



## THE COLIN MONTGOMERIE LINKS GOLF ACADEMY AT TURNBERRY

**Turnberry Resort is one of the most luxurious in Scotland but it is more famous for its demanding golfing challenge. Set on the western coast of Scotland, our instructional feature shows you how to tackle links golf at its finest.** BY DAVID J. WHYTE

### SET UP AND FACILITIES

The Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy is part of Turnberry Resort's expansive 5-star operation complete with spa, fine dining and the magnificent hotel that has held pride of place on Scotland's West Coast since the turn of the 20th century. The hotel was refurbished in 2009 just in time for the 138th Open Championship, a memorable occasion when Tom Watson at the age of 59 came so close to winning his sixth Open to become the oldest major champion in history. He lost to Stewart Cink in a four-hole play-off.

The Ailsa course is one of the best examples of links golf and keen players from around the world make their way to Ayrshire to take on its challenges. In order to help those who might not have the benefit of links golf experience, the Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy was established nearly 10 years ago. The Ryder Cup Captain and eight times Order of Merit player was responsible for setting the direction of the academy and returns on a regular basis to hold clinics and maintain his Links Golf philosophy.

The academy has 16 covered driving bays along with separate short-game bays. The GASP video swing analysis system has its own dedicated bay with retractable rollover doors that open on to the driving range. Along with outdoor short game and bunker practice areas, there is the 9-hole Arran course, specially designed for academy golfers to put into practice what they have just learned.

The Academy has recently added a TaylorMade Performance (TMP) Lab, one of only two in the United Kingdom designed to enhance the game with 'Golf's Ultimate Fitting Experience'. The TMP Lab offers a custom fitting process to design and build clubs tailored to an individual's personal swing characteristics. The experience consists of a two-and-a-half hour analysis

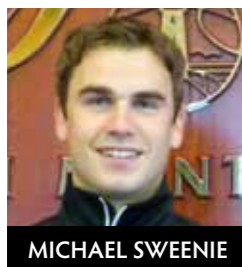


session that maps the golfer's set-up and swing to the nearest tenth of a degree using 34 reflective markers placed on both the body and the club, these sensors are tracked by six high-speed cameras and the data is fed to a computer. The computer then creates an avatar on-screen to depict the golfer's movements for detailed comparison and analysis.

OPENING PAGE: The Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy

# SWING PHILOSOPHY

Turnberry's Head Teaching Professional at the Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy, Michael Sweeney, offers how it might help players adapt to challenging links conditions. BY MICHAEL SWEENIE



Golfers from other parts of the world tend to play parkland courses and if it's raining or windy they might choose not to play at all. That's not how we approach the game here. The weather and its unpredictable nature is part of the game here and a great part of the appeal. You can play these courses every day of your life and no two rounds will be the same.

The teaching philosophy here at Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy is similar to how Colin Montgomerie played his own game. Brought up on the west coast of Scotland, he played golf at a very natural level. There were a few quirks in his swing but his results proved that he was capable of playing very consistent golf.

That is the essence of what we are working towards here at the Golf Links Academy - consistency. Look at Montgomerie's career, he has been the absolute classic golfer in terms of consistency with no less than eight Order of Merit titles. Colin wanted this to be a place

where people could come to adapt their game to their own natural strengths and weaknesses and to the unique conditions they will face out on the links.

Montgomerie does about five or six clinics here at Turnberry each year focusing on links golf and he always emphasises one thing: You have to relax in order to play links golf. When the wind is blowing across the fairways, most amateurs get tense and try to force the ball, usually trying to hit it harder which only imparts more spin - the last thing you want out there. Instead, we encourage you to take an extra club, swing it nice and easy with soft hands. The take-away should be slow and controlled. These are the key elements of Colin Montgomerie's approach and the foundations you need for solid golf, especially in the wind.

Every time you play the Ailsa, it's going to be different. That's very much the essence of links golf. You can play it back-to-back on consecutive days and it's virtually like playing a different golf course in terms of club selection,



OPENING PAGE:  
Turnberry Golf Club,  
Kintyre Course, 8th Hole.  
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
LEFT: Turnberry Golf Club,  
Ailsa Course, 11th Hole;  
Ailsa Course; Turnberry  
lighthouse & Isle of  
Arran; Turnberry Resort;  
Turnberry Golf Club, Ailsa  
Course, 16th Hole.

length of the holes and weather conditions.

On the 1st hole on the Ailsa for instance, I've driven the green with a 3-wood. Then just the other day I hit driver and 3-wood into the green so that's the scope. In summer, downwind, baked hard, you can drive 340 yards. In order to survive and even play well, it's all about adapting to the weather on the day. Coming to Scotland, you definitely are not coming for a sunny holiday. You're coming take on some of the best golf courses in the world. Wind, rain or shine.

Take the Open Championship last year at St Andrews. On the first day the weather was great and young Rory McIlroy went out and shot 63. On the second day in completely different conditions, he shot 80. The best golfers in the world will struggle under some of these conditions. Tiger Woods in 2001 at Muirfield shot an 81. There are going to be days out there that 80 is a good score. That's the nature and beauty of links golf.

For dedicated golfers, links golf adds new dimensions. Assess the weather in the morning; if it's blowing hard - it's going to be tough. Go out there and try and limit the damage. Try and keep the ball low, on the fairway, try and keep it out of the fairway bunkers. Instead of reaching for your wedges, try and run it into the greens. You are working with your senses a lot more here. You use your eyes, but most of all you use your brain, you need to be more creative especially around the greens.

Club selection can be completely different. Rather than for every chip shot or every pitch shot choosing the sand iron or lob wedge, there are going to be times when you might even use a 3-wood or the classic Texas-wedge - a putter from 30 or 40 yards out and onto the green. Cast aside your normal understanding of 100-yard approach shot.

That's exciting, creative golf. Golfers who play links golf for the first time want to go back to their habits but that's the challenge both for us teaching professionals and the golfer. Get them to play bump and run shots with a 5-iron for instance. They really enjoy that. They're capable of playing those shots a lot better than they initially thought and get great results. It's all about making adjustments to your setup to play the ball as low as possible. A lot of golfers might have never played this way before. It goes against what you initially learned to get the ball up into the air.

These are fundamental changes and can be a bit scary. But if you are coming to Scotland to play links golf, you have taken these changes on board. You would be surprised just how well you can play and how much more you can enjoy links golf. 📍

# CALLING THE SHOTS

Michael Sweeney, head teaching professional at Turnberry's Colin Montgomerie Golf Links Academy shows us the shots that are key to enjoyable, and successful links golf. BY MICHAEL SWEENIE



EXTREME LEFT: Driving across the wind. INSET ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE: Links putting. CENTER TOP: Pot Bunker. TOP RIGHT: Bump and Run. BELOW RIGHT: Escape the rough. INSET ON THIS PAGE: Punch Shot.



## DRIVING IN THE WIND

The golfer is looking for less backspin when hitting into the wind to avoid losing control. Driving in the wind is about accounting for the wind's direction and strength and adjusting the trajectory to accommodate it.

## THE PUNCH SHOT

The punch is a low penetrating approach shot using for instance a 7-iron. Get the ball back in your stance to impart an initial low trajectory to keep the ball low and let it roll onto the green.

## POT BUNKERS

Links pot bunkers are much more severe than you'll find on any other type of golf course. You need to know how to escape them successfully. Open the stance and make sure you have plenty loft and most of all have a good understanding of what we're trying to achieve. In many cases it's simply a case of limiting the damage. Play out sideways if it's the safest option. It might not look very brave but it will save you strokes.

## THE TEXAS WEDGE

Links golf courses tend to have big greens, some, at



St Andrews for instance leave 150-foot putts. It's not unusual to employ a putter from as much as 50 yards off the green and roll it all the way towards the pin.

## PUTTING

Wind is a factor here also. Surprisingly for some, the greens will often run a little bit slower. If the greens were cut short, when the wind picks up the ball can begin to oscillate and move. Spend a good session on the practice putting green to get used to the pace of the greens. Hit some 30-50 foot putts for practice; you'll need them.

## PLAYING THE AILSA AND KINTYRE

### THE AILSA COURSE

The Ailsa is such a scenic golf course, playing it for the first time you're going to be blown away by the views and most likely by the breezes. Moving that bit closer to the water makes a considerable difference in terms of exposure to the wind and this is Ailsa's underlying, unseen defence.

Taking on one of the most celebrated of links golf courses calls into play many of the techniques you will gather at the Colin Montgomerie Links Academy.

Driving into or against a crosswind is a situation few will avoid here so it calls for a different approach;

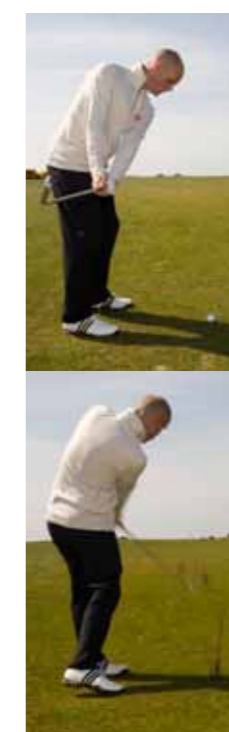
The same can be said around the greens. Links terrain, given its sandy nature and constant wind, is firm and dry through most of the season. This is where low punch shots come in handy from 100 yards out and bump and run approaches closer to the green can pay dividends in reaching the flag.

The word imagination springs forth. Links golf asks you to be more engaged with your environment. Look at the lie of the land, consider the breeze and its direction and play approach shots short to allow for the bounce and roll.

### THE KINTYRE

The Kintyre is often under-rated and overlooked due to the prestige of its next-door neighbour. But the Kintyre is a championship golf course in its own right and has held the Scottish Amateur and various professional events as well as being a Open Championship Qualifying course when the event is played on the Ailsa.

The Kintyre has its own unique character. Although predominantly links, it has more of an inland feel and is less effected by coastal breezes. Gorse-lined



fairways make you temper your tee shots. Bunkering is predominant on many of Kintyre's holes, cunningly placed to maximise their effect. To score the Kintyre is all about accuracy.

Around Kintyre's turn, there is a trio of exceptional holes, 8, 9 and 10 with the water of Clyde's Estuary and Turnberry Lighthouse in the background. The 8th is a short Par 4, eminently drivable but surrounded by rocks, gorse and shoreline and easily misjudged. Layup ahead of the drop and tentatively chip onto the green with still a good chance of the ball rolling right off the back. This is a great little hole with a stunning backdrop of the water and crags of Arran.

**For further information and to make a reservation, please call +44.1655.333.991 or email turnberry.teetimes@luxurycollection.com**