

# Get Tour Tough

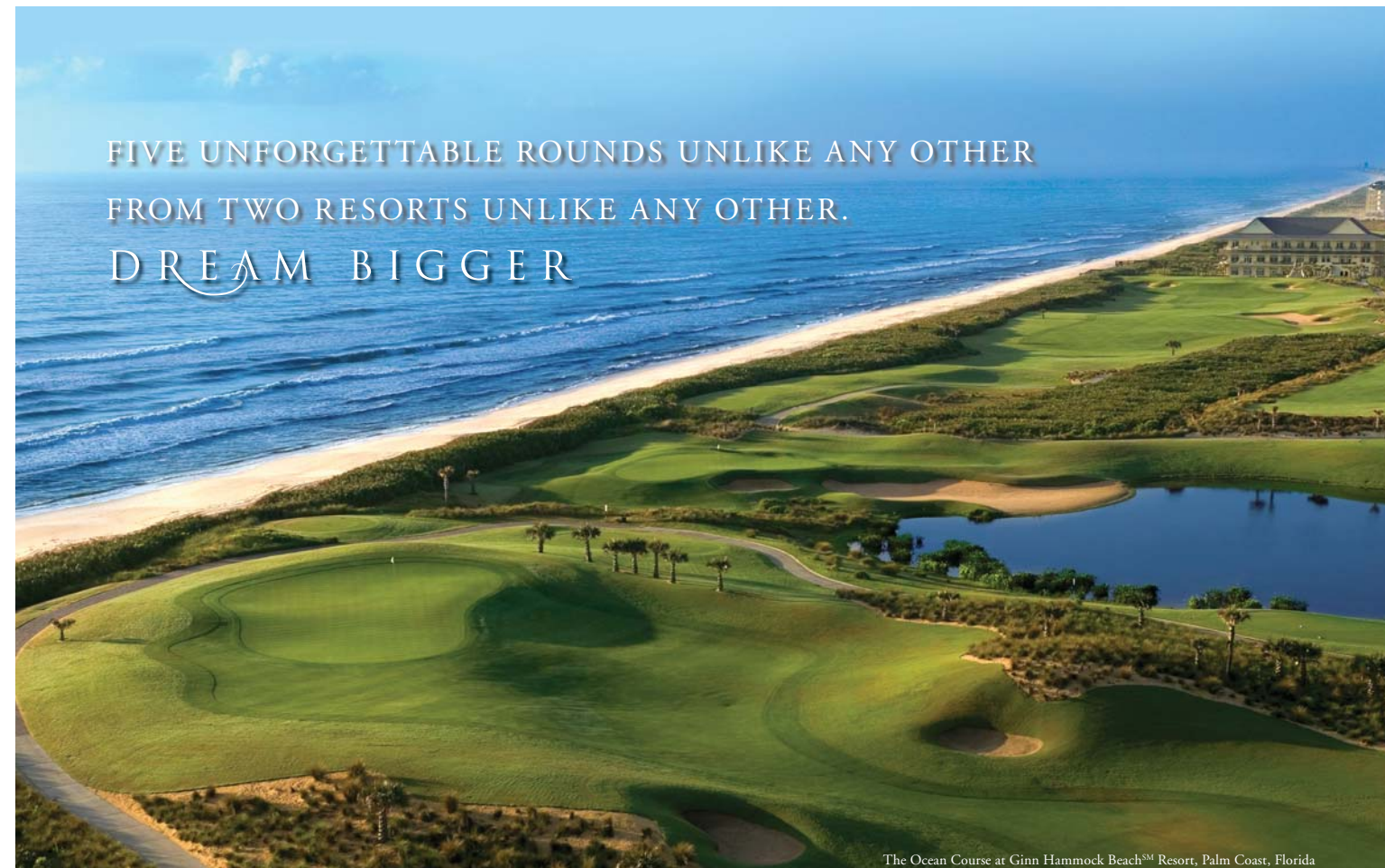
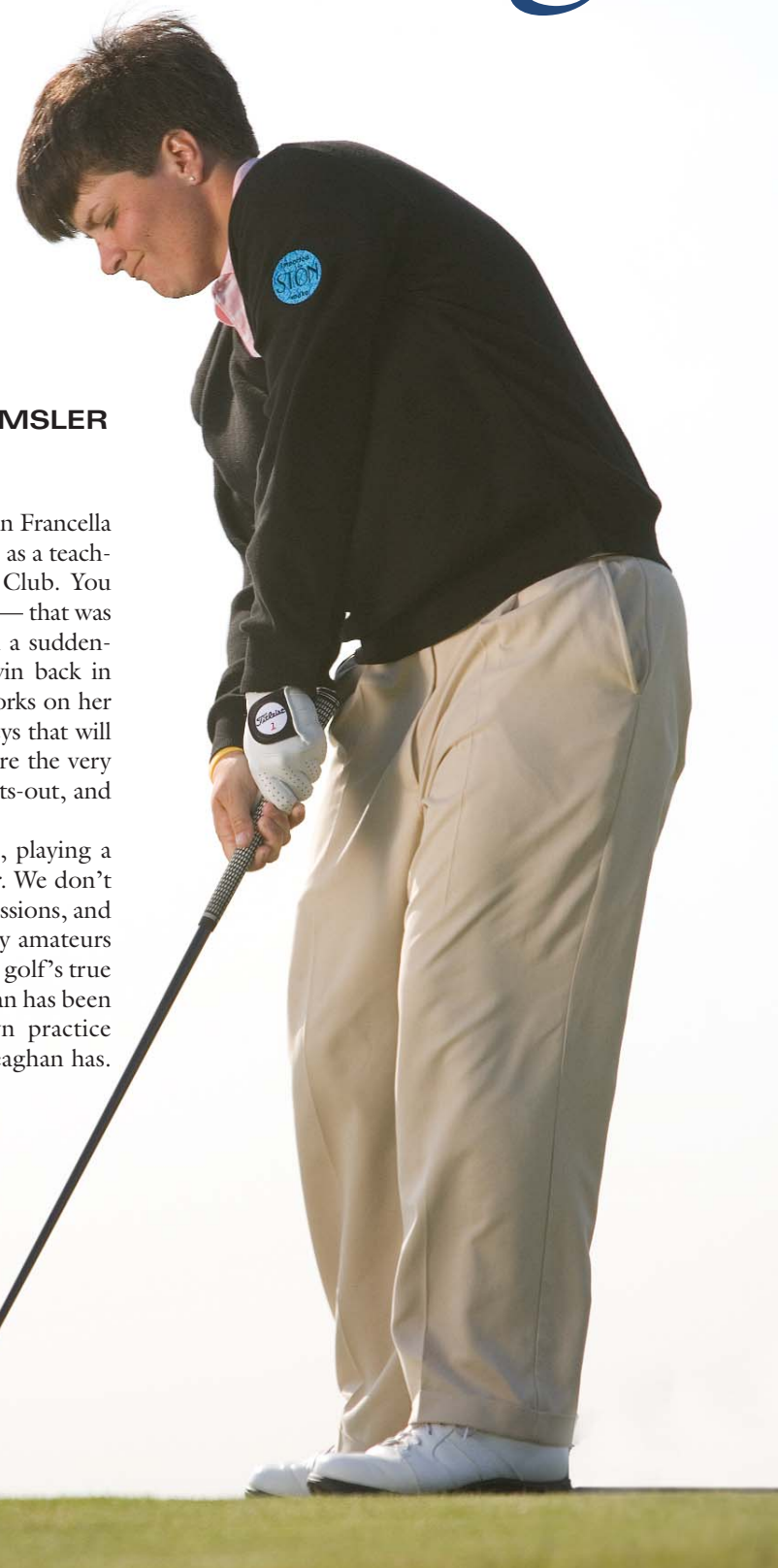
*Meaghan Francella worked hard to become a first-time LPGA winner. Here's how she did it, and why her keys can help you*

BY TOM PATRI

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEONARD KAMSLER

I have been fortunate to work with Meaghan Francella for more than 13 years now, since my days as a teaching professional at Westchester Country Club. You already know she is one tough competitor — that was clear when she beat Annika Sorenstam in a sudden-death playoff for her first LPGA Tour win back in March. But what you don't see is how hard she works on her game. We spend hours at a time working on the keys that will help her succeed on the modern LPGA Tour, where the very best players can bomb the ball 275 yards, putt lights-out, and hit a variety of wedge shots.

Meaghan, who grew up in Port Chester, N.Y., playing a bunch of different sports, is by nature a feel player. We don't get into too much mechanical jargon during our sessions, and that's why these keys can help you too. I see many amateurs get so bogged down with positions that they forget golf's true point: to hit the ball! So take a look at what Meaghan has been working on, and employ the keys in your own practice sessions. I bet you'll elevate your game, just as Meaghan has.



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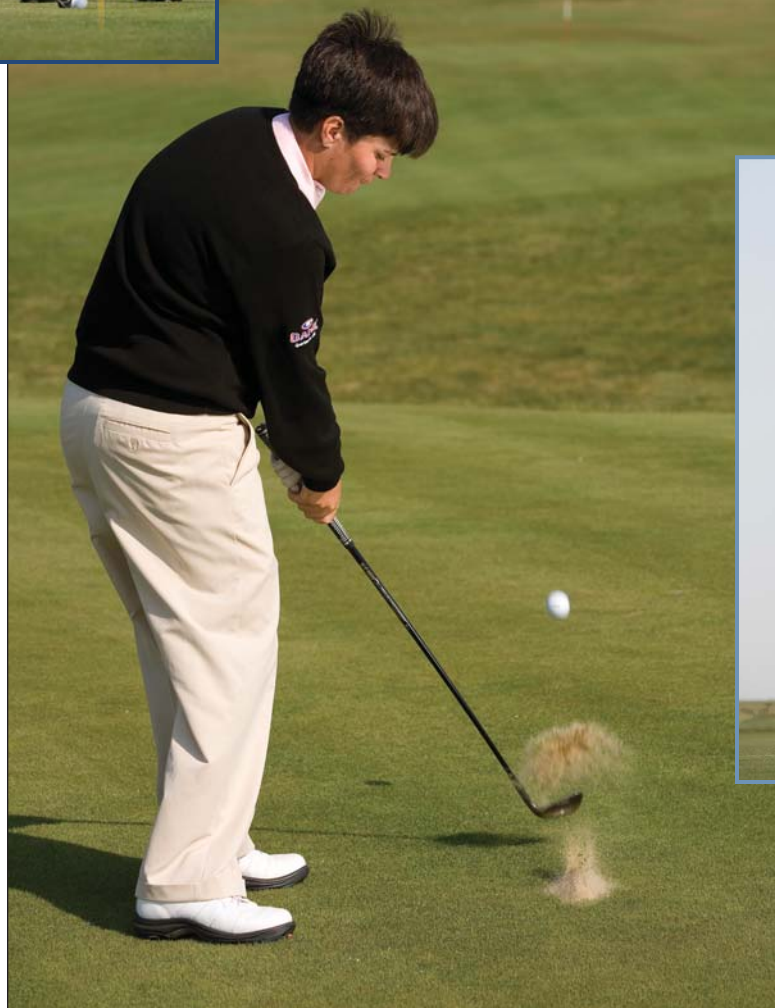
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**Francella says:**

"I don't intentionally lay up to 50 yards, but sometimes you're left with situations like that. It helps to be able to control the shot."



**Nip Your Wedges**

Taking a full swing with a wedge is nice, but that's not always what the shot calls for. Meaghan has become an expert at intermediate wedge play, learning how to control her distance and hit lower, more piercing shots. To do it, grip down an inch or so and play the ball just in back of center (*inset, far left*), which sets your hands ahead. Make a three-quarter-length backswing, and follow through to the same level (*below*). To hit it even lower, abbreviate your follow-through to waist height.



**Why it works for you**

The average player can really benefit from hitting partial shots. You have to practice and devote some time to it, but you will emerge with more shots in your bag and an ability to knock the ball close when the hole is cut on the back shelf of a green, as Meaghan shows here (*left*).

**Eyes Up at Impact**

Meaghan used to hang back a bit through impact, and that is a distance-killer. So we worked on getting her to release her head and upper torso earlier, which puts her in better sequence with her arms and body. As you can see, her eyes are looking well ahead as the ball rockets off the club (*right*), a la Annika Sorenstam and David Duval. Practice this with the post-up drill: Tee up a ball and set your driver ahead of it (*1, below*). Then swing slowly up to a full follow-through, feeling the forward momentum (*2 and 3, below*). Re-create that in your swing, and you'll never hang back.



**Why it works for you**

Many amateurs spray the ball off the tee and lose yardage because they are actually falling back, rather than moving forward, at impact. You simply can't fall back if you release your head as Meaghan does.

**Francella says:**

"I've probably picked up 25 yards in the last year. Some of that is conditioning and equipment, but my improved release is a big factor in it too."



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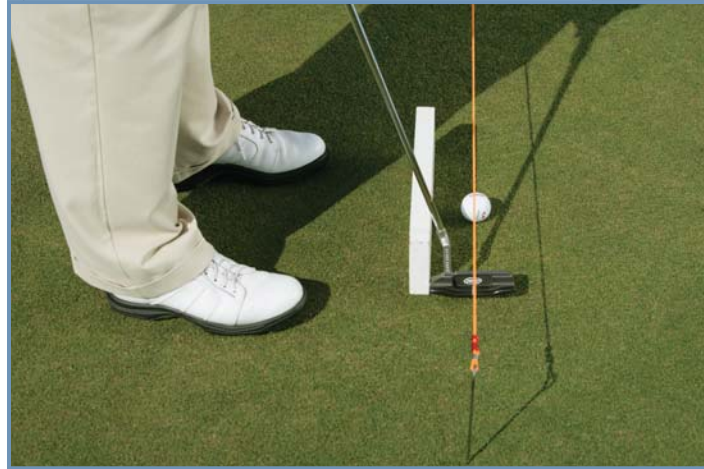
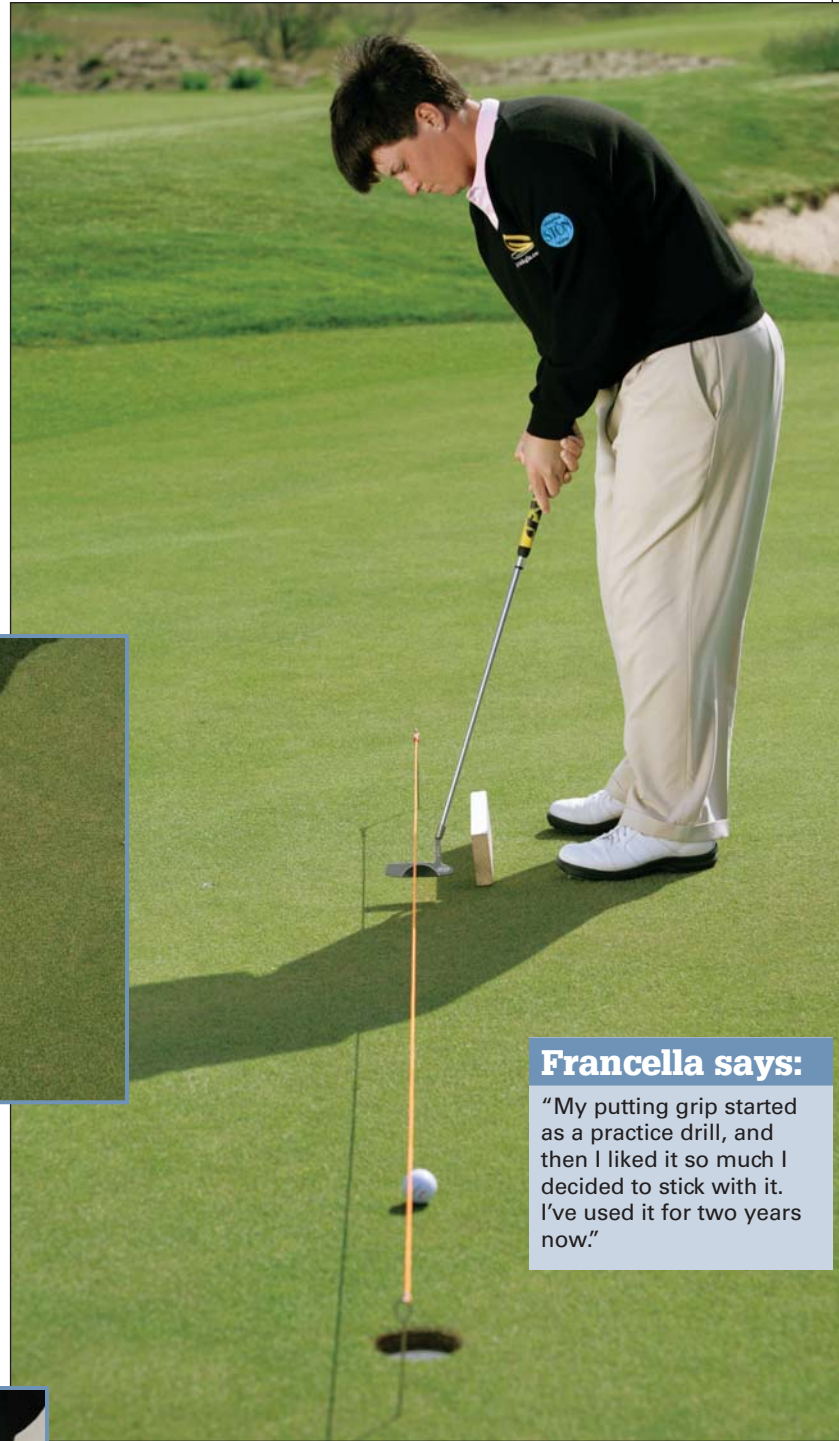


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## Make More Putts

Pros make their living on putts from inside 10 feet, and to improve Meaghan's percentage from this range, we didn't have to go high-tech: A 2x4 and a piece of string worked just fine. Find a flat six-foot putt, and set the board on its side, parallel to the target line. Then get two metal hooks and stick them into the green along the line of the putt, and extend the string between them. Set the ball an inch or so from the board, under the string. You may have to adjust based on the type of putter you use, but the idea is to keep the middle of the putter head under the string as you stroke the putt (*right*). Make a faulty stroke, and your putter will collide with the wood. This drill helps you groove the perfect stroke for these crucial putts.

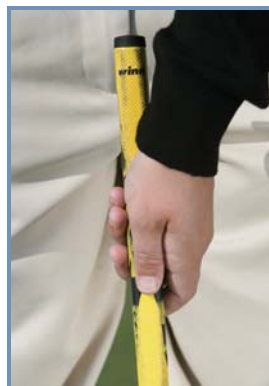


### Francella says:

"My putting grip started as a practice drill, and then I liked it so much I decided to stick with it. I've used it for two years now."

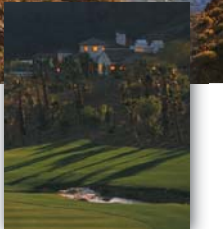
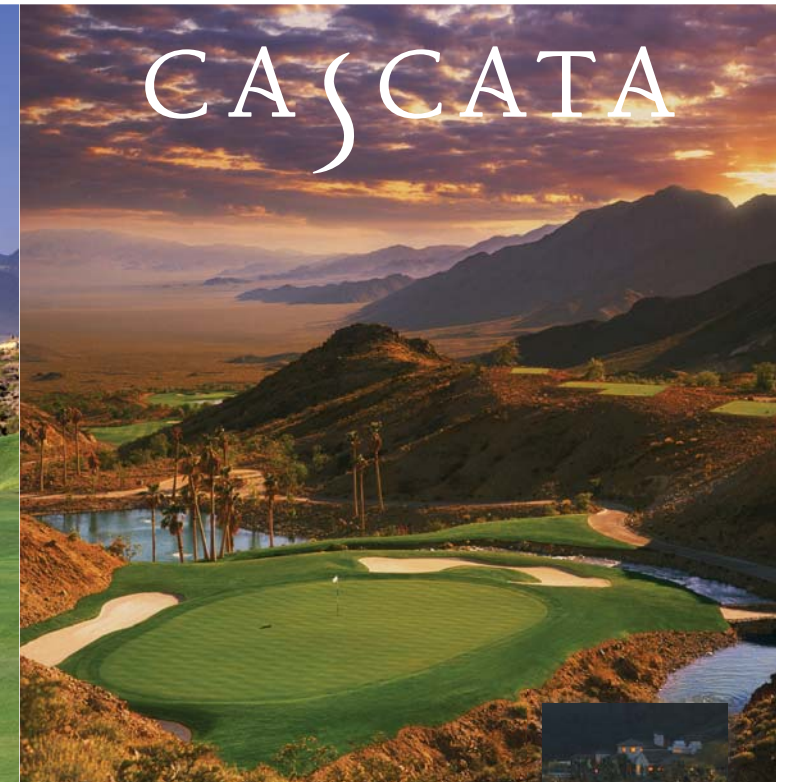
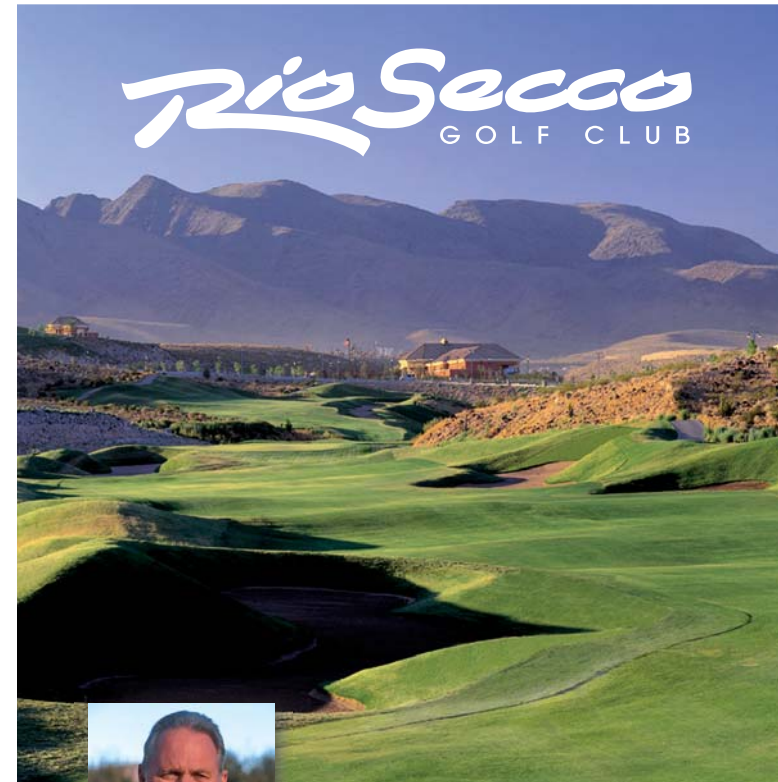
### Why it works for you

It's easy to set up, and everyone needs help with putting. As an added bonus, try Meaghan's unusual putting grip. Set your left hand on the putter first, then wrap your entire right hand around it (*below*). This helps avoid wrist breakdown during the stroke.



**Tom Patri**, a *GOLF Magazine* Top 100 Teacher, teaches during the summer at Friar's Head in Baiting Hollow, N.Y., and in the winter in Naples, Florida.

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