

## Improve Your Golf Game By Improving Your Vision, So You Can See the Big Picture

By Jeffrey J. Eger, O.D.

Did your parents ever console you as a child when you were worried over some misfortune and tell you, "don't worry about this small thing, see the big picture?" I had no idea how profound that advice was until I had seen what improving a patient's vision and increasing their peripheral awareness (panoramic vision) does when fitted with comfortable custom fitted contact lenses or to do vision training to improve their seven vision skills. These seven skills are: visual acuity or sight, eye tracking, efficient near-far focusing, localization in space, binocularity, peripheral vision and, last, visualization. After working with many top amateur and touring pros (of which three became champions shortly after sport vision therapy) when all seven skills were working more efficiently they began to see easy, feel easy and play easy if their swing mechanics were graduated by a golf professional. This article can only address sight and in sports it must be corrected with contact lenses instead of glasses. Custom fitted contact lenses will help you see naturally, easily and will begin to help you see the big picture.

Many patients play golf, including some excellent PGA professionals. They commented, after therapy, how their golf game was more fun now and their handicap dropped significantly. Well, every doctor

likes to hear their work has changed their patient's life for the better, but sometimes we don't know why. I will try briefly to share with you my impressions of why custom sports performance contact lenses help you see the truer big picture over eye glasses and why enhancing your peripheral vision helps you relax in order to play your game to your optimum potential.

How many of us have been told to keep our eye on the ball to hit a good shot? My question, as a sports optometrist, is "What good is keeping your eye on the ball if the incoming information through the eyes is incorrect or out of focus." I tell my players, "you can't focus if you can't focus." They laugh and understand, after therapy, that vision is more fundamental than thinking or mental playing. When vision is enhanced and working more efficiently, the players are playing more instinctively, feeling and dreaming their game. Not only do they play better, but they have fun.

In 1990, at the Phoenix Open I helped a former classmate of mine from optometry school. Because of this player's time

restraint, I had to fit him on the last round with a different contact lens to better correct his astigmatism and his presbyopia (weakening of crystalline lens focusing beginning after age 40). He gave me his recent corneal and spectacle readings and I brought out three different lenses for him to try on the practice putting green. Whichever lens helped him roll the ball better into the cup and centered better on his eye is what I call now a sports performance contact lens. This player shot his best round of the tournament that day with a three under par. That year he was one of two players over the age of 40 to win a PGA event (eleven in history have done this), winning the Kemper Open and receiving \$702,000 in yearly earnings. His name is Dr. Gil Morgan, age 43, who won two tournaments that same year did not change clubs, his swing or go to a sport psychologist. He changed his vision from wearing thick nearsighted glasses to contact lenses. This man was Hale Irwin.

The reason custom contact lenses are better for players over glasses is because it gives truer, wider and more natural open vision. The optical centers align with the vision centers of our eyes as we move our eyes so we get more natural vision and don't have to move our head as much as glasses. Contacts give us a panoramic view of the course or a bigger bite of computer information for the brain.

Eyeglasses' true optical area of vision is the size of a quarter in the center of the

lens. Everything else is a *funny house effect* of distortion. So if you look in the periphery of your glasses the vision is false. The more you move your head the more you innovate the semicircular canal fluids in your inner ear. This causes an imbalance in the body and your eyes jerk laterally back and forth (nystagmus).

So what is easier to hit, a still ball or a moving ball? Wider vision possibly allows more light into the vision system causing more relaxation in the whole body. Can you see why when I had the opportunity to examine Phil Mickelson, at the beginning of his junior year at ASU, a contact lens was chosen as his first ever vision correction. He was the U.S. amateur and N.C.A.A. champion that same year before his sight was corrected. Five weeks after wearing his new sports performance contact lenses he won the P.G.A. 1991 Tucson Open. Phil was only one of four amateurs ever to win a P.G.A. event.

It's critical that the eyes stay still and focus over the ball when we putt, because the hands will naturally go where the eyes were last focused. Remember it's easier to hit a still ball than a dancing ball.

Improving peripheral visual enhancement by using a custom fitted contact lens or naturally improving your nearsightedness with an accomatrac vision trainer (vision therapy) will give you wider, truer and more efficient visual information to the brain. Many patients say they are more relaxed and trusting. They see it, trust it and do it. Your performance is only as good as your vision. So it's just like Flip Wilson says, "What you see is what you get."

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