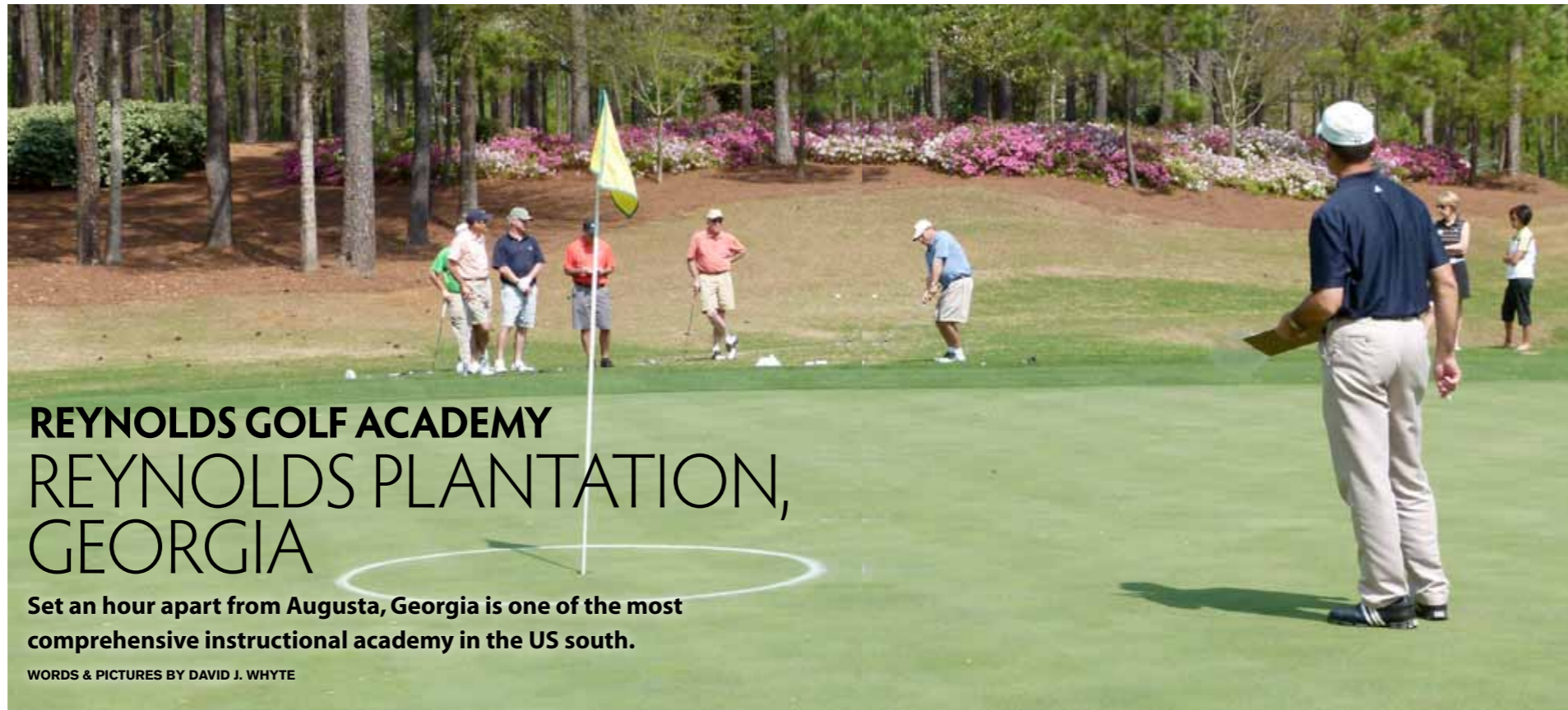


Charlie King is one of the USA's Top 100 golf instructors. Based at the Reynolds Plantation Golf Academy, he offers a "3-day Essentials Comprehensive School", and a unique Red Zone Challenge Short Game School. A deeply passionate coach who reverse-engineered a lot, he basically learnt what not to teach from some bad lessons he's had previously. His first teacher had a one-size-fits-all approach. Subsequently, there were others whose philosophies changed from week to week. Here, at Reynolds Plantation, he has a programme that has sustained successfully through the years.

The Reynolds Plantation Golf Academy opened in 2002. It started out as a Dave Peltz Short Game School but the resort wanted their own dedicated teaching resource and in 2007, the Reynolds Plantation Golf Academy was opened. The setting for the Academy is one of the finest, nestled within a shaded dell, azaleas and cherry blossom trees surrounding a theatre dedicated to short-game improvement. There is a generous driving range but it is the short game facilities that stand out and King duly explains it.

"We had the chance to model this area specifically to suit our teaching requirements. It really is detailed. We have a three-tiered pitching range where you play over a creek to the green - each tier offers different distances so you can work on your wedge distances. Then there's the putting green at 8,000 sq. feet. You could have 15 people working on putts there with plenty room to spare. Then, there is a bunker/green area which can also be used for pitching and chipping. We even had mounds put in so people could practice uneven lies and side-hill shots."

The indoor Classroom at the golf school is where pupils



REYNOLDS GOLF ACADEMY REYNOLDS PLANTATION, GEORGIA

Set an hour apart from Augusta, Georgia is one of the most comprehensive instructional academy in the US south.

WORDS & PICTURES BY DAVID J. WHYTE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Red Zone Challenge Short Game School; Indoor Classroom; Red Zone Challenge; Reynolds Golf Academy signboard.

take their first step. "In golf," says Charlie, "there are so many myths and most people come into our classroom with a head full of them. 'Oh, I'm looking up on a bad shot,' is a typical example." The classroom is critical to give golfers conceptual understanding of the swing and how we intend to help them improve. We have a definite

plan," Charlie continues, "so it helps to outline that in a classroom situation before going onto the practice areas."

It was apparent while attending Charlie's 3-Day Essentials School that his teaching philosophy was influenced by early lessons that didn't perhaps go so well. "That really made me dig

deep into understanding exactly what we should be teaching, what would be most helpful to golfers to improve their game. It came down to an understanding that, like swimming or basketball, golf is a motor-skill game and motor skills break down into component parts."

One of the main tenets of his teaching philosophy is the essential

skills that a person needs to strike a golf ball and have identified and prioritised them: "We look for the priority skills that are missing and that's where we focus. In this way, you are not going to get confused or overwhelmed. We let you keep your style - that's essential - and we address specific flaws within that style."



the kingdom
Reynolds Golf Academy also encompasses "The Kingdom", a partnership between the resort and TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company to test and fit custom-built equipment to each player's unique specifications on site. Custom fitting at The Kingdom is performed with TaylorMade's MATT System (Motion Analysis by TaylorMade), a sophisticated club fitting tool that combines nine high-speed cameras and a computer to gather vital swing information and statistics through the use of a launch monitor, multiple high-speed video cameras and a computer. The system distils that information to create a sophisticated, computer-animated image of your swing that's viewable from every angle. MATT is also programmed to execute a multitude of calculations and measurements to develop a data-driven personal-swing profile. The Kingdom, the main facility in the southeastern US, serves many tour professionals, club professionals and resort guests. It is quite possible to have a full set of clubs measured, built and delivered to you the next day.

SIX FUNDAMENTALS

TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME

Key Lessons from the "3-Day Essentials Comprehensive School" BY CHARLIE KING



1. LINE DRILL

PROBLEM

What is the most common fault that plagues golfers? Most people would say slicing but it is actually 'scooping', or being too wristy at impact. Scooping entails golfers falling back on to their back foot and flipping their wrists to make the ball go up in the air. Your friends say, 'You looked up - keep your head down'. But that's rarely the case. It's those flipping wrists.

SOLUTION

To counteract this, you think you need to hit down on the ball but the correct action is actually to brush the ground with the club leaning slightly forward. That is the key. At first glance, the Line Drill seems too simple. Put two balls across from each other creating an imaginary line. Make five half swings with a pitching wedge and see how many times can you hit the line. Then try hitting some balls and you'll begin to hit them more solidly instead of scooping. You're now a solid ball-striker.



2. CIRCLE DRILL

PROBLEM

Getting the ball to go towards a target. A golf club is set at an angle on an arc that is tilted. This is known as swing-plane. That swing plane plus the clubface angle is what propels the golf ball towards the target. Going straight back and straight through tends to leave the clubface open. The ball goes off to the right, high and weak. This scenario is typically why the majority of golfers slice the ball.

SOLUTION

Imagine that a ball is teed up at waist height. Then swing around the body in a circle. The right elbow folds on the backswing, the left elbow folds on the follow-through. There's also a rotation taking place in the forearms with the clubface going from open, to square, to closed. Take this principal and tilt it forward towards the ground. You'll be surprised at the results when you hit a ball.



3. SWOOSH DRILL

PROBLEM

When golfers come to a golf school or take a lesson, they are inevitably looking for two things - consistency and distance. For distance, we might take the club back slowly and then start down really fast from the top, but unfortunately, the ball doesn't go far. Then you try to swing even harder. This is very inefficient and achieves only a short distance with maximum of effort.

SOLUTION

To learn how to apply speed at the right point, try the Swoosh Drill. Turn the club around and hold it by the head-end. To create a loud 'swoosh', consider how your wrists hinge; if you create wrist hinge and give it away too soon you'll hear the swoosh early in the swing. If you hold it too long, you have a checked swing as in baseball. You are looking to hold the angle and release it at the optimum point for maximum 'swoosh' and clubhead speed.



4. BUNKERS

PROBLEM

People struggle with bunkers but this can be simplified to the point where a greenside bunker doesn't present a problem. It's all about the sand.

SOLUTION

To practice, draw a line in the bunker sand and without a ball, take sand divots about 3 inches on either side of that line. If your divot is too deep or starts too early, keep working to smooth it out. Only take a partial swing and slide it under the sand. Then start practising with balls. Put them on the line and only take short, partial swings. Once you have the balls popping up into the air, start applying more speed with a longer swing to get them out of the bunker.



5. PUTTING

PROBLEM

To putt well, you need to roll the ball well and on line.

SOLUTION 1

To get a feel for both of these aspects, put two clubs on the ground parallel to each other. Line up a straight putt to a hole 5 feet away. Now we have the path established, if the ball doesn't go in the hole, we can gauge where the face was pointing at impact. If you miss left, the clubface is 1 or 2 degrees open at impact and vice versa to the right. Is it open or closed because of the way you're taking it back or are you shutting it?

SOLUTION 2

Place two balls either side of the hole to act as a gate. The two balls make the hole look much bigger and you'll be surprised how much more confidence this imparts, allowing your body and mind to relax, which is always really important in putting.



6. CHIPPING

PROBLEM

Poor chipping comes from steering and jabbing with a low handle finish and of course, those destructive flipped wrists. This will never allow solid contact and any feeling of control.

SOLUTION

If you keep your hands ahead of the ball and slightly de-loft the club this will actually make the ball easier to get into the air. A perfect arc, both back and through, is one of the secrets to great chipping. Have 70 percent of your weight on your front foot, keep it there throughout the swing and plan to bring the handle of the club up to waist height at finish. Practice this and you'll get lovely, crisp, controlled chips that seem effortless. 🏌️‍♂️



TRAVEL TO REYNOLD'S PLANTATION

Experience a slice of pure Georgian golf an hour's drive from Atlanta and Augusta.

Every April, it is common to see a few tour players practising and enjoying the relative peace here ahead of the Masters. There are six courses on-property with a nice mix of designs from Jack Nicklaus, Tom Fazio, Bob Cupp, Reese Jones to Jim Enge. The courses amble over the rolling terrain and pine trees (with needles) that make Georgia golf famous. But few holes are far from water. Lake Oconee is a 22-mile long man-made lake created in 1979 when Georgia Power dammed the Oconee River.

With 374 miles of prime lakeside property, Reynolds Plantation has created an upmarket, gated-community with hundreds of impressive homes overlooking the courses and lake. However, the real estate never comes into conflict with the golf with each a respectable distance back with lots of trees in between. On courses like Great Waters, eight out of nine holes on the back half are on the water - that's a lot of prime real estate to give up to a golf course but it goes to show how much emphasis is placed on golf here.

There are luxurious condominiums near to the Oconee Course, which are hugely spacious and self-contained - ideal for a family or friends - but also a rich variety of accommodation choices from cottages to inn rooms. For those looking for a 5-star, full-service hotel, the Ritz-Carlton Lodge and Reynolds Plantation Spa overlooking Lake Oconee is ideal with an impressive state-of-the-art fitness centre equipped with complete training circuit.

Avid golfers are inundated with choices while families will find no problem in enjoying a huge range of on-property activities including biking, hiking, tennis, kayaking, fishing, numerous pools and lots of peaceful space to just relax in. A highlight for non-golfers is a fishing expedition out on the lake with Norris Edge, the resident fishing guide.

It's hard to say which golf course is best here but for panoramic beauty, the lakeside vistas of Great Waters offer the most. Here, Jack Nicklaus has curbed his inclination to create over demanding, undulating theatres and opted to blend a wonderful smooth tract through trees and across water. The front nine has



some tight, strategic holes while the back nine offers exceptionally beautiful play by the lake.

The Creek Club is private but a friendly banter with a member - and within this chummy community, one is likely to be able to - can get a round arranged quite easily. Great elevation changes pepper the Creek course and its play cannot be more different from the others. There are few more memorable holes in the game than the 12th here, or perhaps the 18th with its choice of three different greens. It seems the finishing arena was so good that they couldn't make up their mind where to put the green and so they alternate them each day.

www.reynoldsplantation.com

Watch David J. Whyte's video presentations on Reynolds Plantation & The Golf Road Warriors at www.reynoldsplantation.golfroadwarriors.com.

OPENING PICTURE: The Creek Club - 18th Hole.
RIGHT PAGE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Great Waters Course; Oconee Course.