A system for golfers who seek precision

SUNLAND, CALIF.

There are three ways to play golf.

One, slug the ball without swing thoughts. Just murder it.

Two, become a swing-thought junkie and constantly shift the focus of your swing using interchangeable swing thoughts. Just manipulate it.

Three, adopt and master a total swing system. Just memorize it.

Peter Croker is more committed to a swing system than any other instructor I know. He constantly reminds golfers that he advocates a "system" and not a "method" – the Croker Golf System, which is used for every shot in the game.

James Achenbach
jachenbach@golfweek.com

I don't pretend to know everything about the Croker System, but I know this: I have seen Croker turn crooked hitters into straight hitters, and I have seen him cure golfers of the putting yips with his principles.

Croker, an Australian PGA professional who was Queensland junior champion and still competes regularly, believes wholeheartedly in discipline. There is no such thing as a half-Croker approach to golf. Adopt the entire system or forget it, mate.

He believes in analyzing every detail of the golf swing, from pre-address to followthrough. The system employs the same address pattern and the same means of starting the swing for every shot that is played.

Croker's biggest distinction is his insistence that golfers use a "pushing" motion throughout the swing rather than the "pulling" sensation that has been discussed and taught for decades.

Another difference: Croker believes the hands control the golf swing, and he is unafraid to challenge "big muscle" proponents to an instructional showdown.

"I'll give you an example," Croker said. "People are always saying, 'Take your hands out of putting; use your big muscles.' This is just not true. The hands control the swing from start to finish. They are the source of all motion in the golf swing. To become an excellent golfer, you must use your hands properly."

Croker, who was greatly influenced by Homer Kelley, author of "The Golfing Machine," is defiantly proud of his system. He doesn't teach shortcuts, although some instructors use parts of the Croker System to "quick fix" their students. "I want every golfer to have a swing – and a system – that will last a lifetime," he said unpretentiously.

Croker was thrust into the mainstream of golf instruction in April 1995, when *Golf Digest* placed him on its cover with a provocative label: "Swing of the Future."

In the 10 years since his splashy debut, Croker has maintained a relatively low profile, although he continues to conduct golf schools and train instructors around the world.

One of those certified Croker instructors is Wedgy Winchester, who is something of a golf legend. In 1984, Winchester, 40 years old at the time, earned the title of "Longest Hitter in Golf" with a victory in what today is called the Re/Max World Long Drive Championship. Back then it was sponsored by Chrysler.

Winchester unleashed a 319-yard bomb in difficult conditions, but his driver attracted more attention than he did. The club was 60 inches long and had a converted cross-country ski pole for a shaft.

At the time, 60 inches was 17 inches longer than standard. The World Long Drive Championship is conducted under U.S. Golf Association rules, so competitors today are limited to a driver length of 48 inches.

"Peter taught me to hit the ball straight," Winchester said. "I have great respect for the man. His system may sound complicated, but actually it simplified the game for me. Before I met Peter, I tried a different swing every week. Now I do it the same way all the time, and that is about as simple as it can get."

Winchester teaches the Croker System. He owns the Custer House Bed & Breakfast in Seaside, Ore., and conducts golf schools on the Oregon coast. He also is a headliner for clinics and exhibitions.

I believe certain golfers need to follow a system in order to play the game effectively. These golfers tend to be highly organized. They are comfortable with precise behavior. They love details. They are motivated by complex tasks.

The Croker System is one answer for these golfers, although Croker doesn't flinch when he entertains a question about potential students.

"Anybody who wants to discover a system that applies to every shot, that's who will benefit," Croker said. "I am not saying that golf can be taught in one lesson, but stick with me and the results will be there."

That's the systematic approach. Your other options: revolving swing thoughts or no thoughts at all.

Analyze your personality and your needs, then choose your own path. Act with conviction. As Yogi Berra might say, "The road not taken is full of people who didn't go there."

– For more information on Croker and Winchester, visit www.crokergolf.com.