‘The sad truth is that most golfers make the wrong read 100% of the time because they base their decisions on nothing more than guesswork’

AimPoint is revolutionising the way many Tour pros read greens – and it will help you hole more putts, too

H ave you ever watched television coverage of the PGA Tour and seen that blue line pop up between the ball and the hole to show exactly how the putt is going to break? Do you find yourself thinking ‘I wish it was really that easy’? You’re one of the majority of golfers nodding their head to that question you could be about to experience an epiphany because the same technology that draws that perfect line has been converted into a green reading technique that will help you hole more putts.

AimPoint is the brainchild of IT-based inventor Mark Sweeney and he’s teamed up with British coach Jamie Donaldson to create a system that takes all the guesswork out of the dark art of green reading and replaces it with cold, hard science that anyone can apply to make more accurate reads and improve your putting – whether you’re Tiger Woods or a 28-handicapper.

“About four years ago it struck me that there was nothing in any manuals or passed down price at the end of the feature, but you can still learn a lot from AimPoint without it. AimChart. We have an exclusive reader offer for you to purchase the chart at special knock-down price at the end of the feature, but you can still learn a lot from AimPoint without it. Turn over now to become a better green reader and hole more putts.”

So good putting all starts with the right read, and the key to a good read is determining the three key elements that affect how much the ball will break – distance, slope and angle. Combining these three pieces of information will enable you to calculate exactly how much the ball will break; distance, slope and angle.

The new way to putt

**AimPoint**

**Words** Kit Alexander

**Pictures** Howard Boylan

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‘AimPoint helped me to get to No.1 in the world’ Stacy Lewis

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Ladies European Tour player Stacey Keating has risen 406 places to 70th in the world rankings since she started using AimPoint in 2011. ‘AimPoint has changed my game; the stats don’t lie. Working with my caddy and practising the techniques regularly we have found the results astonishing. My awareness of the undulations on the greens and locating the direction of the slope has guaranteed that I am at the correct side of the hole every time. I’ve never been this excited to get on the greens!’

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Jamie Donaldson

Director of AimPoint.

AimPoint has helped me to get to No.1 in the world, Stacy Lewis.
Get your facts right
Green reading perfection begins with the disproving of some long-held misconceptions...

Under-reading and speed issues
A common mistake that golfers make is to vastly under-read putts. When I ask my pupils, including Tour pros, to read a putt before I’ve demonstrated the AimPoint method, around 90% of the putts will be under-read. If you make this error when reading, the only way you can hole the putt is to hit it hard enough to roll well past the hole or, even worse, manipulate your putting stroke and push or pull intentionally to start the ball on the correct line. The chances of holing are very slim, resulting in a long return putt or an inconsistent stroke.

You need to stand halfway between your ball and the hole and 15 to 20 feet away from the line on the low side of the putt to accurately judge the distance. As you can see from the picture, the markers now look like they are at regular five-foot intervals and you can accurately judge the distance. Standing on the low side gives you the best perspective of the putt and is vital for the next stage of the process when you walk to the midpoint between your ball and the hole to assess the gradient of the slope and angle you will be putting across it. Approaching from the low side ensures you won’t tread on your line.

How much it really breaks
This image is a great visual representation of how much break increases from five, 10, 15 and 20 feet from the hole on a typical green with 3% slope. Using a putt that breaks four inches (measured from the edge of the hole to the first tee peg) from five feet, we can see how the break changes as we get further from the hole. Notice how the amount of break increases at least threefold from five to 10 feet and then in more uniform differences from there on out. It would break roughly 12 inches from 10 feet, 20 inches from 15 feet and 28 inches from 20 feet.

How to gauge the right distance
Determining how far you are from the hole may seem easy, but many golfers get it so wrong

Gauge distance from side on
You need to stand halfway between your ball and the hole and 15 to 20 feet away from the line on the low side of the putt to accurately judge the distance. As you can see from the picture, the markers now look like they are at regular five-foot intervals and you can accurately judge the distance. Standing on the low side gives you the best perspective of the putt and is vital for the next stage of the process when you walk to the endpoint between your ball and the hole to assess the gradient of the slope and angle you will be putting across it. Approaching from the low side ensures you won’t tread on your line.

Pace it out to make sure
If you struggle to accurately gauge the distance by just looking at the putt from side-on, you can pace it out. Two average steps will equal five feet for a fully-grown man, but it’s well worth taking the time to measure exactly how far each of your strides is so you can accurately determine the distance of your putt by simply walking along it. You would never hit an iron shot without an accurate yardage – and the same must be true of your putting. Walking the length of your putt can also help to give you a feel for the slopes and undulations your ball will travel across en route to the hole.

The real hole size
How fast the ball is travelling when it reaches the hole impacts how big it is in real terms – and how accurate the putt has to be for the ball to drop. It’s important to have a consistency of distance beyond the hole on all putts so you can accurately judge the amount of break and maximise the chance of holing it. The magic number is nine inches past the hole; any shorter and the ball is knocked off-line by green inconsistencies and farther than this and the target size shrinks rapidly and you increase the risk of lip-outs.

The wrong perspective
Traditionally, we read putts from end to end, squaring down behind the ball and trying to evaluate how we think the ball will travel across the greens to the hole. In fact, this is one of the worst places to look from to get an idea of distance. The markers in the image above are at five-foot intervals, but as you can see, squaring down behind the ball gives you a skewed vision on the true length. If you do not have a true picture of the distance then you can’t possibly hope to make the correct read or hit the ball at the right pace.
Get a feel for the slope
Use your innate balance and senses to judge the gradient and how much the ball will break

Use your feet to gauge gradient
Facing uphill, you will be able to feel when one of your feet is lower than the other. Rotate on the spot until you find where your feet are completely level. You may have to rotate past the level point and work back to it to be completely sure.
Now you can identify where the pressure of your weight is in your feet to judge the gradient of the slope. Weight in the toes is 1% gradient, balls of feet is 2%, arches is 3% and heels is 4%.
The greater the gradient, the more the ball will break. 2% is a very common gradient as this is the slope required for a green to drain. Anything steeper than 4% is pretty much unplayable. As an illustration of how much gradient affects break, a 10-foot putt at 90° across the slope (from 3 or 9 o'clock on the clockface opposite) will break three inches from the edge of the hole at 1%, eight inches at 2%, 14 inches at 3% and 21 inches at 4%.

MidPoint technique
To accurately judge the amount of slope and angle at which the ball crosses the slope we need to stand halfway between the ball and the hole and use a technique called ‘MidPoint’. Always approach the MidPoint from the low side of the hole. Face uphill and stand completely upright, facing-dead-ahead with shoulders back and chin up. Close your eyes so you’re not influenced by the terrain and completely focus on your feet. You will use the feedback between your feet and the ground to judge the slope and ascertain the angle you’re putting across it.

Use a clockface to judge the angles
The angle that the ball rolls across the slope will affect the amount of break and determine its direction. Straight up or down the slope will have no break and across the slope at 90° angle will be roughly the greatest break for that slope amount. If you imagine a clockface around the hole with 12 o’clock straight in front of you as you stand facing straight uphill in the MidPoint position, you can easily judge the angle of the putt, with reference to a time on the clock. This shows how much a 10-foot putt will break on a typical British green with a Stimpmeter reading of nine and 2% slope. If the ball is on your left it will break left-to-right and if the ball is on your right it will break right-to-left. A downhill putt can break up to twice as much as an uphill putt on the same angle on a steep gradient.
Remember, all break amounts are for a ball rolling at the optimum speed, which is nine inches past. The break amounts will increase for a longer putt, faster green or steeper slope and decrease for a shorter putt, slower green or gentler slope.

Exclusive AimPoint TG reader offer
We’ve teamed up with AimPoint to offer Today’s Golfer readers the chance to attend a green reading class at Brocket Hall on July 24 or 25 or August 6 for the special price of £50 – a fantastic saving of £49 (10am and 1pm sessions available). Also included in this price is the AimPoint booklet, which gives you an accurate break amount for any putt when you know green speed, distance, slope and angle. Attending the course will enable you to take all the techniques you’ve learnt in this feature to the next level and use the booklet so you never have to guess a read again. Every student also receives a special code that allows them access to extra material and videos at www.aimpoint.com.
Please email editorial@todaysgolfer.co.uk with the subject header ‘AimPoint’ and quoting the code TG25 and the day you would like to attend to secure your place.