



# SPEED KILLS



PART 4

IN THE CONCLUDING INSTALMENT OF THIS FOUR-PART INSTRUCTIONAL SERIES ON PUTTING, STEVEN GIULIANO HIGHLIGHTS THE KEY CONCEPTS AND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE SPEED OF THE PUTT

**Above all**, I believe there's one attribute that all great putters possess – the sense of feel and judgement to roll the ball at the correct speed time and time again, no matter what the surface.

When assessing what controls the speed the ball rolls at, we have to take into account the following factors: slope, speed or stimp of the green,

variation in grain and wind conditions.

All these factors relate to the 'time' the ball spends on the green and for the most part are out of our control. However, we must be very aware of them and have a thorough understanding of how they influence break and speed in order to judge the distance correctly.





## **SPEED CONCEPTS**

Firstly, here are a few concepts which will assist you with your distance control:

A question I often ask students during my putting classes is, which putt rolls faster or takes more ‘time’ to get to the hole – an uphill or downhill putt? More often than not, the answer is “a downhill putt rolls faster than an uphill putt” (given the same distance covered, slope and holing speed). This couldn’t be further from the truth and is a large reason why many golfers race their downhill putts past the hole and leave their uphill putts short.

A downhill putt is rolling slower as it’s spending more ‘time’ getting to the hole, versus an uphill putt which needs to be struck firmer and therefore spends less ‘time’ getting to the hole. Understanding this will begin to encourage better feel when dealing with sloping greens.

Also I have many students who also believe that if they strike the putt firmly enough they will cancel out the entire break. This is also a misconception as hitting a putt firmly will minimise the break but gravity will still have an effect on the ball. Having the ball rolling at a capture speed of between 6-12 inches past will effectively give you the greatest chance of making the putt. A putt that’s rolling too aggressively at the hole effectively shrinks the ball’s entry into the hole and increases the chance of lip-outs.

## SHORT GAME SAVERS WITH STEVEN GIULIANO



### **SPEED CONTROLLERS**

There are three main factors that affect speed that are within our control and these are length of stroke, pace of stroke and contact.

#### **1. LENGTH OF STROKE**

Too often, students come to me with either a long backstroke and short finish or, more commonly, a short backstroke with a long finish, believing they need to accelerate the putter-head through the ball.

This is probably the most misunderstood concept of the putting stroke. The concept of equal back, equal through is a technique employed by many great putters.

Try this exercise at home: grab the grip-end of your putter and hold it between your thumb and forefinger; swing the putter head back a certain distance and observe how far it swings through. The length back should match the length through with the putter acting like a pendulum.





Australian PGA AAA-rated professional **Steven Giuliano** is based at the Impact Elite Golf Academy at The Mines Resort & Golf Club as the Director of Player Development & Education. He is regarded as one of the top instructors for developing amateurs and professionals in the Asia Pacific region. For more information, log on to [www.sggc.com.au](http://www.sggc.com.au) or email [steven@sggc.com.au](mailto:steven@sggc.com.au)

## 2. PACE OF STROKE

The pace or tempo of your stroke will also influence the distance the ball will travel. When opting for a consistent pace of stroke, use your own body clock as a guide.

For example, if you tend to swing at a fast pace and generally have a quick tempo, then this should be reflected in your putting stroke. But if you are slower and more rhythmic in your movement, like Ernie Els, then your putting

stroke should reflect this.

By using a metronome and putting to a 1-2 'tic-toc' beat, you'll programme your inner tempo and build a rhythmic and repetitive stroke.

## 3. CONTACT

The third factor which affects distance control is where the putts are struck. If contact is made off the heel or toe randomly, this will greatly affect your distance control.



### GATE DRILL

Create a 'gate' for your putter head by placing two tees in the ground outside the toe and heel of your putter. Rehearse a stroke that can go right through the 'gate' without hitting either tee. This exercise will ensure center face contact and consistent roll of the ball.