of this and avoid forcing a change to what is naturally YOUR rhythm. If you go to a dance studio to learn the tango, they're not going to throw you into a dance instructor's arms, start up the music and whirl you about the studio. There are sequential steps or positions that you need to learn first. When you can repeat the positions, you then let them flow together....and that's how you build a rhythmic golf swing; you learn the 3 basic positions, take away, impact -extension, and the most important...HEAD POSITION at impact. It all comes together with practice, kind of like learning to drive your first stick shift...push in the clutch, shift the stick, let out the clutch etc etc. After a while you can whiz through the 5 gears, talk on the cell juggle your coffee, all without even thinking about the gear change...and this is how your golf rhythm will commit itself to muscle memory. It will establish itself to the point where you can hit the ball absolutely dead straight while maintaining an air of indifference, a confidence that is so powerful that you needn't even look to see where the ball ended up, why not? Because you know it went where you planned for it to go...down the middle of the fairway. But remember this...IF you do look up, one thing is for certain...you'll see a bad result 90% of the time...HEAD POSITION! Your head MUST remain behind your right knee through impact...this position combined with the 80% rhythm makes golf as easy as throwing darts at a board ten feet away...it's as simple as that.

Low and slow is a great swing thought. If you take the club back too fast, you'll have a quick tempo, if you take it back too abruptly or steep, you'll probably chop down on the ball or catch it fat at impact.

Most people hit at the ball. That doesn't work. One of the many successful teaching analogies I utilize at the school is the image of a karate expert driving his hand through six stacked roofing tiles. He will zone in on the bottom tile. If he just focuses on the top tile, he will break his hand. In golf, you must hit the bottom tile. You need to accelerate through the ball, the focal point with irons is actually an inch past the ball, by focusing an inch past the ball you create a descending blow which then launches the ball on the best possible trajectory.

I believe that Moe Norman was the greatest ball striker ever. Norman believed in hitting the ball absolutely straight. He was about to play golf on one occasion with Ben Hogan and they were discussing straight ball flight. Hogan said to Norman that a straight ball flight is nearly always an accident. Moe Norman's reply to Hogan was, "well, let's play, I'll show you plenty of accidents."

The pros make it look so easy because they've established a tempo. The idea is to swing an 8-iron with the same tempo as your pitching wedge. The same goes for your 5-iron or 3-iron. There's no change in your rhythm or tempo. The only thing that changes is the club in your hand. The ball position is constant...if you want 10 yards between each iron, you need 4 degrees loft variance between each club, if you move the ball all about the place in your set up, not only are you messing with the 4 degrees, but the club face has no clue when it's square to target. You DON'T need to change your rhythm, just the club in your hands. The other CONSTANT is your swing thought, it must always be positive, and must always be a repetitious and integral part of every golfer's PRE SHOT ROUTINE. I tell my students, "Give me Tchaikovsky, not Metallica. I want poetry and you're giving me rap."

### WHAT SWING THOUGHTS DO YOU HAVE TO MAINTAIN YOUR RHYTHM UNDER PRESSURE?

You want to have a routine that is repeatable in every aspect. Your pre-shot routine is crucial. And part of that is what you're thinking the few seconds prior to hitting the ball.

The shot starts 15 seconds before you hit the ball. When it's time to begin the take away, stare at the ball...THINK NOTHING! These are not my own words, but I believe in them very strongly: "What the mind can conceive, the body can achieve."

Swing thoughts are amazingly powerful and effective. When I'm on the first tee, I think to myself: On the tee from South Africa, we have Mr. Ernie Els. And I hear those words over and over. I have now mentally implanted an image of an easy rhythmic swing. This message now has a reasonably good chance of being delivered to the muscles. So, pick a golfer you admire and when you look down at the ball, see the ball through that person's eyes.

IT WORKS!

Does this mean if you think you're Tiger, you'll swing like Tiger, to a point, yes. You are however limited to your physical boundaries, so don't go putting on a red cape and leaping of a building just yet. Practice off of a soap box for a while, okay?

### **ONE SECRET TO FINDING YOUR RHYTHM?**

On every car that's manufactured they have a red line on the speedometer. Now, the car can go over that line. But you're much safer if you stay under that red line. In golf, that red line represents your 80% line. Every golfer has a red line in their swing. You have a far greater chance of achieving the result you visualize when you remain below your red line. The 80 percent factor is crucial. When you see a top tour player swing out of his shoes then point right or point left, you better believe he's pushed the pedal to the metal and better start thinking recovery shot.

I have a split screen video of Fred Couples. On one side of the monitor he has a pitching wedge and on the other a 3-wood. Fred gets to the top of his backswing at exactly the same time with the wedge and 3 wood. His rhythm is duplicated with each club, the only thing that changes is the club in his hands. His impact occurs at exactly the same instant with both clubs, he doesn't alter his timing. He has developed a rhythmic swing and he repeats that swing every time.

### **ANY DRILLS TO FINDING YOUR RHYTHM?**

A good way to go about this is using music. I used and recommend Rhapsody in Blue because it has great rhythm. If you watch your favorite players swing over and over on screen, listening to one piece of music, then take that sound track to the practice range, your mind WILL pull that swing from its 'filing cabinet'...it's the old 'monkey see - monkey do' learning system at work.

So you go to the range and put on a headset, listen to your swing tune and your brain WILL reproduce that swing. The ability to re create an image using mimicry is by far the quickest and most successful means of improvement. While you're hearing or whistling a tune you can't be entertaining any negative thoughts or fears...it's that simple. Look at Fuzzy Zoeller. He whistles while he walking down the fairway. That's his security blanket. It helps his rhythm. So, understand the three positions, let them flow into one movement...and waltz into a rhythmic new golf swing.

Eric Marson

Associate Publisher/Editor

Southland Golf Magazine

1451 Quail St., Suite 208

Newport Beach, CA 92660

phone: (949) 833-7601, ext. 274

fax: (949) 833-9895

[www.southlandgolfmagazine.com](http://www.southlandgolfmagazine.com)

