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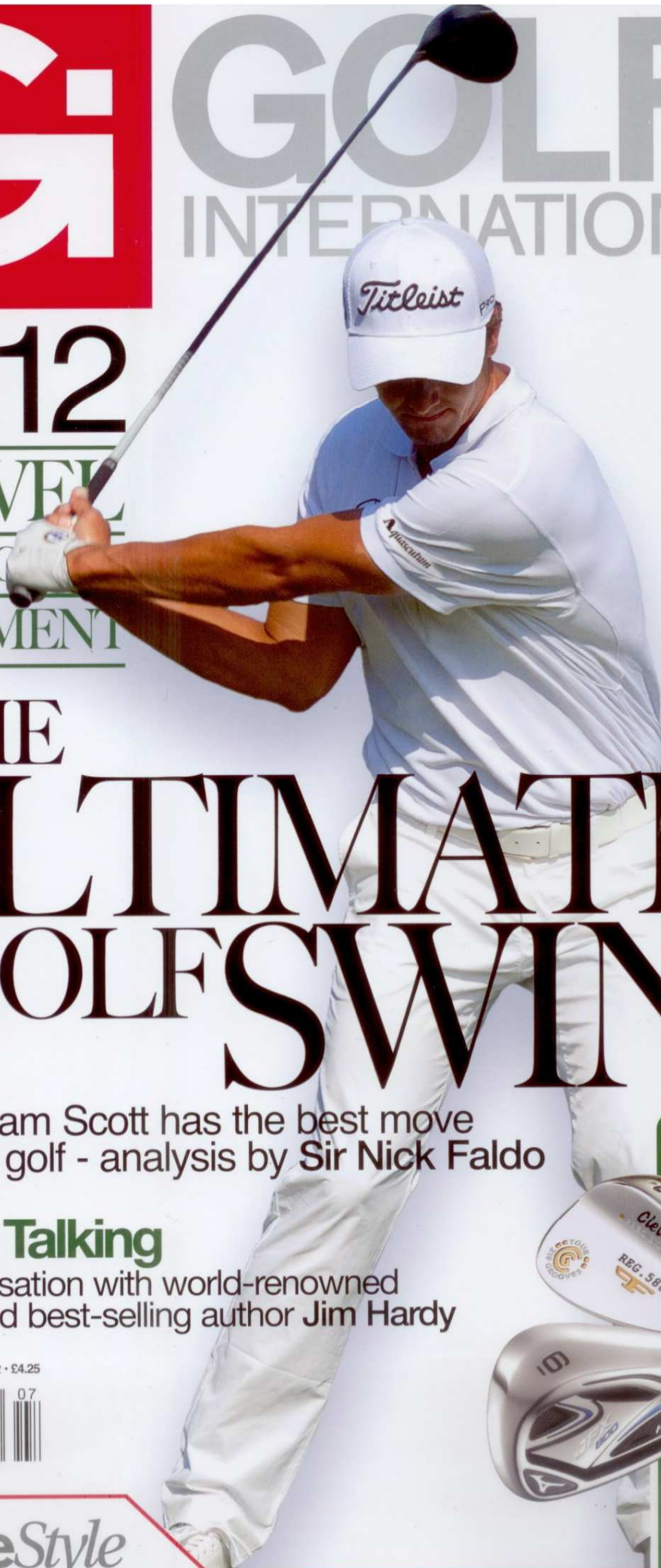
ISSUE 107 • JAN/FEB '12 • £4.25



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G LifeStyle

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Sergio: Lovin' It

A happier personal
life has led to a
renaissance in the
career of Sergio Garcia

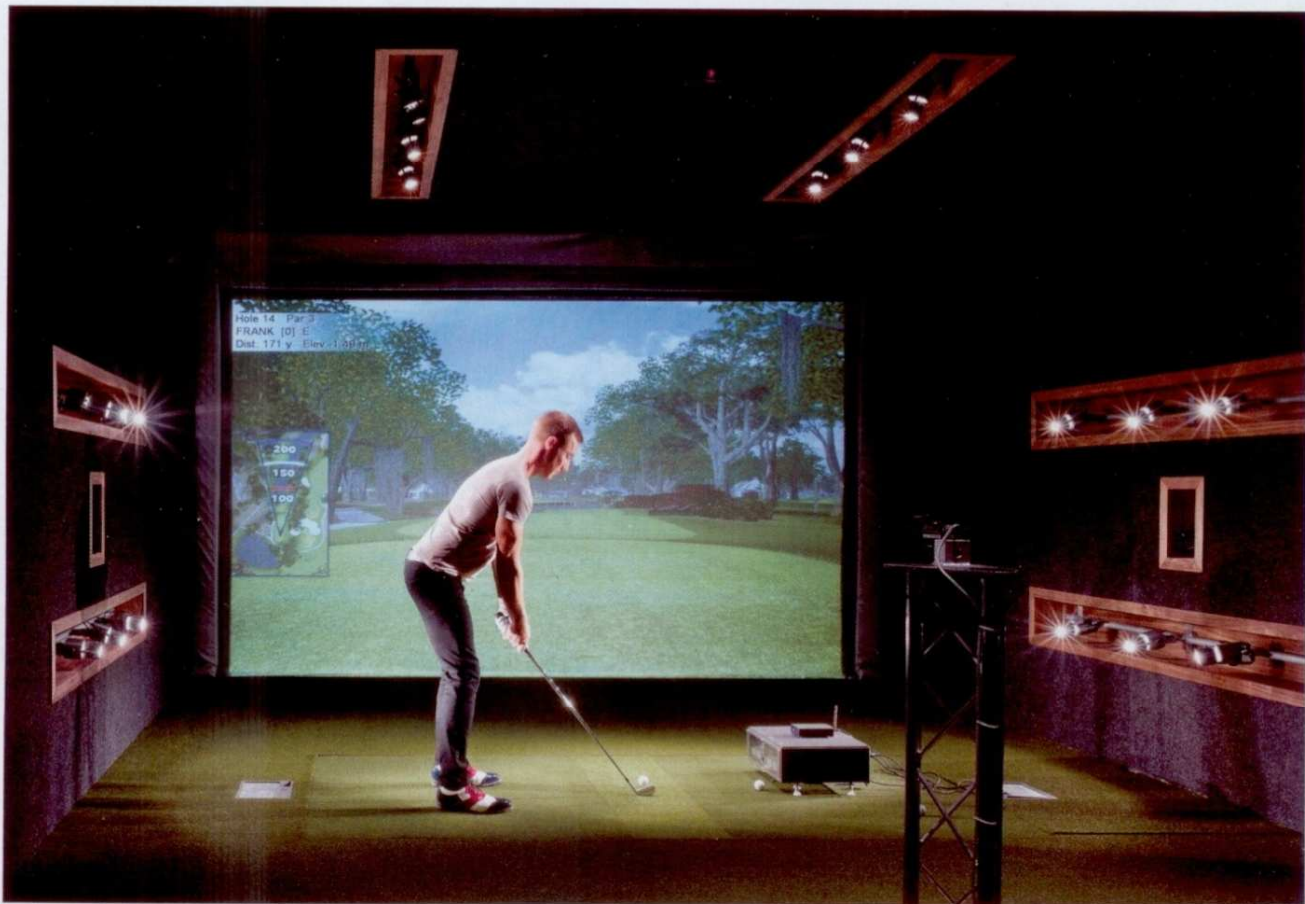
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A FORCE FOR THE FUTURE

aboutGolf's new swing coaching software



Revealing new swing analysis technology from golf's leading simulator company, in partnership with the European Tour's biomechanics initiative, is transforming the coaching experience for amateurs as well as leading tour stars.

Dominic Pedler visited Urban Golf in London to see the latest aboutGolf system in action.

The steady rise in biomechanical-based coaching across sports ranging from track and field to skiing, rowing - and increasingly golf - reflects the success in tailoring technique according to an individual's physical capabilities.

We can all dream of the perfect swing but without the necessary flexibility, movement and power we'll never achieve it.

Of course, today's super-fit tour pros have rigorous workout routines that prepare them for developing their awesome power-driven swings. But for the rest of us to play to our potential, instructors are increasingly

acknowledging the importance of coaching within the context of our limitations, which biomechanics measure in terms of the forces operating in our individual swings.

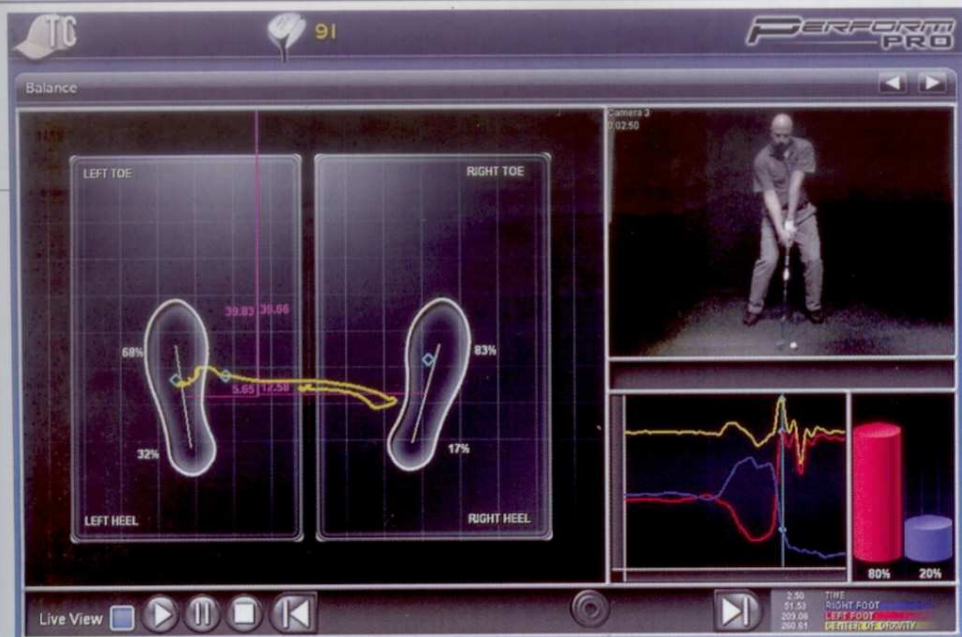
And having seen success from leading experts with all levels of golfer, the European Tour itself is launching its own coaching initiative, European Tour Performance Institute, which is being rolled out across their own portfolio of golf courses in the UK and continental Europe.

Central to the programme is the fascinating new Perform Pro software developed by US company, aboutGolf, in conjunction with their special force

plates that measures the golfer's balance, posture and the dynamic forces generated throughout the swing. This adds a new dimension to conventional swing analysis and complements the biomechanical screenings and assessment that underlie this whole approach.

AboutGolf will already be familiar to those city slickers who frequent the three London branches of Urban Golf, the indoor operator that offers an almost virtual golf experience in state-of-the-art simulators along with the latest approaches to instruction and clubfitting.

Indeed, Urban Golf are integrating aboutGolf's new system into their own coaching programmes, with the all important aG Balance Pro force plates already installed in the high-tech Performance Centre at their High Street Kensington branch. This was the venue for a recent ETPI demo in which leading coach, Simon Holmes, and the European tour's leading biomechanics consultant, JJ Rivet, assessed and instructed a group of



The latest Perform Pro software from aboutGolf provides instant feedback on weight transfer and the forces generated by a player throughout the golf swing

amateurs using this highly customized approach.

As JJ Rivet has proved in recent years, biomechanics combined with the new Balance Pro technology is proving a coaching revelation. At the simplest level it provides instant feedback to both coach and player on a variety of data including the relative weight between left and right feet (and also between heel and toe) from address through to follow-through.

This immediately throws up faults, most obviously a reverse pivot, while helping the golfer to feel the correct weight transfer that is so fundamental to maximizing their distance potential. All the relevant numbers are thrown up clearly as digital graphics in the programme, as we saw on Urban Golf's giant 12ftx11ft screen.

The software's attention to detail is impressive: for example, sudden dips

in the graph of weight shift in the downswing help to identify golfers with a tendency to lift up their body slightly before impact, thereby causing an inefficient loss of force (force which, frustratingly, the player had already generated). Indeed, it seems that 'good' and 'bad' golfers can be very effectively identified simply by differences in their weight transfer profiles.

"Biomechanics in golf is all about identifying what forces a player can generate and using them to help rather than hinder their swing," explains JJ Rivet, who is using the aboutGolf system with leading French tour stars such as Raphael Jacquelin as well as the French national amateur team. "This involves assessing a player's flexibility, strength and movement to appreciate how he can make his swing more efficient within these natural limitations which, for every golfer, will

also change over time."

The aboutGolf system looks set to be widely adopted among leading independent coaches once the portable version of the Perform Pro package is finalized.

In the meantime, Urban Golf is showcasing the system alongside their golf simulator experience which now also adopts the latest generation of aboutGolf's 3Trak ball-tracking technology.

We first mentioned the important switch from laser-based to camera-based tracking back in Issue 105, and now the sixth generation of 3Trak is truly pushing the envelope in terms of capturing and representing a golfer's ball-flight on an indoor digital screen.

"The technology has got to the level where, even if a technically more accurate version is developed, I doubt even the very best golfers could discern any differences," says Urban Golf's Managing Director, James Day, who in his quest to offer the ultimate golf simulator experience has been following the R&D closely for almost a decade.

"With this greater accuracy and realism of graphics the golf simulator experience continues to evolve," explains Day. "There's an ever expanding library of digitally-scanned courses to play, while serious golfers now use the facility as a driving range confident that the visual flight and the accompanying data is providing them with highly accurate feedback."

Not that the R&D stops here. "There are still new challenges in making the concept more interactive, allowing golfers to play each other online and letting them 'compete' in a digital version of a real tour event, complete with leaderboards, sights and sounds," envisages Day.

With the Kensington, Smithfield and Soho branches now all offering the same standard of tracking, and aboutGolf technology transforming the instruction potential, Urban Golf look set to grow their 1,200-a month customer visits across the three venues.

Not least as the British winter approaches...

For more information visit: www.urbangolf.co.uk, www.aboutgolf.com; and (for EPTI) www.europeantour.com

