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GOLF

**FIX THIS
FIRST**

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
INTERPRETING SIMULATOR
AND LAUNCH-MONITOR DATA**

No Fluff, Just Results: Curing the Average
Golfer's Flaws based on Hard Data.

BY DANIEL GUEST



FIX THIS FIRST

The No-BS Guide to Cutting Through Simulator Noise and Curing Your Swing

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INTRODUCTION: Stop Guessing. Start Hitting.

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"Most amateurs practice their mistakes, and then they get really good at making them."

— Butch Harmon

- **The Hook:** A blunt wake-up call about wasting time and money in the simulator.
- **The Promise:** A 10-15 minute diagnostic framework to find the *one* swing killer ruining your game.
- **The Non-Negotiable Rules:** 10-15 honest swings, write down the numbers, run the diagnostic, practice *only* the single variable it spits out.

CHAPTER 1: The Hierarchy of Metrics (What Actually Matters)

"We are not trying to be perfect. We are trying to be functional. Form follows function."

— Sean Foley

- **The Brutal Truth:** Why treating every number on the screen as equally important is a guaranteed path to mediocrity.
- **The 3 Tiers of Data:**
 - *Tier 1: Club Delivery (The Foundation)* – Path, Face Angle, Angle of Attack.
 - *Tier 2: Impact Efficiency (The Multipliers)* – Strike Location, Face-to-Path, Smash Factor.
 - *Tier 3: Ball Flight Outcomes (The Symptoms)* – Spin, Launch, Distance. (Emphasizing that these are *results*, not the root problem).

THE NO-BS DATA CHEAT SHEET

What Your Screen is Actually Telling You

Before we look at your functional ranges, let's translate the TrackMan jargon into plain English. You don't need a physics degree; you just need to know what the club is doing to the ball. *(these are assuming a right-handed golfer, lefties, the opposite)*

- **Club Path:** The actual direction your clubhead is moving (right or left of the target line) at the exact moment of impact. *In-to-out* means you're swinging to the right. *Out-to-in* means you're swinging to the left.
- **Face Angle:** Exactly where the clubface is pointing (right or left) at the moment of impact.

- **Face-to-Path:** The relationship between where the club is swinging (Path) and where the face is pointing (Face Angle). **This is the curve maker.** If the face is closed to the path, it hooks. If it's open to the path, it slices.
 - **Angle of Attack:** Is the club traveling downward into the ball (negative number) or upward through the ball (positive number) at impact? You hit down on irons; you hit up on the driver.
 - **Dynamic Loft:** Forget the number stamped on the bottom of your club. Dynamic loft is the *actual* amount of loft you deliver to the ball at impact based on your shaft lean and how you release the club. It's different for every club.
 - **Smash Factor:** Ball speed divided by clubhead speed. This is your ultimate efficiency grade. It simply tells you how perfectly you hit the sweet spot to transfer power from the club to the ball.
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CHAPTER 2: The "Good Enough" Functional Zones

"You don't have to be perfect to play good golf, but you do have to be predictable."
— Dr. Bob Rotella

- **Forget Tour Averages:** Why comparing yourself to Elite golfers on TV is setting yourself up for failure.
 - **The Acceptable Ranges Table:** A clean, easy-to-read table breaking down functional zones for Club Path, Face Angle, Angle of Attack, Smash Factor, and Face-to-Path.
 - **The Warning:** "You're Screwed If..." vs. "When to Ignore It."
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CHAPTER 3: The 10-Minute Diagnostic Protocol

"There is no such thing as a natural touch. Touch is something you create by hitting millions of golf balls." — Lee Trevino

- **Step 1: The Warm-Up** (Get loose, no screens).
- **Step 2: The Baseline Set** (10-15 honest driver swings, no mulligans).
- **Step 3: Record the Raw Data** (The exact 5 numbers they need to write down).
- **Step 4: Run the Gauntlet** (Feeding their numbers into the decision tree).

CHAPTER 4: The Decision Tree (Find Your Single Limiter)

"The absolute secret of golf is hitting the ball in the middle of the clubface."

— Tom Watson

- *This is the core of the book. Structured as a step-by-step checklist. You run your numbers through this gauntlet and stop at the FIRST test you fail.*
- **Limiter 1: Path Consistency (Outside $\pm 3^\circ$).** Is your club swinging in a completely different direction every time? Stop here. Start line comes first.
- **Limiter 2: Face-to-Path Variance (Outside $\pm 2^\circ$).** Path is stable, but is the face playing nice with it? Unpredictable curve ruins scores. Stop here.
- **Limiter 3: Strike / Smash Factor (< 1.34).** Path and face are behaving, but are you actually finding the sweet spot? Stop here.
- **Limiter 4: Dynamic Delivery (Angle of attack & dynamic loft).** Everything else is dialed, but you're launching it like a brick or spinning it into orbit. Stop here.
- **The Rule:** You stop at the *first* test you fail. That is your primary limiter. Do not pass go.

CHAPTER 5: Your Actual Practice Priorities

"Practice makes permanent. Only perfect practice makes perfect."

— Harvey Penick

- *Actionable advice based on where you failed the diagnostic.*
- **Failed Step 1 (Path)?** Focus strictly on start line and path stability. Ignore the specific path bias (in-to-out, out-to-in), just get the club traveling in a predictable direction. Ignore the rest. Get and use an alignment stick.
- **Failed Step 2 (Face-to-Path)?** Focus strictly on marrying the face to the path to tame your curve. Ignore the rest.
- **Failed Step 3 (Strike)?** Your club delivery is solid, but your impact is garbage. Slow down, concentrate on the driver face and focus strictly on center contact. Ignore the rest. Make a good swing not a great shot.
- **Failed Step 4 (Dynamic Delivery)?** Focus strictly on optimizing your angle of attack and dynamic loft. Ignore the rest.

CHAPTER 6: Common Misreads & Ghost Chasing

"Golfers are the most gullible people in the world."

— Gary Player

- **The Dumb Traps:** Ripping into the ways amateurs sabotage their practice.
 - **Trap 1: Trying to Fix Face When Path is a Disaster.** (Trading a push-fade for a screaming pull-hook).
 - **Trap 2: The Spin Obsession.** (Explaining why high spin is just a symptom of a bad strike or steep path).
 - **Trap 3: Buying a Swing.** (Why a \$400 shaft won't fix a 1.34 smash factor).
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CHAPTER 7: Signal vs. Noise (When to Just Leave It Alone)

"The worst thing you can do is change your swing because you hit one bad shot." —

Jack Nicklaus

- **Human Variance:** Explaining that wandering 2 degrees shot-to-shot is normal.
 - **Playing the Fade:** Why a +6° path and a +3° face isn't broken, per se—it's just a predictable fade.
 - **The Worst Mistake:** Tinkering with 5 things at once and ending up worse than when you started.
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CONCLUSION: Stop Guessing. Start Knowing.

"Golf is a game of misses. The guy who misses the best is going to win." — Ben

Hogan

- **What This System WON'T Do:** A reminder that this tells you *what* to fix, not exactly *how* to swing (that's what a coach is for).
 - **The "What's Next":** Get a realistic, factual, evidence based plan to fix your challenge. Schedule an online or in person lesson with IMAGEN Golf to attack the specific limiter you just discovered. ***You will Get Better, GUARANTEED!***
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GETTING STARTED

Stop Guessing. Start Hitting.

What This Actually Is

Forget the fluff. This is a cold, hard framework to pinpoint your biggest swing killer in under 10-15 minutes. It's not a swing coach, and it won't tell you to chase some "perfect" numbers you saw online.

This system cuts straight to the chase. It shows you precisely what metric demands your attention *right now*, so your practice actually achieves something, instead of just burning daylight in the simulator.

Your Non-Negotiable Steps

Listen Up: This whole process takes less than 10-15 minutes. You get a clear, undeniable direction for your next practice session. No more guesswork, no more paralysis from option overload. Just results.

1. **Hit some real shots in your simulator**—10 to 15 with one club (driver is best). No hero swings, just your honest game.
2. **Jot down the essential metrics.** We'll tell you which ones, don't worry.
3. **Run through this diagnostic flow.** It will expose your single biggest problem.
4. **Then, and this is crucial, practice *only* that one variable.**

STRAIGHT TALK

Your Golf Metrics: What Actually Matters (and What's BS)

Stop Obsessing Over the Wrong Numbers

Here's the brutal truth most golfers miss: you treat every single metric your launch monitor spits out as equally important. You see a spin rate "too high" or a launch angle "too low," and immediately your brain screams, "*FIX IT!*" That's not just wrong; it's a guaranteed path to mediocrity and frustration.

Listen closely: some metrics are the actual drivers—they initiate everything else. Others are just symptoms, reflecting what those drivers are doing. And some? They'll correct themselves automatically when you get the real stuff right. If you spend your time

chasing outcomes without addressing the root causes, your improvement will feel like a cruel joke. Don't be that golfer.

- **Club Delivery: The Unarguable Foundation.** Path, face angle, angle of attack, dynamic loft. These aren't suggestions; they *are* the starting gun. Get these wrong, and everything else is just coping.
- **Impact Efficiency: The Force Multipliers.** Strike location, face-to-path relationship, smash factor. These take what your club delivery did and either supercharge it or completely neuter it. They tell you how well you actually connect.
- **Ball Flight Outcomes: Just the Results (Not the Problem).** Spin rate, launch angle, carry distance, dispersion. These are the readouts, the scoreboard, the *consequences* of the two categories above. They are never the problem; they are merely indicators.

Grasping this hierarchy changes everything. When your distance is all over the map, you don't just "swing harder"—that's amateur hour. You look upstream at your club path and strike location. The diagnostic flow in the next sections will strip away the guesswork.

CUT THE CRAP: Acceptable Ranges

What "Good" Really Means (and Doesn't)

Let's get one thing straight: if you're chasing "tour averages" or those shiny "ideal" numbers you stumbled upon online, you're setting yourself up for failure. Tour players? They're freaks of nature. Their numbers are not your blueprint. ***Period.***

Your numbers don't need to be perfect; they just need to be *functional*. We're talking about ranges that actually let you hit the ball consistently and predictably. Forget perfection. Here's the blunt truth about what "good enough" looks like for us mere mortals, like you and me.

The Metric	Your Functional Zone	You're Screwed If...	When to Ignore It (Mostly)

Club Path (Driver)	-4° to +4° (in-to-out)	You're hooking into the woods or slicing into another zip code. Or you just can't aim.	Your face-to-path is dialed, and your ball isn't going sideways. Who cares then?
Face Angle (Driver)	±3° from target	Your ball starts way left or way right, every damn time. Your curve is a disaster.	You know it's off, but you're a wizard at aiming to compensate. Keep at it.
Angle of Attack (Driver)	-2° to +5°	You're launching it like a brick or spinning it into orbit. Or pure chunking it.	Your launch and spin numbers are already doing what they should. Don't overthink it.
Smash Factor (Driver)	1.34 - 1.50	You're hitting off the toe or heel. You're losing power like crazy.	Never. This is free speed. If your smash factor sucks, you suck at getting power to the ball.
Face-to-Path	±4°	You've got an infuriating two-way miss, or your ball is curving off the planet.	If the relationship is consistent and you can predict your shot, who am I to judge?
Spin Rate (Driver)	2000 - 3000 rpm	Your ball is a knuckleball, or ballooning. <i>(Note: this is almost always a SYMPTOM).</i>	If your carry distance and trajectory are where you want them, shut up and hit it.

THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS: Context is everything. Interpreting these in isolation is a fool's errand. A $+5^\circ$ path might be fine if your face is also open, resulting in a nice, consistent fade. Stop looking at one tree and see the damn forest.

THE DIAGNOSTIC FLOW

Stop Wasting Time. Fix What Matters.

Alright, listen up. This isn't another feel-good article. This is the raw, unapologetic truth about using your data. We're cutting through the BS to give you a systematic process—a decision tree—to go from "I have too much data" to "I know exactly what to fix." You're looking for ONE primary limiter. Apply your actual numbers here, in this exact order. Do not skip steps.

01 | Assess Path Consistency First.

If your Club Path is a hot mess (swinging wildly outside $\pm 3^\circ$ shot to shot), your start line is a lottery. You're fighting directional chaos. You cannot play predictable golf if your club is swinging in a completely different direction every time. This is your first battleground. Everything else is secondary until you stabilize your path.

02 | Evaluate Face-to-Path Relationship.

Path stable? Great. Now look at your Face-to-Path relationship. If it is bouncing all over the place (not within $\pm 2^\circ$ shot to shot), you're cooking up unpredictable hooks and slices. Even with a stable path, an erratic face means your ball will never know where it's going. Tame it.

03 | Check Smash Factor.

Face-to-Path consistent? Excellent. Now look at your driver Smash Factor. If it's below 1.34, your problem is simple: you have a decent delivery, but you're missing the sweet spot. You are bleeding power and distance because of off-center strikes. Fix your strike location.

04 | Check Dynamic Delivery.

Smash factor good? Impressive. Now let's get into the nitty-gritty: Angle of Attack and Dynamic Loft. If these values are wildly outside functional ranges, they're sabotaging your launch conditions. Get these right, or you're leaving yards on the table.

05 | Only Then Consider Outcomes.

Congratulations, you've earned it. If all your fundamental delivery metrics and strikes are dialed in, *now* you can start obsessing over spin rate, launch angle, or squeezing out those last few yards.

Most golfers jump straight to step 5 when their swing path is a train wreck. That's why they feel stuck. Fix the foundation first.

STOP WASTING TIME: FIX THIS FIRST

Your Actual Practice Priorities

Here is what you actually need to care about based on where you failed in the diagnostic flow. **Work on ONE.**

If Your Problem Is Path Consistency (Failed Step 1)

- **Why it matters:** Your start line is a lottery. You can't aim with any confidence. Your directional reliability is a joke.
- **How you know it's fixed:** Your path variation is shrinking, ideally within $\pm 3^\circ$. Your ball actually starts where you're aiming. Your left-right misses aren't spread across two fairways.
- **Don't even think about:** Your specific path bias (in-to-out, out-to-in—who cares yet?), launch conditions, or new clubs. Get your path stable, *then* you can get particular.

If Your Problem Is Face-to-Path (Failed Step 2)

- **Why it matters:** Your path is fine, but you're constantly fighting wild hooks or slices. Predictable ball flight? Forget about it.
- **How you know it's fixed:** Your face-to-path relationship stays within a tight $\pm 2^\circ$ window, shot after shot. Your curve is now predictable, not a random act of chaos.
- **Don't even think about:** Your absolute path direction, spin rates, or how far you hit it. Just focus on making that face and path play nice together.

If Your Problem Is Strike Location (Failed Step 3)

- **Why it matters:** Your swing direction is sound, but distance, consistency, spin, launch—it's all garbage if you can't hit the damn ball in the center.
- **How you know it's fixed:** Smash factor consistently pushing 1.47 or higher. Your strike patterns on the clubface are tight. Your carry distances aren't erratic.
- **Don't even think about:** Your path, your face angle, or fancy spin optimization. Ignore all outcome metrics until you learn to hit the sweet spot.

If Your Problem Is Dynamic Delivery (Failed Step 4)

- **Why it matters:** Your launch angle and spin rate are all over the place. You're leaving distance on the table because your club isn't doing its job at impact.
- **How you know it's fixed:** Your angle of attack is where it needs to be. Your dynamic loft is creating optimal launch.
- **Don't even think about:** Equipment specs. Micro-optimizing spin. Get the fundamentals of impact delivery sorted first.

COMMON MISREADS THAT ABSOLUTELY TORCH YOUR PRACTICE TIME

Alright, you get the priority system. Now let's rip into the dumb ways golfers waste hours chasing ghosts.

- **Trying to Fix the Face When Your Path is a Disaster:** Your ball is starting ten yards right, so you try to "close the face." Great. But if your club path is swinging wildly out-to-in, all you've done is trade a weak fade for a pull-hook. Your start line is still a mess because your *path* dictates where the ball initially launches. Get your path consistent first.
- **Your Spin Obsession Is Pointless (for now):** You saw a pro spinning it at 2400 RPM and now you're hyper-focused on your 3200 RPM driver spin. Newsflash: spin rate is almost always a symptom. High spin usually screams "steep angle of attack" or "you can't hit the center of the clubface." Address those root causes, and your spin magically sorts itself out.
- **New Gear Won't Fix Your Crappy Swing:** Your distances are all over the place, so you figure it's time for a new shaft. Wrong. If your smash factor swings from 1.38 to 1.48, your problem isn't your equipment—it's your inability to hit the goddamn ball in the sweet spot. Stabilize your delivery metrics first.

WHEN TO JUST LEAVE IT ALONE

This might be the single most crucial section in this entire guide. Sometimes, the absolute best thing you can do for your golf game is *nothing*. Let your body adapt. Trust the friggin' process.

Signal vs. Noise: Quit Confusing Them

Every golfer has shot-to-shot variance. Your club path might wander between +1° and +3° in a session. That's not a broken swing; that's just you being human. If you're consistently starting the ball where you want and shaping it predictably, you don't have a path problem.

Why Your "Bad" Numbers Aren't Always Bad

So what if your club path is a whopping +6° in-to-out? If your face is consistently +4° to that path, you're hitting a predictable fade. That's not a problem; that's a shot. Deal with it.

How You're Sabotaging Your Own Progress

Here's the most common amateur mistake: changing too many damn things too quickly. You have one mediocre session, so you overhaul your swing. That messes with your path. Now you fix your path, which screws up your strike. Three weeks later, you're worse than when you started. Identify the *actual* primary limiter, work on *only that one thing*, and give it time. Minimum two or three focused sessions. Patience and brutal consistency beat mindless tinkering.

WHAT THIS DIAGNOSTIC WON'T DO (So Don't Even Ask)

Let's get one thing straight: this framework isn't a magic wand. Knowing its limitations is crucial.

- **It Doesn't Teach You How to Swing:** This diagnostic points to your biggest problem. It tells you *what* to fix. It absolutely does not tell you *how* to fix your swing. Finding *your* way depends on you and who you work with.

- **It Doesn't Explain Your Flaws:** You'll find out your path is a mess. Great. But this framework won't tell you *why* it's a mess. Grip? Timing? Lack of rotation? It identifies the symptom; you (or your coach) dig into the root cause.
 - **It Doesn't Replace a Real Coach:** A good coach sees, knows and feels things data simply can't. This diagnostic makes you a smarter student, giving you precise data to discuss with your coach so you stop wasting time.
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SO, WHAT NOW?

Stop Guessing. Start Knowing.

This diagnostic framework already handed you the essential answer: "what should you actually work on?" That's a huge win, separating you from the masses who just flail aimlessly.

But if you're serious about taking control—truly understanding your launch monitor data and making it work for you, not just an amateur staring at numbers—then there's more to uncover. Book a session with Imagen Golf, we'll give you a concrete, evidenced based plan complete with on ball drills, off ball drills, golf specific exercises and a practice plan tailored to your specific needs. No generic, place a towel under your arms and swing drills.....You'll get:

- The real 'why': how your numbers actually connect to your ball flight.
- Thinking like a pro: the mental models instructors use to make sense of the data.
- Gear: what truly moves the needle, and what's just an expensive distraction.
- Beyond the driver: dialing in irons, wedges, and specialty shots.

You've just gained what most simulator golfers never will: A no-nonsense decision-making framework that tells you what matters most, right now. Don't waste it. Use it, trust it, and let it brutally guide your practice.

"Golf is what the ball does." — Homer Kelley

THE 10-MINUTE DIAGNOSTIC PROTOCOL

Don't overcomplicate this. You are going in to collect cold, hard data. You are not there to fix your swing today. You are there to diagnose it.

Step 1: The Warm-Up (2 Minutes)

Get your body loose. Hit a few wedges, then a few mid-irons. Do not look at the screen. I don't care where the ball is going right now. Just get the blood flowing so you aren't making stiff, first-swing-of-the-day compensations.

Step 2: The Baseline Set (5 Minutes)

Pull out your Driver. (We are using the driver because it amplifies your flaws better than any other club).

- **Hit exactly 10 to 15 shots. * Play your stock swing.** No hero swings, no trying to hit it 320 yards, and absolutely no tinkering with your mechanics mid-set.
- **No mulligans.** If you top one 40 yards down the left side, that counts. We need the raw, ugly truth of your baseline game, not your highlight reel.

Step 3: Record the Raw Data (2 Minutes)

Look at your simulator's average data for that 10-15 shot set. You are going to write down exactly five numbers. Ignore total distance, ignore rollout, ignore how pretty the tracer looked. Write down:

1. **Average Club Path** (and note the variance)
2. **Average Face-to-Path** (and note the variance—is it jumping between +4 and -4?)
3. **Average Smash Factor**
4. **Average Angle of Attack**
5. **Average Dynamic Loft**

Step 4: Run the Gauntlet (1 Minute)

Take those numbers and run them straight through the decision tree we talked about:

- *Is my Path all over the map?* If yes, **STOP**. Your start line is a mess.
- *Is my Face-to-Path wildly inconsistent?* If yes, **STOP**. You can't control your curve. Fix it.

- *Is my Smash Factor under 1.34?* If yes, **STOP**. Your strike is garbage. That is your only priority.
 - *Is my Angle of Attack causing me to chop down on the ball or launch it into orbit?* If yes, **STOP**. Fix your dynamic delivery.
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THE RULE OF ONE

Whatever step you hit a wall on first—that is your **Primary Limiter**.

For the rest of that simulator session, you are only allowed to work on drills or feels that address *that specific metric*. If your Smash Factor is 1.28, I don't care if your club path is a perfect +2° in-to-out. Slow down, swing good and figure out how to find the center.

This is how you practice with intent. It's brutal, it's boring, and it's exactly what actually works.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: THE MAN BEHIND THE METRICS

Daniel Guest doesn't just teach golf; he's cracked the damn code.

As the founder of IMAGEN Golf and a Top 100 Coach, Daniel knows exactly what it feels like to be a frustrated amateur because he used to be one. But after conducting over 40,000 real-world lessons on the tee, the truth became unavoidable: the secret to mastering this game isn't *more* practice. It's *smarter* practice based on hard truth.

Daniel stripped away the traditional coaching fluff to engineer the exact framework you just read—a brutally honest system for translating confusing launch monitor data into immediate, actionable improvement. He wrote **Fix This First** for one specific reason: to give golfers everywhere the ultimate shortcut to stop guessing, cut through the simulator noise, and start dialing in their actual game based on cold, hard data.

"Golf isn't a game of luck; it's a game of physics and focus. I'm here to give you the keys to both." — Daniel Guest

A FINAL WORD

Thank you for reading this guide. If you made it this far, you're officially done with the guesswork. You have the blueprint. You know exactly how to filter out the noise, find your true limiters, and practice with actual intent. Now, it's on you to put in the work. Keep this framework saved on your phone, your computer, heck I'm "Old Scholl" print it out and use it every single time you step into a simulator.

But your education doesn't stop here. If you want to keep leveling up and stripping away the fluff holding your game back, subscribe to the [IMAGEN Golf YouTube channel](#) and listen to [The Imagen Golf Podcast](#) wherever you get your podcasts. We drop hard-hitting, data-driven coaching that actually translates to lower scores, whether you're watching at home or listening on the drive to the course.

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And of course you can always connect with us on our website [ImagenGolf.com](#)

Trust the data, Put in the work and I Guarantee you'll get the swing and the game you've always ***Imagined!*** (see what I did there, imagined).