

THE MENTAL GAME OF GOLF - Continued

In previous articles I have attempted to paint a picture as to the importance the mind plays in the game of golf. One previous article outlined ideas of how to approach each and every shot you are faced with by ensuring you have a pre-shot routine.

A proper pre-shot routine prepares your mind and body to successfully execute the shot that you are faced with. Key components of the pre-shot routine include the practice swing, alignment, visualization and focus. Preparation is the key to lowering your scores on the golf course! Educating yourself on making that perfect golf swing, learning the proper putting and chipping strokes and then practicing each and every component of the game of golf will assist you when you take it to the golf course. Practicing your pre-shot routine on the driving range prior to taking it to the golf course is an important component to lowering your overall scores.

Part of your practice time should be dedicated to practicing your pre-shot routine. How we do this is simple. Choose a different golf club from your bag for each shot. From the time you put the golf club in your hand, you are simulating an on course situation. Therefore, you go through your entire routine prior to hitting each and every shot.

The key to your pre-shot routine is that it should take the same amount of time for each shot. From the time you choose your club to the time you have hit your shot should take approximately 30 seconds. This may differ from player to player but should be around that time frame. Repeat this process for each and every shot after that.

Staying focused on the golf course is an important component to playing well. An average round of golf will take approximately 4 hours to play. As a result, staying focused for the entire round can be very difficult. Keep in mind that you only have to stay focused throughout your pre-shot routine. The rest of the time can be spent talking to your playing partners, preparing for your next shot or just enjoying the outdoors.

One of the biggest mistakes most players make on the golf course is that they tend not to “stay in the now”. In other words golfers allow their minds to wander and think about the end result instead of what it is they have to do to get to the end result.

An example of this and one that all golfers can relate to is remember the game that you were playing and playing very well. Now, every situation is different but let's say that your score was quite a bit lower than it has ever been with 2 holes to play. You start to think that if you have a par on the last 2 holes, you will shoot your lowest score ever. As a result of thinking about the end result, and not staying with the now, (your shot at hand) you shoot a triple and double bogey respectively on the last two holes.

This is not uncommon and has happened to all of us at one time or another. It is important that we stay focused on what we are trying to achieve with the shot you are faced with and by doing so will assist you in hitting most of your shots the way you envision them.

Having said this golf is not a game of perfect and as a result not all of your shots are going to be perfect! Every person plays to a different level and in some ways this is what makes this game special. It does not matter your age, gender or physical ability we all can play golf. Our intent is to hit the ball perfect all of the time but this is physically impossible. Even the best players in the world hit poor shots at times. This will happen.

Dealing with the imperfect shot is an important part of the game of golf. All of us deal with hitting poor shot differently. Some will throw their club, some will yell and scream, others channel their energy inwards and become anti-social and others laugh it off and really do not care. This is an extremely important part of the mental game and is call “releasing” negative energy.

It is important to devise a way to release the negative energy you have inside of you by hitting one or many poor shots. If you do not then the anger builds up inside of you, creating tension and causes you to hit more poor shots. As a result your score will most certainly be higher than it could have been.

Learning how to release negative energy is a learnt skill and needs to be perfected by all that play the game. One way to release negative energy is at the completion of the hole, pick up your ball in your left hand, squeeze it as tight as you can and then place it in your right hand.

Squeezing the ball tight will take that negative energy and transfer it to the ball. Passing it over to the other hand after you have squeezed it to death eliminates the negative energy from your body so that you can move forward, stay relaxed and focus on the task at hand. That task is to put a good swing on your next shot.

This is only one of many ways to release negative energy but is essential to staying relaxed and calm on the golf course.