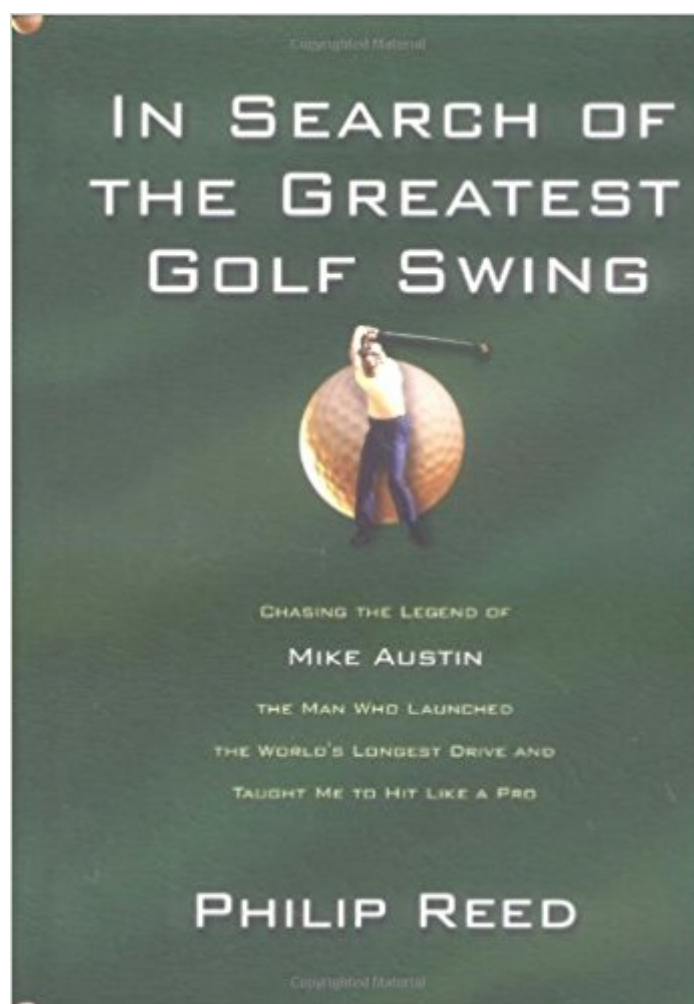


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In Search Of The Greatest Golf Swing: Chasing The Legend Of Mike Austin, The Man Who Launched The World's Longest Drive And Taught Me To Hit Like A Pro





Synopsis

“Can you teach an ordinary golfer like me to drive the ball 300 yards?” With this question sportswriter Philip Reed’s search for the greatest golf swing begins. When Reed met ninety-year old Mike Austin, he knew that Austin held the record for the longest drive ever—an awesome 515-yard shot during a Senior PGA event. What he didn’t know is that he was forging a bond with a man whose amazing life he has now chronicled in a book that is charming, funny, and wise. As Reed’s tutelage under his cantankerous teacher begins, he learns of Austin’s winning wagers on trick shots, sharing a Hollywood apartment with Errol Flynn; giving secret lessons to Howard Hughes; and matching shots against Sam Snead and Ben Hogan. As Reed’s drives get longer, Austin’s health worsens. Mike soon suffers a stroke that silences him, but Reed is sure that Mike wants someone to tell his story of a man who could do one thing better than anyone else, who possessed the most prodigious golf swing ever. This book is not just for golfers, but for all readers who savor heartwarming stories of unexpected friendships and are eager to learn secrets of living life to the fullest.

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Customer Reviews

Ostensibly about retooling his golf swing, Reed’s account develops in surprising ways that are incidental to the conventions of the golf instructional. Dreaming of walloping a 300-yard drive, Reed seeks out Mike Austin, a long-ball specialist who, in 1974, set a record for the longest shot in professional tournament competition. Reed concedes that Austin (who was in his early 90s when Reed met him in 2001) seemed to be a man of self-aggrandizing habits: every story about his life

was over the top, his every swing tip the greatest discovery ever made. But enough about Austin did check out to convince Reed to relax and enjoy his swing guru's bombastic ways and drill-sergeant delivery. As he adjusts his swing according to the barked instructions delivered by Austin from his Barcalounger, Reed perceives a genuine friendship forming, deepened by Austin's survival of a health crisis. Culminating with Reed playing the course where Austin set his record, this intriguing mix of instructional, memoir, and biography could be the sleeper hit of the golf-publishing season. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

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Inside every golfer lurks a mad scientist, a demon willing to deal with the Devil at any price. Just about every man who once singled in a little league game believes he is only one secret away from breaking one hundred, or ninety, or eighty, or seventy, and it wouldn't surprise me if every touring professional awakens every Thursday convinced this is his week to break sixty, too. The author of this book had a dream about hitting a golf ball three hundred yards, and he claims to have achieved two ninety four on the same hole where Mike Austen once hit one five fifteen. I have been playing golf my entire life and have met only three people capable of hitting the ball that far, so forgive me for being skeptical. I found the book mildly interesting but thrown together as if the author found himself unable to reread it once it was done. I don't blame him. The egocentric groveling and self deprecatory style is not particularly attractive. In the words of Truman Capote, this book isn't writing; it's typing. Mike Austin was a legendary striker of the golf ball, who built his legend without shooting a tournament winning score very often, and then probably by accident. He not only understood how to hit a golf ball better than everyone else of his time, but he also mastered the lingo of complexifying his action, to the point that anyone who hoped to understand what he was doing had no alternative to sitting at his feet for weeks or months or years, groveling for every morsel of the master's wisdom, and paying for it through the nose. Well, good for him. Commercial America has always been about running successful cons. What would all those golf professionals who cannot break par in competition be doing now without secrets to dispense by the hour to befuddled fozzlers eager to soak up their know-how? I was lucky enough to learn golf at age twelve from a book by

Tommy Armour which had set my mother back \$2.95. Armour was another celebrated golfing guru, whose shtick was nursing a highball under a beach umbrella while instructing high rolling executives and inheritors on the art of swinging a club. His book was nothing to write home about. It consisted largely of self congratulation and maddeningly inconsistent bromides, but the one thing Tommy said that made perfect sense to a twelve year old kid who had taught himself to punt footballs and throw from the pitcher's mound was that footwork was critical to golfing success. Anyone who really understands this can read about Mike Austen and his protégés with a sense of amusement, and wonder, and appreciation too, without necessarily drinking the kool aid and convincing himself that the Austen technique (or any other) is going to propel him to the front rank of golfing greats. I would be surprised if the Austen students on average are even consistent winners in their weekend foursomes. What counts in the game of golf is native ability and not much else. It is true that a man with perfect balance and hand eye coordination and the strength and agility of a leopard can totally screw up his game by over thinking and attempting to over control it, but an average Joe will be lucky to consistently break ninety at golf however he goes about learning to play it. Looking back on my own golfing life at a distance of fifty-eight years, I am glad I experimented with just about every golfing technique that has ever been advocated by anyone over the past one hundred fifty years. At age seventy I can still produce an enviable swing that looks easy and costs me every ounce of energy I can summon out of a body that has earned a decent rest. My drives carry two hundred yards and my shots go amazingly straight, but I know that is largely due to today's golf ball, which explodes off the face of drivers which look more like tennis racquets, and no longer hooks or slices when hit with anything resembling a decent swing. I think Austen is right about moving the weight from side to side and throwing the club from the top of the swing, and as for all that malarkey about the conical action of the wrists, in my humble opinion a golfer can forget about that. My own golfing secret is simply to set my feet in a slightly closed stance so that a line across my knees is parallel to my target line. I begin my swing with a full hip turn in which the hip goes slightly up, I continue it by using my hands to elevate the club over my right shoulder. After finishing my backswing I move aggressively from my right leg to my left, and I release the club immediately and try to create as much clubhead speed as possible as early in the downswing as possible. I think the key is to keep your arms out of the downswing and use your hands to get early speed into the club, and I don't think there is any more to the golf swing than that.

I found this book to be very well written and very interesting. I was thinking about playing a lot less golf until I came across the swing created by Mike Austin. Since this swing changed my perspective

of golf so dramatically I really was curious as to how it was developed. The author does a very nice job of bringing together the human side and the technical side of the Mike Austin swing. I am 73 yrs old and I started golfing when I was 50. I always enjoyed the game for many of its enjoyable aspects, but in recent years I have found the results of my swing to be less predictable. As we all know, the traditional swing requires a very precise timing of opening and closing the face of the club....which never made a lot of sense to me, just on a common sense level. A few years back I went golfing with a young colleague (in his 30s) of mine and I noticed his swing was different and very effective. This was particularly remarkable to me since he had pretty much just started the game! He put me onto how he learned the swing which was from Dan Schauger's books. After getting one of Dan's books and the videos that Dan had available on the internet, I saw the huge difference that the relatively simple mechanics of this swing made for me. It was nothing short remarkable to me! Again, this book is great because it entertainingly tells you how this low-physical-stress, high-results swing was developed by Mike Austin who is, indeed, a very notable figure in golf..... and Dan Schauger who took this great swing and made it learnable by the average person. It is an very interesting story!!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I had never heard of Mike Austin, and after reading it and bringing up his name to our local pro's, etc., they had never heard of him either. No idea who he was or what he had done. Something for everyone in this book. Obviously Mike Austin was a genius, and multi-talented. His is a remarkable story. And his 515 yard drive in PGA competition is the real thing. And he was about 64 at the time, hitting a steel shafted persimmon headed driver. I was on a golf trip while reading it. And I tried to incorporate an idea or two that I thought I gleaned from the book. I typically hit my drives a pathetic 205 yards or so in the air. Maybe 220 total. The same as my 2 buddies I was with. On the last day I was hitting my drives 235-250 total, and hit one at least 280. Maybe more. All I know is that I was over 100 yards ahead of my buddies, and had thought I had lost my ball even though I had hit it dead center in the fairway. I just never thought to look that far ahead of them. I plan on reading it again. And I bought a paperback for another friend who is a trivia wizzard. He is going to love this thing.

Though I wanted to know the secrets of long drive, I didn't get it. The author wrote about his his long drive and a happy ending, but I feel it's like a Hollywood movie (I can't believe it). If you want to know the life of Mike Austin, this book might be worth reading.

If you are a skeptic about anything you have heard about Mike Austin's 515 yard drive.....this book will put your questions to rest. Phil Read has provided a very real account of some of the mystery surrounding Mike Austin and the golf swing he taught. Phil writes exactly how Mr Austin spoke.....straight shooting style. Phil talks about Austin's experiences with some of the best golfers from the 30's through to the 60's....Sarazen, Snead and Hogan etc. There are some glimpses of golf instruction in the book....but it is really about Mike Austin. Some questions like ...why isn't Mike Austin not better known if he was so good etc are answered. A great read along with Dan Shaugers How to Kill the Ball and 21st Century Golf Swing.

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