



A COMMON

misunderstanding among many golfers is the idea that they must achieve a flat lead wrist at the top of their backswing. Unfortunately, this is often misdiagnosed.

WHAT ARE YOUR WRISTS DOING?



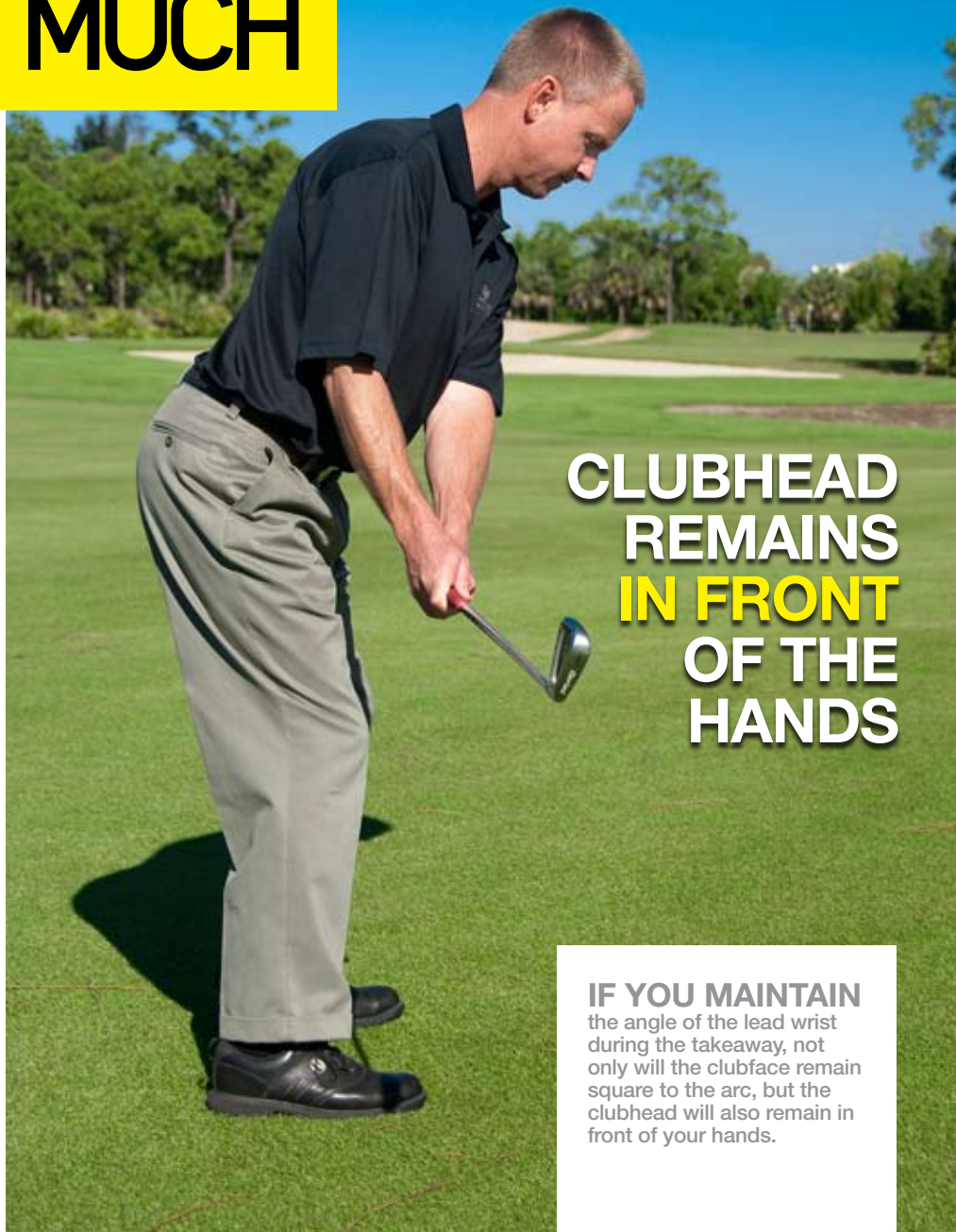
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
A **CUPPED** OR **FLAT WRIST**
IS **MORE IMPORTANT** THAN
YOU MIGHT THINK.

BY **JIM
SOWERWINE**
PHOTOS BY AMBER
FREDERIKSEN

SO HOW MUCH WRIST CUP,

if any, should you have? The answer depends completely on how you place your hands and fingers on the club. The stronger your grip or the more you position your lead hand to the right on the grip (for right-handers), the more cup you will be creating at address. The weaker your grip or the more your hands are positioned to the left on the grip, the less cup you will be creating. Also, if you position the grip more in your palm than in your fingers, the flatter your wrist will be as well.

Of course, there is not just one way to properly hold a club. Not only are golfers physically built differently from one another, but many great players deliberately position their hands on the club in a particular way to promote or prevent certain tendencies.



**CLUBHEAD
REMAINS
IN FRONT
OF THE
HANDS**

IF YOU MAINTAIN the angle of the lead wrist during the takeaway, not only will the clubface remain square to the arc, but the clubhead will also remain in front of your hands.

thing to understand when swinging the club away is to maintain the same angle in your lead wrist

that you started with. By doing so, you'll give yourself the best chance of maintaining a square clubface. If

MAINTAIN THE ANGLE

Regardless of how much cup you have in your wrist, the important

THE ONE PLACE IN THE SWING WHERE A FLAT LEAD WRIST IS DESIRABLE IS AT IMPACT WHEN CONTACTING A BALL ON THE GROUND.



TRYING TO FLATTEN THE WRIST CAN MOVE THE CLUBHEAD BEHIND THE HANDS AND OFF PLANE

IF YOUR LEAD WRIST has some cup at address and you try to achieve a flat wrist during the takeaway, the clubhead will move behind the hands and cause the club to get off plane.

you add cup or increase the angle of your wrist, you are effectively opening the clubface and adding loft. If you decrease the cup or flatten your wrist, you are effectively closing the face and decreasing loft.

To help you better understand this, take your normal grip, hold the club in front of you with the club slightly above the ground and make sure the face is square. Now cup your wrist and you will see the clubface open. Flatten

or bow your wrist and you will see the clubface close.

Most golfers have at least a slight cup in their lead wrist at address. However, regardless of how much cup you have, maintaining it throughout your backswing not only promotes a square face but also increases your chances of swinging the club back on a good plane.

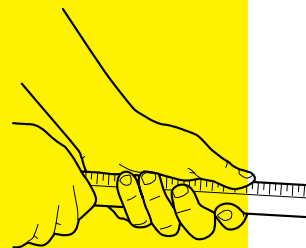
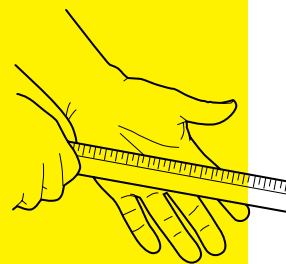
THE YARDSTICK GRIP

THIS IS THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT A PROPER GRIP SHOULD FEEL LIKE. THE LATE DAVIS LOVE II TAUGHT IT TO MANY OF HIS STUDENTS.

Place a yardstick diagonally across your lead hand and then wrap your fingers around it until it fits comfortably into your hand and fingers. You will notice that the "V" formed between your thumb and forefinger points at or close to your back shoulder. Next, place your back hand until it feels comfortable as well.

Now, make a few mini practice swings with the yardstick. The yardstick's flat sides will accentuate the squareness at impact and help you become more aware of how your hands should work throughout the swing.

After gripping the yardstick, immediately reproduce the same grip on one of your clubs to get a sense for how this grip feels on a standard round grip. Unless you have been told by your teaching professional to do otherwise, the yardstick grip is a great grip to adopt.



ADDING WRIST CUP IN THE BACKSWING OPENS THE CLUBFACE....

....RESULTING IN A SLICE

THE IMPORTANT THING TO UNDERSTAND WHEN SWINGING THE CLUB AWAY IS TO MAINTAIN THE SAME ANGLE IN YOUR LEAD WRIST THAT YOU STARTED WITH.

INCREASING THE

amount of cup in your wrist during the backswing opens the clubface and adds loft. This makes it very difficult to square the clubface at the bottom of the arc and is one of the primary causes of a slice.

do so during the first few feet of the swing. When this occurs, the clubhead immediately moves behind the hands and effectively causes the club to get off plane.

If the angle of the lead wrist is maintained during the takeaway,

not only will the face remain square to the arc, but the clubhead will remain in front of the hands. This is a move most good ball strikers achieve.

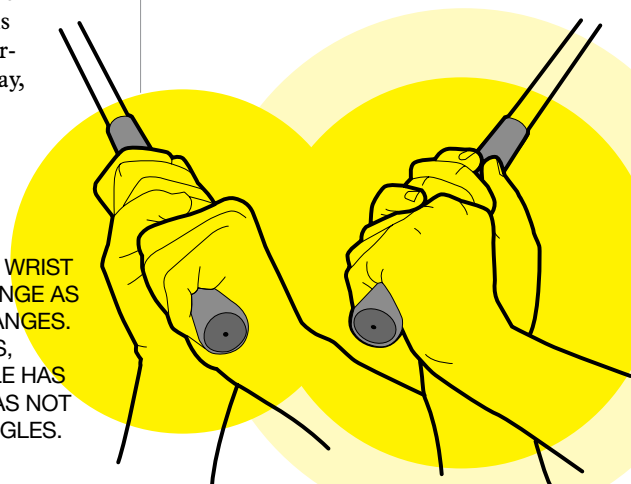
If your timing is good during a full swing, you can sometimes get away with fanning the club. Raymond

SEEKING A FLAT WRIST

If your lead wrist has some cup at address and you deliberately seek a flat wrist, you will most likely try to

CAMERA TRICKS

THE ANGLE OF THE LEAD WRIST OFTEN APPEARS TO CHANGE AS THE CAMERA ANGLE CHANGES. IN THESE TWO EXAMPLES, ONLY THE CAMERA ANGLE HAS CHANGED. THE WRIST HAS NOT MOVED OR CHANGED ANGLES.





**YOU SHOULD
HAVE A **FLAT**
LEAD WRIST
AT IMPACT
WHEN HIT-
TING A BALL
ON THE
GROUND**

A FLAT LEAD

wrist is desirable when contacting a ball on the ground in order to compress or pinch the ball off the ground.

THERE ARE PLAYERS WHO HAVE A RELATIVELY FLAT WRIST AT THE TOP, BUT THE MAJORITY OF PLAYERS WHOSE PHOTOS YOU SEE ACTUALLY HAVE A SLIGHT CUP IN THEIR WRIST.

Floyd fanned it back, but he is the exception to the rule. The real challenge comes into play during less than full swings because there is not time to make the necessary adjustments. Chipping, pitching and half swings are usually very difficult to hit well. In addition, fanning the club away can cause a shank.

Increasing cup during the takeaway or any time throughout the backswing is equally detrimental. As mentioned earlier, when you cup your wrist, you are effectively opening the clubface and adding loft. This cupping during the backswing is very common among golfers and is a primary cause of slices.

Cupping the wrist is often a false sensation of cocking your wrists. Cocking your wrist or setting the club is indeed an important element to a good swing for a number of reasons, but most important is that the lead wrist maintains its original shape or angle. It is much more proficient to have less set than to try and achieve more set and deviate the angle of your lead wrist that you started with.


angle. It's much easier to learn this without a club in your hands because there is no weight to influence your wrists.

Once you see and feel how to swing your arms/hands and set your wrists without changing the angle of your wrist, graduate to holding a club

upside down just above the hosel. This will allow you to practice with a club, but with the club upside down, it will still feel very light. The lighter it is, the easier it is to learn.

Next, progress to holding a club normally and rehearse it several times before letting a ball get in the way. It can also be beneficial to practice this exercise in front of a mirror or in the reflection of a window to put together both a visual image and the proper feel.

Keep in mind that there is one place in the golf swing where a flat lead wrist is desirable for all golfers, regardless of their grip. That place is at impact when contacting a ball on the ground, as this is necessary to compress or pinch a ball off the ground.

So rehearse your takeaway often, pay attention to your lead wrist at all times and keep the amount of wrist cup that you started with. By doing this, you will give yourself the best chance of maintaining a square face as well as an on-plane swing. 

Jim Sowerwine is a golf instructor at the Raptor Bay Golf Club in Bonita Springs, Fla. He is also the founder of Jim Sowerwine's Inside Approach to Better Golf.

PRACTICE TECHNIQUES

Take your grip without a club and pay close attention to your wrist while making mini backswings. Focus on maintaining the same wrist



FOR MORE ARTICLES on how to use your wrists to square the clubface, go to golfillustrated.com/tips to view downloadable electronic golf tips and techniques from *Golf Illustrated* magazine. Among the articles available include "One-Plane Swing: Eliminate Push Shots & Duck Hooks." Enter promotional code "12" for a free trial subscription to *Golf Illustrated* magazine and a free membership in the *Golf Illustrated* e-Deals Club.