

Roe's short notes pay off for Westwood and Fisher

Heaven knows what Mark Roe charges Lee Westwood and Ross Fisher for a short game lesson. But if it's anything like the £300 per hour plus VAT quoted on his website, the two in-form pros must be reflecting on the best few grand they have ever spent.

Scroll down for more



Turnaround: Britain's Lee Westwood tees off

Think of Roe at an Open, of course, and the abiding image is of a man with his head in his hands, unable to comprehend his diabolical luck at being disqualified for failing to exchange scorecards with Jesper Parnevik, when a final round alongside Tiger Woods beckoned. That was five years ago, at Royal St George's.

Now he returns as Britain's secret weapon, the man who has revolutionised the short games of the nation's leading candidate Westwood and England's man of the moment, Fisher.

When Roe retired two years ago after an 18-year career on the European Tour built round his short-game prowess, he had nothing more to go on than a full contacts book. Now he is the most refreshing new voice on golf on British television for years. As for his work as a short-game whizz, that began this very week 12 months ago.

'The first time I spoke with Lee was when he was 16 years old,' Roe recalled. 'He asked me very politely if he could have a game over the winter and we've remained firm friends. I saw him at Loch Lomond last year and told him he was swinging the club brilliantly. He replied that he would win every week if he could chip like me. I said to him that he would have won three majors by now if he could chip like me. So that's how it started, and I couldn't believe the difference I was able to make in a short space of time. I had no idea I could explain my thoughts on the short game in a way people could understand.'

Could they ever. Ask Westwood and Fisher about what Roe has done for them, and there is an almost beatific look in their eyes. Which is hardly surprising.

With their long-game qualities, imagine what it must be like to suddenly have more control around the greens. As Roe says: 'Save these guys one shot per round and you're making all the difference. That is why they are so enthusiastic, because they can see all the possibilities.'

'What did I do? I think there are 15 to 20 components to a perfect short game and some players come with 10 in place and some with one. I think Lee would be the first to say he didn't have too many, and so we worked on things that would repeat under pressure. It's the same with Ross. When he holed that bunker shot on the final hole to win the European Open recently it gave me enormous pleasure.'

As for The Open, Roe's big chance came and went in 2003 in a flurry of apologies. 'I still think about it,' he

admitted. 'I look at some of the recent winners like Ben Curtis and Todd Hamilton and think: "Why not me at Sandwich?" I shot the joint lowest round at that event, and the hole was like a bucket. I love the course, and playing alongside Tiger would have been perfect. But these indescribable things happen. Now, having retired, there couldn't be anything better for me than Lee winning The Open. It would be special beyond belief.'