



CAM CHAMP: ROCKET MAN

Who better to teach you the secrets of tee box power than the longest player on Tour? For your driving pleasure, Champ's five tips to add serious speed.

With Ryan Asselta
Photographs by Jeff Wilson

▶ **The numbers don't lie.** At just 25 years old, Cameron Champ has quickly morphed into the most dominant driver of the ball on the PGA Tour. In 2019, Champ averaged 317.9 yards off the tee, ranking No. 1 in driving distance. At a slender 6 feet tall and 180 pounds, and with a waist his instructor Sean Foley says is probably on the short side of 29 inches, Champ generates that distance with ridiculous swing speed: 128.01 miles per hour (also No. 1 on Tour) on trusted Trackman reports. That velocity produces an average in-tournament ball speed of 190.7 mph off the tee—seven miles per hour faster than any one of his peers on the pro circuit. So how does he do it? In his own words, Cameron shares his five keys to send it deep.



KNOW YOUR OWN SHOT SHAPE AND VISUALIZE IT

● When it comes to hitting it long off the tee, I always go with my normal shot shape. **When I'm driving the ball well, I play a slight draw, so no matter what the conditions I'll always stick with that natural shape.** When I veer off from that mindset, I start missing it both ways and we know how the two-way miss can cripple even the best drivers in the world. I'll pick a small target where I'd like my ball to end up and try to visualize my shot shape—seeing a slight draw—and go with it.

I think getting off the tee is the hardest part of the game for recreational golfers. I've seen many weekenders fight their natural shot shape. I have a friend whose ball flight is a big cut. He aims down the middle of the fairway every time and he'll drive the ball into the right rough or woods. I finally said to him, "Why don't you just play the cut? Aim up the left side of the fairway and hit your normal shot." He started doing that and immediately was hitting more fairways.

Know your shape. Then visualize it and own it. Easy.



19 TEE THE BALL AT THE CORRECT HEIGHT

● We've all heard the saying "Tee it high and let it fly," **but for me teeing my ball lower is a key to finding more fairways.** Ninety percent of the time I peg it about an inch and a half above the ground. The low ball flight is much more consistent for me and because the ball isn't in the air as long, it has less time to move.

Sure, the ball would fly farther if I teed it up higher, but I've found that my total distance is the same because I get so much roll-out. I'll tee it half a ball higher if I have a drivable par 4 and I want to carry it farther and land it with less roll, but most of the time I tee it low and see it roll. Recreational golfers looking to find more fairways should try teeing it lower. I bet they'll actually gain more distance off the tee.

"Cameron could easily fly the ball 340 yards, but he'd lose accuracy," says his instructor Sean Foley. "Instead he carries the ball 310 yards and then gets 40 yards of rollout because his landing angle is 20 degrees."



20 GET WIDE EARLY FOR SPEED WHERE IT COUNTS

● Speed starts at the beginning of your swing. Whether you can whip it 80 miles per hour or 120-plus like me, the key to generating ball speed is creating width in your takeaway. I see a ton of recreational golfers who struggle to create a full turn or rotation. That problem starts during the takeaway. Many golfers just pick up their driver and turn their shoulders. **In order to create maximum speed, you have to create maximum width. This is something I work on a lot.**

Try taking the club back almost as far out as you can, creating that width. Naturally, your body will want to turn with you. This will create more speed when you come down from the top.



21 ROTATE EVERYTHING AT THE TOP

● I've played in dozens of pro-ams over my career and one common mistake I see amateurs make is that they forget about their lower body. They'll make a big turn with their upper body but keep their lower body still. I like to make a complete body turn. I know all golfers may not be as flexible as I am, but even the most inflexible player can make a turn to some extent. Use your hips, legs and shoulders. **Make a full turn, or as full as you can, before starting your downswing.**

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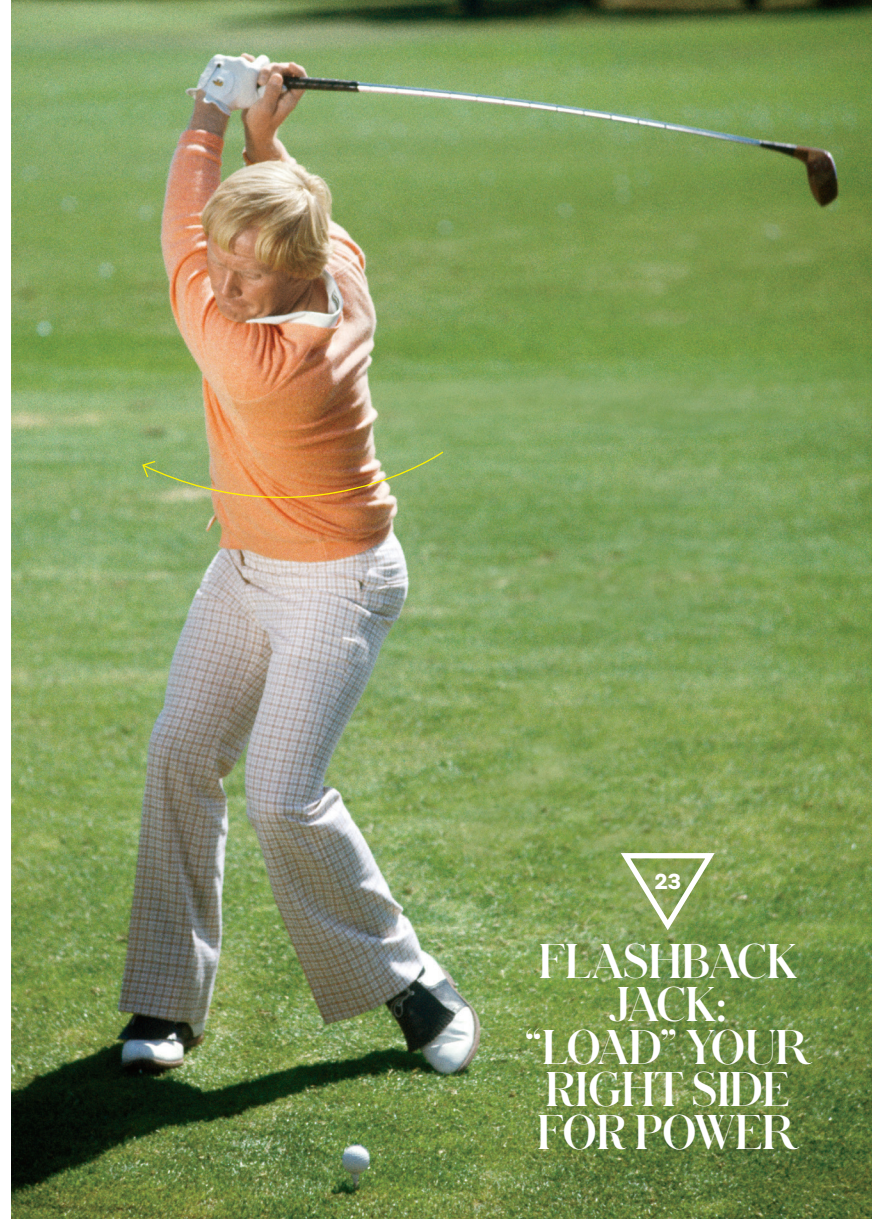
GET YOUR HIPS OUT OF THE WAY

Equally as important as the rotation *to* the top is a full rotation *from* the top on down. This is done with our hips. Almost all long hitters fully “clear” their hips on the downswing, and do it so aggressively that the club ends up “lagging” behind their body. Sergio García has been the poster boy for this move for years. Other examples: Rory McIlroy and Brooks Koepka... their hips are rotating superfast and the club is behind them.

Tip: Once you get to the top of your swing and you’re ready to start back down, feel like you’re rotating your hips as hard as you can. That will create the lag. Lag creates speed, and speed creates power.

“Cameron uses the principle of elastic energy to create his speed,” says Foley. “He basically turns into a slingshot by rotating his lower body. The elastic recoil is where his true power comes from.”

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FLASHBACK JACK: “LOAD” YOUR RIGHT SIDE FOR POWER

If you’re curious how Jack Nicklaus became the most dominant driver of his generation, this is it! He has rotated deep around his right hip and loaded max pressure into his trail side for a huge turn. (His left foot is mostly for balance.) It’s a full-body, athletic windup that ends up positioning his entire body behind the ball as he reaches the top. **Lesson: Don’t cheat your backswing. The wider and fuller you make it, the faster you’ll swing.** —Joe Plecker



25. One Drill for Better Driving

Distance is king, but distance *and* accuracy is the ultimate goal. To master both, you need to extend your arms fully through impact. Try this: Tee up a ball and place another tee six inches outside the first on a 45-degree angle. Your goal is to strike the ball on the first tee and swing the clubhead over the second. Do this and you’ll automatically hit all the right power positions.

24. Smoke It on a Downhill

Downhill lies can be tough, but making a few adjustments gives you a greater chance for success. One constant for downhill lies is that they tend to produce shots that come out low and to the right, so you need to make four adjustments: 1) go up one club; 2) aim left; 3) move the ball back in your stance and set your shoulders at the same angle as the slope; 4) stay balanced and centered throughout the shot. **Avoid any inclination to “lift” the ball up. Stay in the shot, swinging down with the slope of the hill you’re standing on, and use the lower ball flight to your advantage.** —Michael Hunt

