

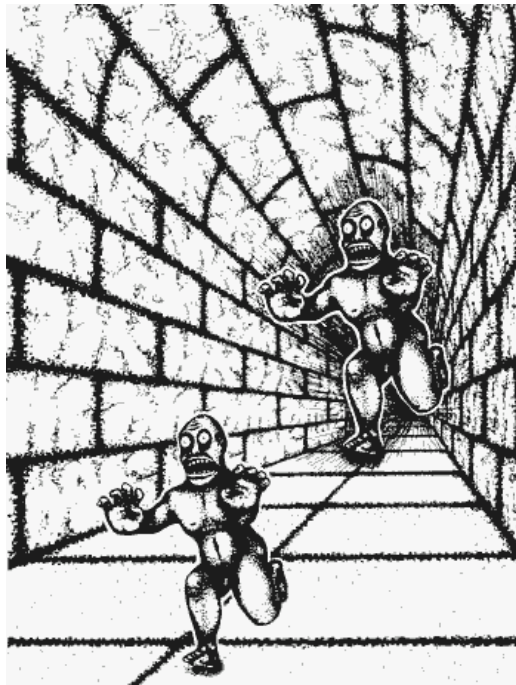
## CHAPTER 17: READING PUTTS

Golf is general considered an eye hand coordination sport. It is in part, but one's body is more trustworthy than the eye. The body has an inner ear that functions like an accelerometer and a gyroscope. (Chapter 3) It tells you where you are in space.

Ever wonder why we hear the golf announcers' remark that all the players have misread that putt to the right. Is it possible that all the players cannot read putts. No, what has happened is that the players have depended upon vision too much.

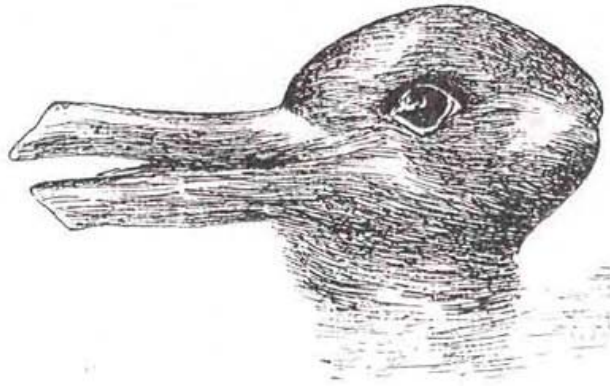
It is possible to have an optical illusion, but it is unlike your body will miss read a slope. For instance, one can close there eyes and know they are walking on the side of a hill. However in the traditional haunted house at the carnival, one can believe any strange thing since they use mirrors and other devices to create an optical illusion. Look at the following illustrations of optical illusion.

Which man is taller?



**They are both the same height. Measure them.**

Is this a rabbit or a duck?



**It all depends.**

I prefer my body to read the putts. I first look at the landscape influences upon the green; i.e. lake, ocean, mountain, hill and valley. I then look at the green. I inspect the landscape between my ball and the hole.

If possible I like to walk along the intended line above the anticipated putting path. I like to stand with both feet together behind and to the side of the hole if possible. I then return to just behind the ball and take my practice strokes exactly as anticipated for the length of the putt. (Chapter 16)

I then go to my putting routine, giving preference to the line.

Frankly, I am not that great at reading putts, so I refer to Twitty's Takes.

## ***Twitty's Take on Reading Putts***

*Reading greens is truly an art. While I can give you some helpful hints there is no substitute for playing golf and using your imagination to visualize how the golf ball rolls on the green. If you can remember one thing about reading greens it is to use your imagination and to try to visualize how the ball will roll to the cup.*

*The first thing you need to be aware of is the kind of grass you are playing on. If you are playing golf in the south there is a good chance you will be putting on some strain of Bermuda grass. Bermuda is a bit courser than bent and in some respects is more like putting on a brush. The key to putting on Bermuda is to know how the grain affects the way the ball rolls. Grain is actually the direction the grass grows on the green. If you are putting into the grain the putt will be slower and if you are putting down grain the putt will be much faster. When the grain grows across your line the ball will tend to break in the direction the grain is growing.*

*The trick is how to determine which direction the grain is growing. I can give you several hints. First, grain will tend to grow toward the setting sun or in the direction the water surface drains off the green. Once you become more proficient you can read the grain by looking at the color of the grass or the sheen. If you stand in the middle of a Bermuda green you will notice that the green appears to have variations in the color or the sheen of the grass in different parts of the green. If the color of the grass is a darker shade of green you are looking into the grass as it is "laying down" and the putt would be into the grain. When you see a brighter sheen or the grass looks shiny you are looking at the*

*reflection off the tops of the leaves of the grass in which case you are putting down grain. The most important area of the green to be aware of the grain is around the cup. The grain will affect your putt the most as the ball slows down around the hole. The best method for reading the grain around the cup is to look at the cut of the grass around the edge of the hole. Two thirds of the cup will have a sharp edge while on one side of the cup the grass will look frayed.*



**The close up inspection of the cup shows the frayed edge of the cup on the right side and the dirt is exposed. The red arrow is the direction of the grain.**

*The grain is always growing toward the frayed edge of the cup. It is best to be more aggressive on Bermuda since for the most part they are not as fast as bent or poa annua greens. By using a bolder stroke on Bermuda the grain will not affect the golf ball as much as it slows down around the cup. Bent grass greens are usually located in cooler*

*climates. They are much more like putting on a pool table. For the most part there is very little grain on bent grass or Poa annua greens. I have found that bent or poa is much easier to read than Bermuda. The one thing you need to be aware of when putting on Bent grass is that as the day goes on the greens can dry out and can get firmer which will make the greens much faster. You see this often in major championships where the greens are intentionally dried out to make the course more difficult. A great example of this condition was at Shinnecock on Long Island when Retief Goosen captured the US Open by holing putt after putt the last day in brutal conditions.*

*Reading the breaking putt:* *In reading the slopes on greens the most important place to read the break is from behind the ball looking down the intended line to the hole.*



***This photograph is staged to show the intended line with the placement of multiple golf balls. The direct line to the hole is marked by a suspended white line. I have positioned myself to look down the intended line while visualizing the path the balls will roll.***