

STROKESAVERS WITH STEVEN GIULIANO

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION: THE CHICKEN-WING

The causes and cures for golf's ugliest malady



We've often heard that the most important part of the golf swing is impact. Too often I see golfers working on a perfect grip, backswing and yet are still unable to achieve solid contact on the ball.

Worse still, when I ask them why they've topped a shot or mis-hit the shot to the right, the common responses are: "I lifted my head" or "I swung too fast, I need to slow my swing down". This is a common misconception which holds many golfers back from achieving a pure impact position, and generally comes down to poor form.

If you've ever had your swing filmed and it resembles the image here, then you're suffering from the dreaded 'chicken wing'. Not only does it lead to a number of mis-hits, but this action is also visually displeasing. Usually the golfer will feel like they're handcuffed through the ball, producing this 'bent arm' look at and past impact.



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THE CAUSES

POOR HAND POSITIONING

One of the main causes of the dreaded chicken wing stems from poor positioning of the hands at address – this can lead to excess tension in the hands and arms. Before you next head to the range to work on your chicken wing, ensure the club is positioned through the fingers of both hands, free of tension. This will allow for a much freer release of the clubhead through impact.

POOR CONCEPT

Another cause of the chicken wing is a poor concept of how the club should be attacking the ball through impact. Too often golfers feel they should be sliding the club under the ball in order to elevate it in the air. This couldn't be further from the truth! Again, this leads to the club bottoming out too early behind the ball and a thin or topped shot.



DEVELOP THE FORM

Before you take a club in hand and start working on your technique, let's develop some good form away from the ball. Take a lightweight dumbbell in your lead hand; for added support, you can rest your opposite hand against your bicep. From here, swing the lead arm across the chest (left pic) on the forward swing, allow the lead elbow to rotate towards the ground. Training the lead arm under load will encourage better extension and rotation through impact. This is exactly the opposite of the chicken wing, and is the same look and feel you should be after when you're swinging a club.



IN PLAY

Once you've begun to train the correct move under load, you're now ready to put this new move into practice. Starting with a short to medium iron, work on feeling the lead arm extended and rotated down through impact. You should find your ball-turf contact beginning to improve as the club is now working down and through, no longer swinging up on the ball.

The club works down and through the ball