

PAUL MCGINLEY GOLF ACADEMY QUINTA DO LAGO

Introducing the world's first Paul McGinley Golf Academy set in the sunny coast of Algarve in Portugal. WORDS AND PICTURES BY DAVID J. WHYTE



physical shape. The Trackman, it has to be said, is as true a measurement as it comes; good enough for tour professionals and recognised worldwide as the number one system for its purpose.

The practice area offers a huge grass teeing area in excess of 2,000 square metres with six target greens set up to allow the golfer to work with every club in the bag. The "Short Game" area includes a 400 metre square putting green along with a chipping-and-putting green built to USGA specifications, as well as a 100 square-metre green intended to allow the golfer to work solely on bunker shots.

The new TaylorMade Select

Fit System is also set up overlooking the range operated by professionally trained TaylorMade technicians using the aforementioned Trackman launch monitor system. The system allows golfers to test hundreds of combinations of heads, shafts and face settings. This includes around 186 different metal-wood and shaft combinations and more than 258 iron combinations that can be instantly changed or adjusted to find the right mix to maximise performance. A state-of-the-art TaylorMade Performance Lab should open at Quinta do Lago later this year.

PHILOSOPHY

The Paul McGinley Academy and its team of professionals aim to go far beyond instructing the basics of the golf swing. While the rudiments of the game are always in focus, the role of technology through specific teaching aids is brought

to the fore to build an effective and repeatable swing. This tenet will start at the teaching range and ultimately grooving it comfortably out on the golf course.

Science plays a central part in the philosophy of the school with the most up to date teaching aids available, including Swing Analysis as well as and Science and Motion Putting Analysis equipment.

With the TaylorMade Fitting Centre in place, golfers will have access to some of the best club fitting technology available to ensure they get a set of measurements that fits their physical attributes and swing perfectly, instead of having to struggle with unsuitable equipment.

The opening of the Academy is the first step towards a long-term project that aims to bring together science, experience and quality unparalleled in Europe to this idyllic Portuguese enclave.

McGinley's enthusiasm is key to the project and he will be holding teaching sessions at Quinta do Lago at least four times a year to work with golfers and also to promote kids golf camps. "I am going to be very hands on. I am delighted about this project so I want to see it all working and operating at a high level," he said.

This attitude reflects his, and hence the Academy's commitment to growing the popularity of the game locally, the Academy will also be working with local schools to help produce the next generation of golfers in the Algarve region. Kids academies and programs will be available throughout the year to encourage the young to take up this game that will see them through the rest of their lives. ♣

The ever-cheery Irishman's prominence as a golfer commenced in 1991 when he played in the Walker Cup as an amateur followed by a successful visit to the European Tour Qualifying School that same year. A highlight of Paul's rock-steady career was holding the winning putt on his Ryder Cup Debut in 2002. He then went on to represent Europe in the Ryder Cup in 2004 and 2006.

McGinley's character is perfectly suited for the team game. A great people person, McGinley could not have been more charming to the crowd of local golf enthusiasts gathered to gain some insight into improving their game at the newly

opened Quinta do Lago teaching facility named after the man himself.

Located at the heart of the Quinta do Lago Resort opposite the main clubhouse and close to the North and South courses, this opening ceremony is the first step in a series of developments that will make the Paul McGinley Golf Academy at Quinta do Lago a Centre of Excellence for teaching golf in Europe.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

While there is currently only a TrackMan for swing and ball flight analysis, there will be more in the ensuing months ahead, as the academy starts to take



taylormade performance labs

Custom fitting aims at building a golf club designed to match individual swing characteristics.

Described as 'Golf's Ultimate Fitting Experience', reflective markers are placed on strategic points on the body as well as on the shaft and head of the club. Nine separate high-speed synchronised cameras capture the motion of the reflectors and instantaneously produce a three dimensional image that can be viewed in motion and from any angle. All relevant elements of the swing are then measured, giving a true representation of its dynamics and impact position.





Paul McGinley's tips on playing better golf in a heartbeat. BY PAUL MCGINLEY



WARMING UP

There is no pro in the world that would go out without preparing themselves with some sort of warm-up. Here are a few ideas to improve your practice sessions.

Most amateurs need to bring structure into their practice. A good tip is to try hitting balls in groups of 3. With a pitching wedge, take three balls and pick a target. Hit those three shots with a specific objective in mind, not necessarily the target but looking to make good contact with the ball. If you don't achieve a crisp, satisfying contact within your first three shots, take three more and do it again until you do.

When you're ready, move on to an 8-iron, then a 6. Don't go through every club; go down in 2's all the way to the driver. Remember, the main objective at this stage is to achieve good contact, not distance or accuracy.

DISTANCE CONTROL

Working on distance is equally important but keep it separate so that you are focusing on one thing at a time. I leave this for the last part of a warm-up session. I normally hit a few 7-irons and a few wedges towards target flags. Know what the distance is to the flags on a practice range and start gauging your distances. Remember to keep loose at this stage. Sometimes when you become target-oriented you get tight. As you start to warm up, distance and accuracy should start coming together.

Rather than tipping out a bucket of balls and lashing at them with the driver, a good, set-routine like this keeps your mind focused. This can make a tremendous difference when you're hitting balls on the course. Practice is about quality, not quantity.

COORDINATED APPROACH

The next thing I'd like to discuss is coordination. 80 to 90 percent of amateurs make the same mistake, particularly men. A good golf swing is a combination of the body turning and arms swinging. This needs to be done in a coordinated way.

The tendency for men is to 'go-at-it' especially with the driver. What usually happens is they don't allow for a proper back turn and then there's a massive

heave forward. Their body moves so far ahead of the ball that the hands are stuck underneath it. Coming into the ball, the club is left aiming right and you then have to compensate. The result is either a pushed shot right or a hook to the left.

To prevent this, restrict your body movement so that it can't lean into it the swing. A good idea for amateurs is to practice shots with their feet together. Besides coordinating your turn, this makes your arms work. I never see people practising their arm movement – they always work on their body. And yet the arms are most important because obviously they're attached to the club. With the feet together, this tends to increase arm speed and at the same time, stop the body leaning forward, otherwise you'll fall over.

Keep in mind though, it's not so much about balance, it's about coordinating your swing so you don't sway.

HOW EQUIPMENT CAN HELP

I've worked with TaylorMade since the beginning of my professional career. I was in San Diego for a two-year scholarship. Our coach was one of founders of TaylorMade, Gary Adams, the man who invented the metal wood. With the advances we've seen with technology, a lot of the problems you see with the golf swing can be fixed by adjusting the equipment.

THE GRIP

This might seem a minor point but it is a much-neglected element in most amateurs' minds. There are about five different settings and your fitting professional will find the correct size for you. On links courses, I need to be play the ball low. The way to do that is to grip down, stand a bit closer without changing your swing and the ball will come out lower every time. To assist this sort of shot, I always get the right side of the grip built up more on the bottom half; there's an extra two layers on the bottom part of my grip from normal so when I grip down it doesn't feel as skinny near the bottom. What you're looking for is the thickness to suit your own hand. A good rule of thumb is your left hand fingers should just about be touching your palm.

TO THE RESCUE

The last iron in my bag is a 5 iron. My 3 and 4 irons have been replaced with Rescues. I think amateurs need to get more familiar with their Rescue clubs and use them more often. There are numerous variable lies where I can use it, even sitting in a divot.

WEDGES

Padraig Harrington used to change his wedges every week. That sounds a bit extreme but he felt that it was necessary to maintain spin on the ball and get it to check on the greens.

Now, TaylorMade has developed a way of easily renewing the grooves in wedges with a face that simply pops out and you can put a new face in.

THE DRIVER

This is an area where new technology really comes into play. There's a great degree of science behind all of this and I recommend that keen golfers or 'golfing anoraks' as I sometimes call them, get tuned in. Take the R11 driver as an example. It has 14 or 15 different settings so there are lots of ways to change the club. The R11 we use on tour, by the way, is exactly the same as the one you'll buy in the shops.

CLUB FITTING

At the Academy, together with your professional, you can really work on the fine details to get your clubs working to its maximum efficiency. Based on your results, the professional will start fitting you. It's all done in a matter of seconds and can be continually adjusted based on your ball flight results until he's got it absolutely right. A lot of problems I encountered in my years on Tour could have been sorted simply by adjusting my equipment rather than trying to change my swing. So, what we've learned on Tour and the amazing technology that is now coming along is being applied to the amateur game.

I think the people that will get the most out of such fitting centres are the 18 to 20 handicappers. In terms of distance and accuracy, it could help their game say 20 to 30 percent. It's not just yardage, it's consistency. 🏌️

THE PORTUGUESE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

While learning to play better golf, enjoy the Mediterranean breezes and creature comforts provided by this Portuguese enclave.



OPENING PICTURE: Laranjal Course - 16th Hole. INSET FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: San Lorenzo Course - 18th Hole; Vale do Lobo course.



The Quinta do Lago community about 15 minutes away from Faro Airport is one of the most exclusive areas in Portugal. The area between the town of Almancil, Quinta do Lago, and Vale do Lobo is often referred to as 'The Golden Triangle'.

The Quinta do Lago Resort offers three golf courses, Quinta do Lago South, Quinta do Lago North and a relatively new, exciting edition, Laranjal, with its sweeping fairways, well-defended greens and beautiful lakes. Also nearby is the famous San Lorenzo course as well as the two Vale do Lobo courses. These, it has to be said, are among the best layouts in Europe so you have plenty of first class golf immediately surrounding Quinta do Lago.

The nearby beach and sea views are quite unique in this area, which is also renowned for dozens of superb local restaurants, many specialising in fish, fresh from the sea only an hour or two away.

MAIN PICTURE: Monte da Quita Suites. BOTTOM PICTURES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Hotel Quinta do Lago - Royal Suite; Gourmet Natural Restaurant; Designer boutiques along Quinta do Lago shopping centre; The busy square at Quinta do Lago shopping centre.

WHERE TO STAY

MONTE DA QUITA SUITES

American-style suites popular with families with a lovely pool area and a small spa. The clubhouse for the North and South courses is within walking distance.
 Phone: + 351 289 000 300
 Email: mqreservas@mqclub.com
 www.montedaquintaresort.com

HOTEL QUINTA DO LAGO

Located in the Resort of Quinta do Lago, this hotel is situated near the Ria Formosa and the sea; in the heart of the Parque Natural da Ria Formosa. This is a 5-star establishment suitable for mature couples with disposable income to spend.
 Phone: +351 289 350 350
 Email: info@quintadolagohotel.com
 www.hotelquintadolago.com

WHERE TO EAT

The Golden Triangle has some of the best culinary delights in all of Portugal with the town of Almancil best for local produce.

GOURMET NATURAL

Only a couple of miles away, this fabulous restaurant specialises in grass-fed beef imported from Uruguay. The menu offers the finest cuts of beef, including fillet, sirloin and Gauchito, the top end of the fillet cooked on the restaurant's special grill – the Parrilla – that uses wood embers rather than charcoal to give it a milder but unique flavour.
 Reservations: +351 289 355 271
 www.gourmetnaturalrestaurant.com

HENRIQUE LEIS, ALMANCIL

This is a Michelin star restaurant with intimate and rustic settings; some even call it a quaint Swiss-style chalet. Brazilian Chef Henrique Leis offers an international menu with such creations as royal urchins and nuts, oysters and lukewarm Sabayon seaweeds. They also have an impressive wine list.
 Reservations: +351 289 393 438
 Web: www.henriqueleis.com

