

BETTER GOLF SOLUTIONS

Professional Techniques,
Strategies and Methods
to Break Your
Scoring Barriers
and
Maximize
Your Potential

BY
LESTER J. BOUCHARD, PH.D.

ACHIEVEMENT SOLUTIONS

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To all my mentors, clients and supporters:

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About the Author

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Introduction

Golf is one of the few sports where the player and the player alone determines the outcome. There is no one else to blame or accept responsibility. Fortunately, irrespective of education, socioeconomic status, gender or age, anyone can learn the skills necessary to self-improve play and demonstrate more consistency. All that you need is a little knowledge about technique to develop a reliable swing and a good short game, and the right physical and mental approach.

Success in golf is a matter of understanding and attaining the appropriate mechanical techniques. It is also about regulation of the mind and body. Lots of people know the basic principles. However, it is a matter of applying those principles consistently at the right moments. The knowledge is not much good unless you use it. The reality of the situation is that technical skill and self-regulation of the body and mind are not attributes that a golfer can buy and instantaneously possess. Rather, they are skills that any player can develop and must practice.

Unfortunately, the majority of players have not received proper instruction, they fail to learn from mistakes and don't practice correctly. Consequently, they never get any better and they become frustrated. One of the primary reasons that a player becomes discouraged is because of their inability to determine why their game doesn't improve. They can't ascertain what is holding them back from beating playing partners or friends whom they feel that they're better than.

All that you have to do is look around the typical driving range and you can see the obsession and aggravation with attempting to master this game.

Increasing proficiency in any endeavor requires awareness, choice and trust.

This is particularly true of golf. First, you must be aware of what is costing you strokes. Second, you must choose a training regimen, which over time will lower your scores. Finally, you must trust that what you are doing will be effective if you stick with it.

Self-awareness is one of the biggest advantages that high-level players have over amateurs. They know themselves, they know their game and they know their tendencies. Therefore, they know, through experience, how to assess and resolve the majority of their own personal problems when they arise. Not every player may achieve the proficiency to perform at the elite level. Every player can, however, acquire the knowledge and develop the right mental attitude and physical approach to the game to get everything possible out of his/her capability.

Better Golf Solutions was developed to help the amateur golfer learn the skills necessary to be self-sufficient, be mentally tough, achieve and more regularly attain peak performance. Additionally, it is structured in a way that allows each player to construct and implement an individual plan for improvement. Please keep in mind that every athlete is different. Elite athletes have used many of the concepts and techniques described, solely or in combination, to enhance performance for decades. Which skills and techniques

are needed and will be most beneficial to you is a matter of objective analysis, experimentation and regular application.

Better Golf Solutions provides a life-long philosophy and process for continuous self-improvement. It is an approach and perspective that all high-level players adhere to because they recognize and accept the laborious nature of this game. Although amateur players often look for quick fixes, such approaches rarely fulfill expectations, particularly over the long-term. Nothing of quality ever comes that way. Progress and development takes a thorough and accurate assessment of your game and habits, a dedicated effort to the appropriate improvement activities and time.

Better Golf Solutions will help you:

- ✓ Learn how to accurately chart rounds and assess what is costing you strokes.
- ✓ Develop complete control over your own advancement leaving little to chance.
- ✓ Become skilled at recognizing all known situations that cause performance problems.
- ✓ Learn how to think, train and compete with professional techniques and strategies.
- ✓ Save time, money and energy that would otherwise be wasted on inappropriate or less effective assessments, training methods, strategies and gadgets.

- ✓ Acquire the knowledge and skills to improve all facets of your game at a fraction of the cost that similar professional lessons would be.

Chapter 1 teaches you a system for accurately charting rounds of golf to determine which statistical areas of the game are costing you strokes. The chapter includes a sample round analysis, a thorough explanation of how to objectively and subjectively determining stroke-costing shots and a blank worksheet that can be used for more effective round assessments.

Chapter 2 covers the basic fundamental and technical aspects of the golf swing. Included are instructions and illustrations regarding grip, alignment and set-up, posture and stance, ball position, and swing path. Explanations and drills for the most common causes of swing path and ball flight errors are also included. Moreover, Chapter 2 introduces kinesthetic awareness exercises to help you develop a feel for a proper swing path, contact, tempo, timing, and grip pressure.

Chapter 3 details the proper execution of the short game strokes and various trouble and specialty shots as well as strategies for increasing proficiency. Illustrations are included to aid understanding.

Chapter 4 explains the impact that confidence, improper thoughts, tension, nervous reactions and anger have on performance. It also differentiates the difference between the conscious and subconscious minds, how they affect the golf swing as well as how and when to use them. Exercises, worksheets, a

questionnaire, and sample journal are included to help you develop psychological awareness.

Chapter 5 discusses the various mental errors that players make and the typical scenarios during which they occur such as improper pre-competitive preparation, mental and emotional reactions to the start of competition, when play is going well versus poorly, and what a player does in between shots. Suggestions are offered for developing effective performance routines and course management skills.

Chapter 6 addresses how sleep, nutrition, fitness, self-discipline, attitude, time management, stress management and recovery or lack thereof can potentially affect performance. Recommendations are made for ways to improve each of these variables and a worksheet is included to aid monitoring and assessment.

Chapter 7 teaches you various techniques for developing emotional control and enhancing performance. You learn:

- ✓ How attitudes are developed and why they affect performance.
- ✓ How to identify and restructure self-talk.
- ✓ The power of affirmations.
- ✓ The different forms of attention and how to focus more effectively.
- ✓ How to use triggers and cues to change behaviors.
- ✓ How to stop unproductive thoughts.
- ✓ Two key types of visualization and when to use them.

- ✓ The art of relaxation and the techniques for manifesting it.
- ✓ How to use models to manifest development.

Chapter 8 instructs you on how to:

- ✓ Properly set goals.
- ✓ Practice effectively and efficiently.
- ✓ Periodize technical, mental and fitness training to maximize performance.
- ✓ Identify and increase the frequency of peak performance moments.

Included are a sample goal-setting worksheet, a daily practice log and training regimen.

Chapter 9, the final chapter, describes how to:

- ✓ Sustain the motivation to achieve.
- ✓ Avoid athletic staleness and burnout.

The path to reaching peak performance potential and consistency can be long and arduous. Without regular self-monitoring, assessment and adjustment, a person remains stagnant. They get in a comfort zone, whether productive or not. At the first sign of adversity, these individuals generally resort back to the same old ingrained unproductive habits. It ends up being a perpetual cycle of falling victim to similar pitfalls repeatedly time after time.

You, on the other hand, have taken the first step toward discovering your impending talents and making monumental strides forward. By reading this book, embracing the **Better Golf Solutions** philosophy, adopting the right perspective,

making a dedicated effort, remaining patient and resilient, you will soon realize how truly good you can get.

Chapter 1

Developing Performance Awareness

“You can’t set the course for where you are going until you know where you are.”

Author Unknown

To improve your golf game you must have a clear understanding of what is causing you to lose strokes. Is it a deficient swing? Is it a poor short game? Is it your strategy? Is it a substandard mental game? Is it just a lack of practice or playing? Unless you understand why you are not playing to the best of your ability it will impossible to make an effective change to help you reach your goals.

Therefore, let’s begin this process with a little self-analysis. Which of these previous areas do you think is causing you to lose strokes? If you know definitively, then you are one step closer to reaching your objective. If you think you know, I would caution you to make sure that your notions are factual before you commit to your plan for improvement because perceptions and reality are often different. If you have no clue, then welcome to the path of self-discovery and let’s proceed to gaining some insight.

On the basic level, take a look at your typical round of golf. How many fairways and greens do you hit in regulation? How many putts do you average? How often do you get up and down from around the green and in the bunkers? If you don’t know, you should. Again, it is essential to know exactly what part of

your game is causing you to lose strokes. Keep track of these statistics as you play and after a few rounds calculate the averages.

This simple process can be added to any scorecard. Under your name on the scorecard list on separate lines the words: (1) fairways, (2) greens, (3) up and downs, (4) sand saves, and (5) putts. On every hole, place a “Y” in the box if you hit the fairway and an “N” in the box if you didn’t. Leave it blank if the shot didn’t come into play. Duplicate this procedure for greens, up and downs, and sand saves. For putts, simply record the number of putts per hole.

The details of your round can be further specified with some minor adjustments in your recording. For instance, you can record the degree of your hits and misses by using small and capital letters. A capital “Y” would then represent a near perfect shot. A small “y” would mean that you achieved the objective but it wasn’t a great shot (e.g., a drive in the fairway but in a bad position). A capital “N” would then represent a bad miss and a small “n” a slight error (e.g., a shot just off the green). Additionally, you can add the club that you used right next to these letters to gain further insight into your strengths and weaknesses. For example, a capital “ND” would indicate a bad miss with the driver. A small “y7” would point out that you hit the green with your 7-iron but that it was distant from the hole, your target, or just in the fringe. Putts can be further detailed by including the approximate distance. 2³⁰ may represent a two-putt from 30 feet or even more specifically a 2⁴⁵⁻⁵ may indicate that you two-putted from 45 feet and the second was from 5 feet.

To clarify exactly where you are losing strokes, circle the shot that directly resulted in the loss of a stroke. If it resulted in the loss of multiple strokes then make circles proportionate to the number of strokes lost. This process can be somewhat subjective. Try to be accurate and honest and you'll start to get a clearer picture of what is really costing you. To avoid confusion and take some of the subjectivity out of the assessment process, let's distinguish how many and which types of shots may directly cost strokes.

A tee shot may or may not cost you strokes depending on how well and where you hit it. Needless to say, if you hit it out-of-bounds it will likely cost you two strokes unless you are able to hole out with the remaining strokes left to achieve par. If you pop it up, top it, shank it, or miss it completely then it will likely result in the loss of one stroke unless you are able to hole it with the remaining strokes. If you hit it into a lateral hazard then it will probable cost you a stroke. If you miss the fairway, it may or may not cost you depending on the lie, how far off line it is as well as the quality of the approach shot remaining. If you have a relatively clear line to the green and a descent lie then it shouldn't cost you anything. Do not automatically assume that a missed fairway is what cost you the stroke(s) above par.

The same is true of approach shots into the green. The fact that an approach shot does not hit the green does not necessarily constitute a stroke costing shot. If the approach goes out-of-bounds, into a hazard, is chunked, topped, or shanked then in all likelihood it may. If it goes into a bunker or lies off

the green then it may or may not be the culprit depending on the distance, pin position, lie and overall difficulty of the next shot.

Whether or not you should allocate the lost stroke to the approach shot or one of the short game strokes is the most subjective part of this process. In general, if the ball is within 15 yards of the pin, you have a descent lie and angle and there are no major obstructions in your line then you should be able to get it up and down the majority of the time. If the ball is outside of that distance or any one of the other factors comes into play then the chances are greatly reduced. If you hit it into a greenside bunker then it depends upon the location of the bunker, the pin position in relation to that bunker and the lie. If it is a front bunker location, in a bunker with a short-sided pin position or you end up with a poor lie then the culprit is the approach shot. If none of these hold true and you don't hit it reasonably close then it may be the bunker shot.

If you three putt at any time then one of those putts cost you a stroke. If your first putt is further than 30 feet, you hit it outside five feet and consequently miss the second then it is the first putt that cost you. If you hit it within five feet and miss the second then it's the second. If the first putt is within 30 feet, you leave it outside of three feet and miss the second then it's the first putt. Any putt within three feet should be made 95 percent of the time. A sample scorecard of a round and brief explanation are provided on the next few pages to give you a better understanding of what I am describing.

Sample Scorecard

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out
Par	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	5	4	36
Score	4	4	4	6	6	4	2	6	4	40
Fairways	ND		YD	Y3i Nw	ND	YD		N3w Y3w	YD	4/7
Greens	Y7	n5i	N3i	N9i	y9i	Yw	Y8	n3w	Yw	4/9
Putts	40-4 2	20-1 2	7 1	14-1 2	18-1 2	30-3 2	9 1	10-1 2	8-1 2	16
Up & Down		N	y	N				N		1/4
Sand Save										

Hole	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Par	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	35	71
Score	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	38	78
Fairways	YD	ND Y3i	YD		ND	YD	Y3w	ND		4/7	8/14
Greens	Nw	yw	y9i	N7i	y7i	Y8i	Yw	n9i	N8i	5/9	9/18
Putts	25-5 3	50-2 2	50-4 2	2 1	30-5 2	6-1 2	7-1 2	10-2 2	12-1 2	18	34
Up & Down				Y				N		1/2	2/6
Sand Save									N	0/1	0/1

Although most players would kill for a round like the example used above, there is still room for improvement. Therefore, let's take a closer look at which shots caused the player to lose strokes to see if there is any useful information. On the par 3-2nd hole, this player missed the green but had a very makable up and down. He made a poor chip to 20 feet and two putted. On the dogleg left par 5-4th hole, the player hit a nice 3 iron off the tee, mishit a fairway wood into the light rough, missed the green with a 9 iron but again had a very makable up and down. Another poor chip to 14 feet resulted in a bogey. On the par 4-5th, the

player hit his tee shot out-of-bounds and had to re-tee, ultimately costing him 2 strokes. On the par 5-8th, a 3 wood off the tee was hit into a lateral hazard. After taking a drop, he hit a nice fairway wood short of the green but it left a very difficult up and down. On the par 4-10th, the player hit a wedge to the fringe of the green and three putted from twenty-five feet. On the par 4-17th, the player again misplayed an easy chip to 10 feet and two putted. And finally, on the par 3-18th he hit a poor bunker shot from an easy lie to 12 feet and two putted.

In this particular round, the player lost three strokes to par from driving errors, not bad considering that two of those strokes were from the one tee shot on the 5th hole and he had 14 total drives. That equates to a cost ratio of 21% (3 strokes divided by 14 attempts). The other five strokes that were lost resulted from some aspect of his short game. He only converted two out of six scramble attempts; however, three out of those six chipping attempts directly resulted in the loss of a stroke. That's a cost ratio of 50%. The remaining two strokes were from a poor medium range putt (1 out of 34 attempts) and bad bunker shot (1 out of 1). Needless to say, the putting statistic is negligible and there is not enough sand save information to make an informative decision.

In assessing this round, the one thing that stands out the most is the poor execution in the short game area, particularly his chipping. If this player were to record similar statistics over the course of a few rounds it would highly suggest that he needs some dedicated practice in this most crucial aspect of the game.

After charting a minimum of three rounds, calculate the cost ratio of the different statistical areas of your game. Divide the total number of strokes lost in each area by the total number of attempts.

Total strokes lost on drives/Total drive attempts= Fairway Cost Ratio

Total strokes lost on approach shots/Total approach attempts= Green Cost Ratio

Total strokes lost on putts/Total putt attempts= Putting Cost Ratio

Total strokes lost on scrambles/Total scramble attempts= Scramble Cost Ratio

Total strokes lost on sand saves/Total sand save attempts= Sand Save Cost Ratio

The higher the number the greater that facet of your game is costing you. For example, a cost-ratio of .5 indicates that you are losing about a half a stroke for every attempt. 1 means that you are losing on average a stroke an attempt. This process will give you a fair assessment of which areas of the game are most often costing you strokes and suggest a need for further evaluation and some dedicated practice. Although tracking fairways, greens, scrambles and sand save percentages is the most widely utilized method of professional statistics analysis, the cost ratio system is a far more effective technique for accurately assessing your game because theoretically you could hit 0% of fairways, greens, scrambles or sand saves and none of those shots may have actually caused you the loss of strokes to par.

Now, to give all this information some perspective, take a look at how the average professional scores. Keep in mind that these are the averages of all the players on the respective tours. The top 10 players' statistics are much better.

<u>2003 Final Statistics</u>	<u>PGA</u>	<u>Champions</u>	<u>Nationwide</u>	<u>LPGA</u>
Scoring	71	72	71	73
Driving Accuracy	67%	67%	63%	68%
Greens in Regulation	65%	67%	66%	60%
Putts per Round/Hole	29/1.77	29/1.79	29/1.78	30/1.84
Scrambles (up & downs)	58%	57%	58%	Not Listed
Sand Saves	50%	45%	48%	35%
Bounce Back	20%	18%	20%	Not Listed

<u>2004 Final Statistics</u>	<u>PGA</u>	<u>Champions</u>	<u>Nationwide</u>	<u>LPGA</u>
Scoring	71	71	71	74
Driving Accuracy	65%	70%	64%	68%
Greens in Regulation	65%	66%	66%	63%
Putts per Round/Hole	29/1.77	29/1.80	29/1.79	Not Listed
Scrambles (up & downs)	58%	58%	57%	Not Listed
Sand Saves	49%	45%	47%	50%
Bounce Back	19%	18%	19%	Not Listed

Driving accuracy denotes the percentage of fairways hit and bounce back is the percentage of time that a player responds with a birdie or better immediately after scoring a bogey or worse on the previous hole. Bounce back is the only tour statistic that characterizes a player's mental toughness. I will explain the importance of that statistic in further detail a little later. I would also like to add that there is not one player on any of the professional tours that averages 31 or more putts per round or lower than 45% in scramble percentage.

Next, let's take a look at how most amateur players stack up from the white tees.

Handicap	4.5	9	18	36
Driving Accuracy (#/%)	10/71%	8/57%	5/35%	0/0%
Greens in regulation (#/%)	10/55%	8/44%	3/17%	0/0%
Putts per round	30	32	35	41
Scrambles (up & downs)	60%	46%	17%	0%
Sand saves	31%	7%	0%	0%

Certainly, it is unrealistic to expect the majority of players to be able to perform at the professional level. However, they are good benchmarks to measure yourself against as well as it should give you a realistic understanding of what it takes to achieve as a pro. To amplify the statistics even further, keep in mind that professionals play on much longer, narrower and in general, more difficult golf courses than the majority of recreational or avid players.

Summary Points

- Chart the next 3 to 5 rounds
- Calculate the percentage of fairways and greens hit, up and downs, sand saves, number of putts as well as the total number of strokes lost in each of these areas
- Perform a cost ratio analysis of each of these areas

Round Tracker

Round 1	Fairways	Greens	Putts	Scrambles	Sand Saves
Attempted					
Converted					
Percentage					
Lost Strks.					
Cost Ratio					

Round 2	Fairways	Greens	Putts	Scrambles	Sand
Attempted					
Converted					
Percentage					
Lost Strks.					
Cost Ratio					

Round 3	Fairways	Greens	Putts	Scrambles	Sand
Attempted					
Converted					
Percentage					
Lost Strks.					
Cost Ratio					

3 Rd Avg.	Fairways	Greens	Putts	Scrambles	Sand
Tot. Attp.					
Tot. Conv.					
Tot. %					
Tot. Lost					
Cost Ratio					

Chapter 2

Increasing Technical Awareness

“If a lot of people gripped a knife and fork the way they do a golf club, they'd starve to death.”

Sam Snead

Once you have determined which key statistical area(s) is/are costing you most, you now have to ascertain why it is happening. In other words, is it technical or mental? Golf is a very complex sport that encompasses a multitude of physical and psychological variables that influence your score. On any given stroke, there are at least a dozen different things that can potentially cause an errant swing. For example, physically it could be your grip, alignment, posture, ball position, swing path, club-face angle at impact, tempo, timing, contact point, etc. Psychologically, feelings of nervousness, tension, excessive worry, doubt, lack of confidence, indecision, thinking about past or future results or score, anger, frustration, mood, attitude coupled with any negative mental images or self-talk can impact the swing and consequently the result. An error in any one of the above constructs can potentially lead to an errant shot.

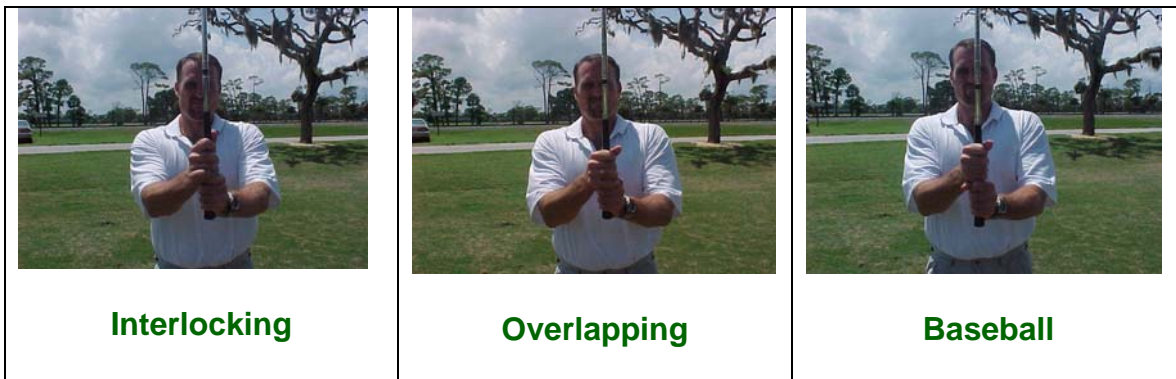
The golf swing is a complicated technically precise series of biomechanical movements. It is always a work in progress regardless of how good you are. The goal is to develop a swing that is mechanically solid, repeatable, works with every club in your bag, and holds up under pressure. No two swings are exactly the same. What works for one may not work for another.

You have to build a swing that is right for you. Therefore, if you are trying to imitate a swing, model an individual that is similar in height and body type.

Please keep in mind that this manual is not intended to be a thorough technical instructional piece. Although I am going to address the basic fundamentals as well as the causes of common errors, there are more detailed and informative resources on the market if that is your desire or need.

Grip

A proper grip is fundamental to good golf. Although there are other factors that affect the club-face angle, the grip is the primary factor responsible for its position at address and impact. Improper grip is the most common flaw among amateurs and one of the most difficult to correct because changes feel funny. Regardless of which type of grip that you use (interlocking, overlapping, baseball or 10 finger), the two most important factors are that your hands are in an acceptable position on the club and that you have an appropriate grip pressure.



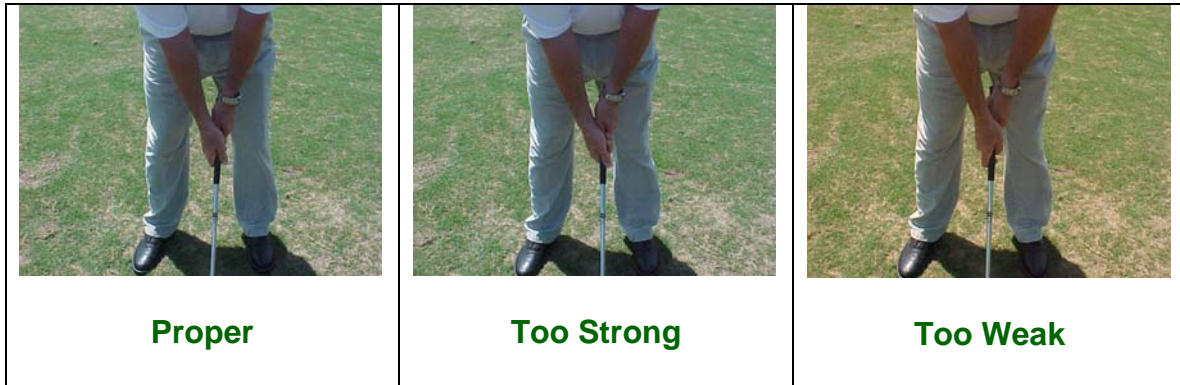
The club handle should rest in your non-dominant hand so that it runs through the middle digit of your trigger finger up to where your pinky finger meets

your palm under the pad of that hand. In your dominant hand the club lays across the crease where the fingers meet the palm. Your non-dominant hand should be wrapped around the grip so that you can see the first two knuckles and the V formed by the trigger finger and thumb points toward your dominant side ear. Your dominant hand should be wrapped around the club so the club rests more in your fingers, again with the V pointing toward your dominant side ear. Proper grip for the non-dominant hand is holding the club against the palm with the last 3 fingers. The dominant hand grip is with the middle 2 fingers and no palm pressure.

You should hold the club tight enough so that you have a firm feel and control, but not so tight that you cause tightness in the hands, arms and shoulders. Normal grip pressure should range between 3 and 4 on a scale from 1 (so the club easily slides through your hands with light contact) to 10 (gripping it as tight as you can). If your grip pressure is too tight not only will it produce tension and inhibit a full and fluid swing, but it will also tire the muscles, reduce power and lessen the feel of the club-head.

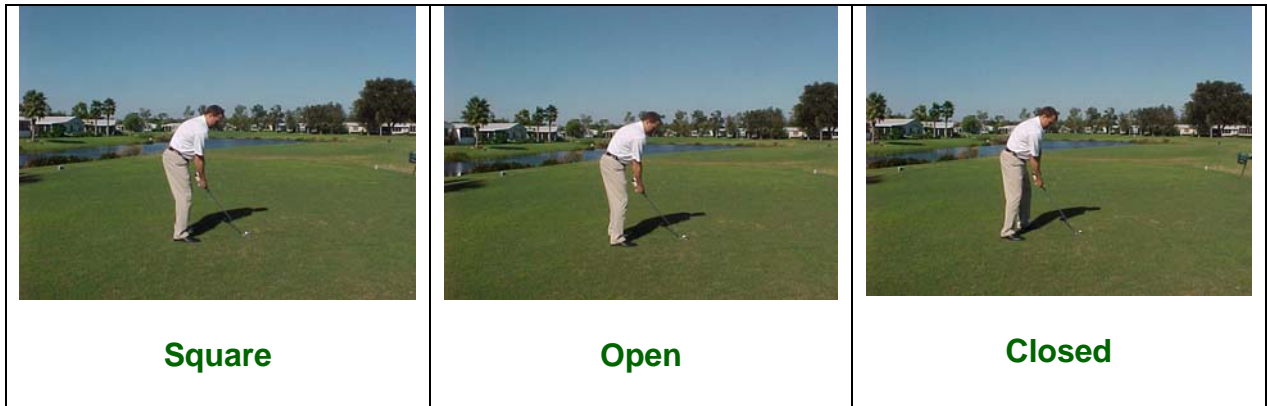
If your grip is too strong (dominant hand palm facing skyward), then the tendency is to hit pulls, draws or hooks. If your grip is too weak (dominant hand palm facing downward) then the tendency is to hit pushes, blocks, fades, and slices. A simple drill to make sure that your grip is neutral is to first take your normal grip and set-up and then raise the club and extend your arms as much as you can until the club is parallel to the ground. If upon extension the face turns

toward your non-dominant side, your grip is strong. If it turns toward your dominant side then it's weak. If it stays square it's neutral.



Alignment and Set-up

Proper alignment and set-up encompasses three sections of the body, the feet, midsection or core and shoulders. Each of these should be square (parallel or slight open to the target line). Square can be identified by placing a club shaft across the front edge of the toes, waist and shoulders respectively. If any part of your alignment or set-up is too open (left of the target line for a right-handed player), this often promotes an outside-in swing path causing the ball to fade or slice (move from left to right for a right-handed player). If it is too closed (right of the target line for a right-handed player) then this often influences an inside-out swing path resulting in a draw or hook (right to left movement for a right-handed player).



Before fully addressing the ball, first take your grip and then set the clubface square to the target line prior to setting your feet and the rest of your body. To facilitate your perceptual awareness of proper alignment, lay a club shaft down on the ground toward your target when you are practicing on the range. Another method for aiding your alignment and set-up is to determine an intermediate target on your target line somewhere within the first few feet after your ball and set the clubface square to that target.

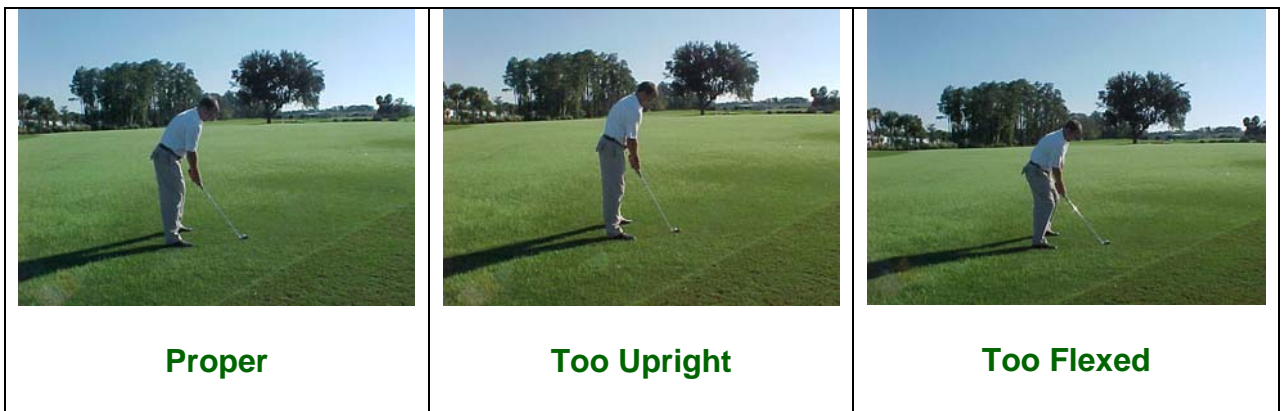
Slight variations in alignment and club-face angle make a big difference in the direction and quality of the shot. For every degree that your alignment and clubface angle are offline the variation to the left or right of the target will increase proportionally with the amount of deviation and distance of the shot. So for example, if your alignment and clubface angle are off 5 degrees with all other swing variables correct, your shot will be 10 yards left or right from 60 yards. It would be 20 yards off from 120 yards and 30 yards off from 180 yards. Alternatively, with each degree of variation on a standard shot from 150 yards the

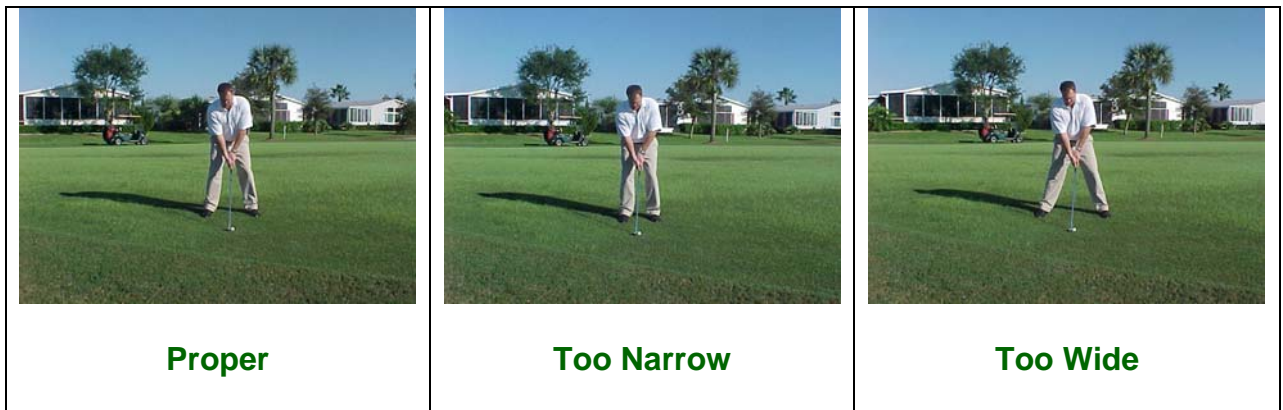
ball will be 5 yards offline. So a 1 degree variation will send it 5 yards offline. Two degrees will produce a 10 yard deviation and so on.

Posture and Stance

In every shot you need a combination of balance, stability, comfort and ease of movement. You should have an athletic posture with your back fairly straight, slight flex in the knees, chin up and feet approximately shoulder width apart. Your weight should be distributed equally on both feet and balanced on the balls of your feet, never too much on the toes or heels.

If you have too much knee flex it limits the ability to turn your shoulders causing the loss of club-head speed and accuracy. If your stance is too narrow there is no way to maintain balance and stability. If it's too wide then you restrict shoulder and hip turn on the back and down-swings and limit the release of the club. If your weight is too much on your toes your swing will be too upright. If you are too upright it leads to poor balance and loss of power because your lower body cannot contribute to the swing. If it's too far on your heels then it will flatten out your swing plane, which may cause a pull.





Ball Position

Philosophies on ball position vary slightly. Some contend that keeping the ball centered for all clubs is the easiest way to learn the game and be consistent. The general consensus for more advanced players, however, is that the ball should be positioned somewhere between your bellybutton and the heel of your front foot depending on the club utilized. For longer shots, the ball may be positioned more forward in the stance at a point somewhere perpendicular to inside the front foot's heel (the left for a right-handed player and right for left-handed). For shorter shots, the ball may be positioned at a point closer to the center of the body and stance.

Additionally, the ball should be positioned at a point away from the body where the hands and arms are hanging comfortably below the shoulders, the club is lying flat on the ground and the ball is centered in the middle of the clubface. The hands are generally positioned between two and eight inches away from the body, obviously closer with shorter clubs. If the ball is positioned too close to the body it causes you to be too upright and therefore you can't swing

freely. If it is too far then you end up reaching and flattening out the swing plane. If it is too far back then you can't turn fully behind the ball on the back-swing. If it's too far forward then you end up swinging up on the ball and topping or blading it.

To help determine your ball position relative to your feet, place two club shafts on the ground forming a "t" or "+" sign. Place your feet and toes along the inside of the shaft pointed down your target line with the dissecting perpendicular shaft positioned in between your legs. If you move to a position where the perpendicular shaft is touching your forward heel, then that is the approximate correct ball position for the driver. If the shaft dissects your bellybutton, then that is the ballpark location for the wedges and other shorter clubs.



Swing-Path

Your objective is to create a swing in which the club backswing and downswing are roughly on the same line and on proper plane. On the takeaway you would like to generate a wide swing arc by extending your arms and club down the line. Your wrists begin to cock naturally after the clubface reaches about knee height. Try to keep your hands in sync with your hips and shoulders. Turn your shoulders approximately 90 degrees until your left shoulder (right if left-handed) is under your chin and simultaneously rotate your hips about 45 degrees. The clubface should naturally square at the top of the swing, meaning that it is parallel to the left forearm (for a right-handed player). Start the downward motion and uncoiling process by making a slight forward motion with your dominant knee and rotating your hips before you start to drop your hands.

Let the club travel down slow and smooth and then accelerate through the point of impact while letting your hands release the clubhead. Follow through as if you were shaking hands with the target, meaning that your right arm (left if left-handed) is fully extended down the target line. Finish long with your hands, arms and club wrapped over your left shoulder (right if left-handed) and the toe of the club pointed down at finish.

If your swing-path is inside-out then you will likely push, draw or hook the ball depending on the club-face angle at impact. If it is outside-in then you will probably pull, fade or slice the ball again depending on the club-face angle at

impact. Examine the various reference points to check for proper swing path on the backswing, downswing and follow-through.



Practice your backswing by taking the club back to each one of the reference points in slow motion and verifying proper placement and angles. Improve your downswing move by performing the pump drill. Swing to the top of your backswing, pause and then kick your dominant knee in, start rotation of the

hips and begin the weight transfer. Bring your hands and arms down to about waist high so the butt end of the club is pointing down toward the contact area and then return them back to the top. Repeat this pumping action a few times before making a complete swing with follow-through. Work on your follow-through by swinging a middle iron with your non-dominant hand only. This will allow a free follow-through and improve the non-dominant side action.

Most Common Swing Errors

The most common problem for the average golfer is rushing the downswing. Too quick equals loss of power. If the hips and shoulders unwind too quickly and the hands trail behind, the result is a push, block, fade or slice. If the hands rotate too much, the result is a hook. A slight pause at the top of the backswing may help eliminate a quick downswing and poor tempo. Here are some other techniques to work on swing rhythm and tempo.

To get a feel for proper rhythm and balance make several practice swings at normal pace with your feet together instead of shoulder width apart. If you swing too hard you will lose balance. Find a swing tempo where you can maintain balance while swinging as hard as you would like. Then take your normal feet width and employ the same tempo.

Alternatively, place five tees in a line about six inches apart perpendicular to your target line. Set up to hit the first tee. Begin a continuous swing motion and step forward to clip out each tee in succession with no hesitation to reset.

The second most common error is not making a proper backswing. At times players fail to make a full backswing or turn of the shoulders or hips. Consequently, they may over-bend the arms, over-break the wrists or rush the transition from back-swing to down-swing and once again sacrifice power or getting the clubface square at impact. If they shift their hips laterally or slide instead of rotating, power is again decreased. Proper procedure entails the core of the body remaining centered throughout the swing with the body rotating around this center point. Many players have a tendency to let their dominant knee bow out, which creates lateral motion. As you swing the club back, your dominant knee must remain slightly flexed but braced and anchor the swing. Otherwise, it is unable to drive into the downswing with the power and accuracy required to hit solid shots.

To eliminate a sway, you must think about initiating your backswing with a turning, not sliding motion of your hips and shoulders. Always remember to keep the weight on the inside of the back foot, keep your back knee centered, and think turn instead of sway. A good drill to get the feel of the weight on the inside of the back foot and keeping the knee in is to put a golf ball under the outside of that foot while hitting practice balls. This drill makes it virtually impossible to sway and will give you an idea of what it should feel like to keep the weight on the inside of the back foot.

Recall that the club-shaft and face should be parallel to the non-dominant arm at the top of the backswing. If you have not rotated properly and the club

points to the left of the target at the top, you are prone to come over the top on the down-swing causing an out to in swing and a fade, slice or pull. If the club points to the right of the target at the top, you are across the line and will likely swing inside-out causing a block, draw or hook. If the toe is point more toward the ground then the club-face is open and you'll tend to hit a slice. If the club-face is point more toward the sky then it is closed and you'll tend to hit a hook.

Other Common Causes of Ball Flight and Mishit Errors

Ball flight errors are caused by an improper swing path and/or clubface angle at impact.

Slice

If you slice the ball, the clubface is likely open at impact which is possibly caused by over-rotation of the forearm on the takeaway, cupped wrists or an improper grip. It is also probable that the clubface is traveling from outside-in. Coming over the top and an outside-in swing are often caused by accelerating the lower body too quickly or rushing the downswing.

Check your grip to make sure the "V"s of your index fingers and thumbs point toward your dominant side ear. Make sure that you are gripping your club in the fingers of your dominant hand, not in the palm and that your grip pressure is light. A tight grip tends to keep the club-face open.

Check your divots. If they angle from outside to in then you are coming over the top. If that's the case, then practice the pump drill described in the earlier section on swing-path.

Other methods to help correct a slice include taking some practice swings with your dominant hand extended a few inches away from your non-dominant hand down the shaft. This will create the feeling of releasing the club.

Alternatively, take your normal setup, close your stance significantly, position the ball in the middle of your stance, take the club a little inside along the line of your feet and attempt to swing around your body instead of over your shoulders.

Hook

If you hook the ball the clubface is probably closed at impact. Potentially, this is caused by a strong grip or lack of rotation on the back-swing, which causes a flip of the wrists at the top of the swing or on the down-swing. The wrist may be bowed at the top, the swing-path may be coming from inside-out or your weight may be caught on the backside during follow-through. Check your grip and adjust it to a weaker position if necessary. Move the ball slightly forward, open your stance and swing along the line of your toes. Keep your lower body moving on the downswing so that your bellybutton is leading the swing ahead of the club-head. The pump and sway drills described earlier can help with swing path and weight transfer issues.

Top

Topped shots can be caused from a myriad of reasons. It may be poor weight transfer, your weight staying back, swaying, swinging too hard, crouching too much at address, jerking the head up on the downswing, trying to swing up

on the ball, the ball being positioned too far forward in your stance, teeing the ball too low, or from your hands being ahead of club during impact.

The sway and balance and rhythm drills mention in the opening paragraphs of “Other Common Swing Errors” section can help with weight transfer and tempo issues. If you find yourself crouching too much at address stand more upright. Too much crouch in the set up will cause you to compensate by jerking your head up and lifting up on the downswing. Check your ball position and move it back if necessary. On drives, tee the ball so that one-half of it is visible above the club-head. To facilitate solid ball contact, practice hitting a coin.

Pop-up

Skied drives are most often caused by teeing the ball too high. Pop-ups with other clubs may be caused by an improper grip or steep swing. If the normal tee height of one half ball above the club-face is not working for you then consider teeing the ball a little lower or moving the ball slightly forward. You may want to try strengthening your grip a little or moving your hands ahead of the ball in the setup and lead with your hands through the impact zone. If your swing is steep, then work on starting back 'low and slow' with good extension away from the ball, essentially widening your swing arc. Further, work on keeping your head still and avoid chopping down on the ball.

Fat

There are a number of possible reasons for hitting it fat. Heavy shots can be caused from being too steep or the arms breaking down at the top. More

specifically, by lifting the arms straight up and cocking the wrists immediately (casting), the back-swing and down-swing become too vertical and the tendency is to chop down on the ball instead of swinging through smoothly. Also, if you do not keep your leading arm reasonably straight, the arc of your swing will vary. If you are not shifting your weight properly on the downswing, from the back leg to the front leg, your swing will bottom out before the club gets to the ball. Your divots should be occurring from the ball forward and not before. Alternatively, the ball may be positioned too far back in your stance, you may be standing too close to the ball, have too much weight on your toes, or you may be swinging too hard or too quick on the transition from backswing to downswing.

If your club is bottoming out too early, press a tee in the ground an inch or so in front of your ball until only about the top ½ inch of the tee remains visible. Try to hit the ball and then knock the tee out of the ground. This will move the bottom of your swing forward-and reduce the likelihood of hitting a fat shot. If your swing is too steep or your arms are break down, then widen the width of your backswing. If it seems to be a tempo issue then practice swinging at 75% of your normal pace.

Shank

A shank is the result of the ball coming in contact with or near the hosel, heel or toe of the club-head. Heel shanks are more common and may be caused by the ball being positioned too close to the player, weight being too far on the toes or an inappropriate club-head path on the downswing. One way to correct

this is to practice swinging with a second ball or your head-cover just outside your ball so that there is barely enough room for the club to contact your first ball cleanly. In order to hit the ball and avoid the other object you will have to create a feeling of coming a little more from the inside. Alternatively, you can play the ball right back in the heel of the club at address and make sure that your weight is back toward your heels. Conversely, if you suffer the toe shanks the exact opposite is true and you can correct it by performing the reciprocal of the two suggestions just mentioned.

Push

A push or block is generally caused by an inside-out path and some other reason for which the club lags behind and the face stays open. It may be caused by spinning out, weight staying on the front side, the swing plane being too flat or failing to release the club properly. When addressing the ball, stand erect with your weight centered. Don't hunch over or lean on your front side. Transfer weight back on the takeaway and start your downswing as you always should with a smooth transfer of weight from the back to front side. Then, throughout the hit, make sure that your head stays still and behind the ball, so that the hips and hands can direct the club-head through naturally. If your swing is too flat, work on executing your takeaway and backswing with your back about a foot away from a wall. Practice bringing the club back to the top without hitting the wall. If you are not releasing the club then try strengthening your grip a little.

Pull

A pull is typically caused by an outside-in path and closed club-face. In this situation your weight may be staying on your back foot. One solution is to make your backswing go inside-out, that way your body turn will bring it back to square at impact. Alternatively, you can flex your knees and keep your weight back toward your heels to encourage the proper lateral shift.

Loss of Distance

Generating distance is a function of proper technique, strength and flexibility and equipment fitted to your physique and swing. Improvement in any of these areas you will improve your distance.

A sudden loss in distance can result from multiple causes. Your grip pressure may be too tight. There may be a lack of coil in the hips and shoulders because of tension, poor flexibility or posture. You may be casting at the top or may be too quick on the down-swing resulting in a loss of club-head speed by the time the club reaches the ball.

Check your grip pressure. If grip pressure is too tight then tension radiates from the hands up the arms and into the shoulders limiting shoulder turn. An appropriate grip pressure generally ranges between three and four on a scale from one to ten.

When your shoulders sag or your back rounds at address, you lose power. At address, bend at the waist and tilt your chest toward the ball, pull your belly in and keep your shoulders high. With a straighter back, you'll make a fuller coil on

the backswing, which will result in more power. If you are casting then try and keep your wrist angle as long as possible. If you are like most amateurs and accelerate too quickly from the top then discipline your swing to start down slow and steadily increase to generate speed at the bottom of the swing.

To get a feel for proper acceleration and timing turn a club upside down, swing the shaft of the club at normal speed and listen for the 'woosh.' To get maximum power the 'woosh' should be occurring at or slightly beyond ball impact location. If it's occurring before that point then you are accelerating too early and are losing power. Attempt to fire your dominant hand through the point of impact. Practice swinging until you get the 'woosh' in the proper place and then turn the club around and attempt to create the same feel with the club-head.

One way to improve your swing strength and club-head velocity is to grip a middle iron with your non-dominant hand only and make practice swings paying particular attention to proper technique and accelerating through the impact zone. Make 20 to 30 swings daily.

Alternatively, hitting it longer does not necessarily mean hitting it harder but more importantly hitting it better. Solid ball contact in the center of the face produces greater distance. If you frequently hit the ball off the toe or heel or too high or low off the face, then shorten your swing until contact improves and then gradually increase back to normal length.

Flexibility can be increased with general techniques such as yoga or various swing specific hip and shoulder stretching exercises. The wider the swing arc and fuller the pivot the more club-head speed you'll generate. For more general and golf specific exercises refer to the Chapter 6 section on fitness.

Finally, make sure that the shaft-flex and lie angle of your clubs fits your body type and swing. Furthermore, choose a ball that matches your swing speed. If you are uncertain about your equipment, see your local PGA professional.

Improper Divots

Your divots should be in a direct line with or pointed slightly inside of your target line. Furthermore, a perfect divot is about ½ inch deep and should occur after the ball. If they are not, one of several swing errors may be occurring. If your divots are on an outside-in path then you may be starting the downswing with your arms instead of lower body or throwing the club-head at the ball with your arms and hands alone, instead of assisting with your shoulders. Consequently, you are coming over the top on the down-swing.

If your divots are inside-out then you may be looping the club at the top dropping it to the inside, sliding laterally instead of rotating or keeping your weight back and swinging out. If you take no divot then you are likely lifting your body at impact and need to stop trying to kill the ball. If your divots are behind the ball or too deep then your swing may be steep or you may be dipping toward impact.

The best way to ingrain the correct movements and avoid swing errors is through the development of “feel” and repetition. Even if you fix swing faults you are still not going to make a perfect swing every time. Your objective is to build a consistent swing where the misses are not so bad. If you think that you need some improvement on your swing mechanics and know the technical aspect of the swing pretty well then get out your video camera or get in front of a full-length mirror and go to school. If not, find a qualified instructor or consult your local PGA professional. And keep in mind, even the best players periodically see swing coaches to review and improve their swing.

Kinesthetic Awareness

Technical improvement centers on feedback and adjustment. Unlike professionals, most players typically don't know what's wrong with their swing. They can't “feel it.” If you place them in front of a mirror or take videotape and they know what to look for then they might see it. Although these tools are excellent means of feedback and error correction, they are generally not accessible when they are most needed, either on the range or course. Kinesthetic awareness or “feel” is available at any time or place that one decides to direct their attention to it. The best way to improve your swing is to become aware of the deficiency and then feel it. Thus, once acquired, it may be the most valuable asset in a player's self-improvement arsenal. If a player can learn to feel the difference between strokes that cause a hook, slice, draw, fade, etc. it will then become easier to correct and control.

Kinesthetic Swing Awareness Exercises

The next time that you are at the driving range hitting balls, take time to become aware of certain technical aspects of the swing that impact the quality of your shots. When first attempting a kinesthetic awareness drill simply focus on feel, do not attempt to control the movement or pay any attention to the results of shots. To make this work for you, choose an area of your swing that you want to work on. Direct your attention to one cue at a time and feel it, trust your instincts regarding the accuracy of the feeling and forget about outcome. If you split your attention between these areas then the objective of this exercise as well as your performance will suffer.

For example:

Swing-Path Kinesthetic Awareness

Just swing the club without trying to do anything but feel whether on the down-swing the club is moving from outside-in or inside-out. Rate the swing-path. If it is going from inside-out, rate it on a -3 to -1 (negative three meaning way off line and -1 being slightly inside-out). If it is coming from the outside-in, rate it from a +3 to +1. If it is square it is a 0. Now, take a few swings and intentionally attempt to create a feel of +3, +2, +1, 0, -1, -1, -2, and -3. Feel the difference between them. If you have a full-length mirror at home, you can do this without hitting balls and it will greatly improve the perception of your feel. Otherwise, you might have a knowledgeable person look at your swing and help you accurately match the feel with the swing. Next, hit 10 balls and effortlessly attempt to create

a square path on each. Make a few practice swings and feel the correct path before you step up and hit every ball. Then rate the quality of your swing path after each shot.

Contact Kinesthetic Awareness

Hit another 10 balls but this time focus solely on the quality of contact. After each shot, rate the quality of ball contact on a scale of 1 (extremely poor) to 10 (perfect). Try to feel where you are contacting the ball on the club-face as well as where the club contacts the ground. In other words, did you hit the ball off the center of the face, off the toe or heel, did you catch the ground too far behind the ball and hit it fat or hit the ball with the edge of the sole and catch it thin. When the club contacts the ball there is an energy transfer that travels up the shaft into your hands thereby giving you this information. It is just a matter of directing your attention to it.

Try to regularly generate a contact quality of 7 or better. Before you hit a ball, take a few practice swings either behind or to the side of the ball attempting to generate the right ground contact (i.e., the club clipping the grass) before you step up and hit another. If your contact is frequently poor then shorten and/or slow down your swing until you can get it consistently at or above 7 and then gradually progress back to a typical full swing.

Tempo Kinesthetic Awareness

Tempo refers to the smoothness, fluidity and speed of your swing. Good tempo is important to maintain proper balance and timing. Tour players typically

swing at only 80 percent of their maximum power. As stated earlier, one of the biggest problems that most amateurs have involves tempo. They typically get very quick in the transition from the top of the swing to the downswing resulting in a myriad of potential swing errors. Hit 10 more balls focusing on nothing more than your tempo. Try to make a smooth deliberate takeaway, a smooth transition from top to bottom and accelerate through ball contact. Use a broad perspective and merely feel the cadence of your swing. The average professional has a 3:1 back-swing to down-swing timing ratio. In other words, their backswing takes three times as long as their downswing. Repeat these numbers to yourself and feel the tempo of your swing. 1-2-3-1, 1-2-3-1. Attempt to synchronize your swing with that rhythm. If you have a metronome, this can also be very helpful. Attempt to generate a fluidity feel of 7 or better on the same 1 to 10 scale on every swing. Take a practice swing or two before every shot while trying to generate the right feel before you step up to hit a ball.

Timing Kinesthetic Awareness

Timing involves the degree of connection with all your body parts during the swing. In other words, are your hands, arms, shoulders, hips and legs all moving together in sync during the back-swing, down-swing and follow-through. As stated earlier, if the hips accelerate too fast during the down-swing and follow-through (i.e., spin out) then the hands, arms and club trail behind leaving the clubface open at impact causing a block, push, slice or fade. If the shoulders, hands, arms and club get ahead of the lower body then you get a pull, hook or

draw. Hit 10 more balls concentrating solely on trying to keep the body connected. Ignore all other factors. Take a few practice swings before every shot and attempt to generate a feel of 7 or better on every swing.

Grip Pressure Kinesthetic Awareness

The club handle should be gripped so that you can comfortably and easily swing the club without muscular tension in the hands, arms or shoulders yet have firm control. To gain a best understanding of proper pressure, grip the handle lightly enough so that the club easily slides through your hands with little restriction. We'll call this a 1 on a scale of 1 to 10. Now, grip the club as tightly as you can. That's a 10. Next, try to grip it about half way or a 5. An appropriate grip pressure for most players generally ranges between 3 and 4. If your grip pressure is too tight then that tension will likely radiate up your arms and into your shoulders thereby hindering your shoulder turn as well as limit your ability to release the club at impact. Coincidentally, when players get angry or nervous the most common reaction is to grip the club too tightly thereby impeding their natural swing. Hit the next 10 balls while paying attention solely to your grip pressure. Attempt to generate a feeling of 3 or 4 every time you swing.

Now that you have a basic feel for each of these constructs separately, while hitting the next 10 balls combine your observations and rate each of these areas on every swing. So, after each swing rate the quality of your swing-path, ball contact, tempo, timing and grip pressure. Take a few practice swings before every shot and attempt to generate a feel of 0, 7, 7, 7, 3 (swing path, ball contact,

tempo, timing, grip pressure) or better before you step up and hit the shot. Rate the quality of each of these following every shot. Notice how the quality of each one or combination of these affects the outcome of the shot. The more variables that you can get in acceptable ranges the better the shot generally will be.

Any time swing errors start to creep in, take some practice swings and notice the general feel. Then direct your attention to and focus on the specific part of your swing that you believe is causing the error and rate it (e.g., swing path, grip pressure, takeaway, backswing, position at the top, transition to the down-swing, tempo, timing, contact, follow-through, shoulder turn, hip turn, weight shift, back elbow, knee flex, balance, body alignment). Direct your attention to that area and ask yourself how it feels. What part of your swing/body most determines your ball flight? Direct your attention to it. Do this in front of mirror. Close your eyes. Swing. Feel it. Rate it. Open your eyes. Swing. See it. Feel it. Rate it. Do this until you get it where you want. Feel it. Attempt to recreate the right feel.

As you improve your awareness for the difference in feel of each of these components of the swing as well as the feel in difference between correct and incorrect execution, you will increase your level of control. Thus, the more aware you become of your swing, tendencies and deficiencies, the better your shot making ability will become.

Most importantly, these are exercises that you can do in the off season, at home or in the office if you have a minimal amount of space and you don't need

to hit balls. In fact, if you spend about ten minutes a day and make a total of 60 swings focusing on each of these six exercises, I'll guarantee you will notice a dramatic improvement in your swing, shots and scores.

Summary Points

- Evaluate each basic component of your swing
- Recognize your swing tendencies and flaws
- Develop and practice kinesthetic awareness to help correct errors and refine skills

Chapter 3

Executing Short Game, Trouble & Specialty Shots

The ultimate goal of the game is to get the ball in the hole. The only realistic opportunity that one has of doing this is with one of the short game strokes, namely a chip, pitch, bunker shot or putt. Coincidentally, 60% to 70% of all strokes attempted during a typical round are from 100 yards and in with roughly 60% occurring on and around the green.

The short game is the great equalizer. Anyone can develop a good short game and at one time or another execute like a pro. Having a consistent long game, however, takes considerably more time, effort, skill and precision. More importantly, unlike the long game many of the short game shots can be practice just about anywhere and at any time and you can get accurate visible feedback.

Scrambling

The ability to consistently get the ball up and down from around the green is one of the most identifiable differences between high and low handicap players. It's extremely rare that any level of player is able to hit all 18 greens in regulation. The average pro hits 12. The average amateur hits 3. So, for most of you, there are going to be a considerable number of scramble attempts that will directly impact your score. How well you convert them is a function of your developed skill.

The main reason that high handicap players don't excel in this area is frankly because they don't practice the shots. They would rather beat balls on the range for an hour because they can swing hard, hit it far and feel powerful then enjoy the less glamorous precision and accuracy required to chip and putt well. However, to make the most improvement the quickest, this training methodology is flawed. Most high handicap players could cut their handicap in half in a short period of time merely by dedicating 2/3 of their practice time to learning how to properly execute chips, pitches, bunker shots and putts. Therefore, let's cover some of the basics of these and other potential stroke saving shots.



Chipping

A chip is always the preferred shot around the green, particularly if the green is hard, the lie is poor or downhill or the wind will affect the shot. The proper execution of a chip is very similar to the putting stroke.

Many players will grip the club the same as they do during putts because very little hand or wrist action is required and the stroke is generally short. Choke down on the club somewhat to gain more control. Narrow and open your stance a little and flex your knees. Position the ball slightly back in your stance, press your hands a little ahead of the ball and shift your weight slightly to your left side (for a right-handed player). This will promote a more descending blow. Keep your

head high and your back straight and execute the stroke with your shoulders and arms.

A chip may be executed with a variety of clubs ranging from a pitching wedge to a 5 iron depending on the length of the necessary carry, distance to the hole, speed and slope of the green and personal preference. It's recommended that you get the ball rolling as soon as possible so choose the club that will carry the rough and get the ball to the putting surface while at the same time minimizing the carry, typically about one pace on the green. However, if you have a short-sided pin then choose a more lofted club and attempt to land it in the fringe. As a general rule, the club utilized corresponds to the ratio of the necessary carry to the distance to the hole after landing. So for instance, if the length of the carry is equal to the roll after the carry then a pitching wedge may be most appropriate. If the roll is twice the distance of the carry then a 9-iron may be more appropriate. If the roll is three times the carry then an 8-iron may be better and so on.

Ideally, a player should pick an intermediate target or spot to land the ball anticipating that if hit there the ball will roll the remainder of the distance to the hole. Try to identify a discolored spot on the green or something else noticeable to aim for. As suggested earlier the slope and speed of the green as well as club utilized will impact this target. Therefore, this target area may vary anywhere from one-eighth to two-thirds of the distance to the hole. For example, if a pitching wedge is your club of choice then the intermediate target usually ranges

somewhere between one-third and two-thirds of the distance to the hole; one-third if it is downhill and fast, one-half if it is level and two-thirds if uphill and slow. Similarly, the landing area for a 7-iron may range between one-fifth and one-third of the distance to the hole.

The most common errors that players make when chipping are trying to help the ball into the air or scoop it, getting too steep, using too much wrist or decelerating through contact.

Pitching

The typical pitch requires more hand, body and arm action than a chip because you need to get the ball into the air and land it soft. It's more like a mini version of a full swing. The secret to hitting the ball high and soft is to choose the right club and not force the swing. Select a club with more loft such as a sand, gap or lob wedge. Which club you utilize is a function of the distance to the green and target as well as personal preference. Open your stance slightly and play the ball a little forward in your stance. Concentrate on keeping your weight balanced with no head movement. Make a smooth and rhythmic swing letting the club do all the work. Depending on the slope and speed of the green and club selection the landing area usually varies somewhere between one-half to just short of the hole. To get the feel of a proper pitch, image that you are tossing a ball underhand. Direct your dominant hand



and arm toward the target and swing them through the ball together toward the target.

The most common errors that players make are misjudging the length of the swing and decelerating near impact.



Flop Shot

The flop shot is similar to a pitch. However, now you need to open up your stance considerably along with the club-face and position the ball off your front heel. Make a long swing, fully cock your wrists and accelerate through impact, trying to slide the club under the ball. Maintain the wrist cock and keep the blade open throughout the shot including the follow-through. This should pop the ball more vertically than horizontally.

A flop shot is generally executed with a lob wedge ranging in loft from 60 to 64 degrees. The landing area for a flop shot typically ranges from three-fourths of the way to very near the hole just depending on the slope and speed of the green and club utilized. The flop shot is very difficult to execute, particularly if the lie is tight. It should only be attempted after considerable practice, if you have a descent lie and when a player has no other opportunity to get the ball close to the hole. If executed incorrectly you run the risk of fluffing it, hitting it heavy or blading it over the green.

Bunker Shot

The execution of a standard greenside bunker shot is very similar to that of a flop shot. Open your stance and the club-face and position the ball forward. Aim for a spot between 1 and 3 inches behind the ball, swing easy, accelerate through sand impact and let the sand take care of the rest. How much you should open the club-face, how far forward you should position the ball and how much you should aim behind the ball is a matter of the trajectory that you need to get the ball out as well as the distance that you need to carry the shot. The more that you open the face, the greater the trajectory you will create and less distance the ball will travel. Similarly, the further that you position the ball forward or hit behind the ball the shorter the ball will go. To vary the distance and trajectory of shots, it is much easier to adjust these factors or choose a less lofted club than to manipulate the swing itself.



The next time that you go to the practice green work on getting a feel for playing each of these shots. Drop balls at various distances off the green, pick a target and attempt the different ways of playing it. As you progress in skill, begin to alternate between targets with the same shot and then alternate shot selection and targets. Finally, attempt different types of shots from various lies (e.g., short rough, thick rough, bare lies, fluffy lies, against the grain, and with the grain). The more experience that you gain playing the different types of shots from varying

distances and lies the better prepared you will be to execute the proper shot when it matters most, on the course.

Putting

There are too many different types of grips and styles of putting to address here. Regardless of whether you use a conventional grip and putter, reverse overlap, cross-handed, claw grip or belly putter, what is most important is that you adopt a putter, putting grip and style that allows for maximum comfort, control and feel of the stroke and that you have confidence in. The stroke itself should resemble the motion of a pendulum, smoothly straight back and through. Your grip should be light, your eyes should be over or slightly inside the ball and your head should remain still.

Your arms and shoulders should form a triangle and move in unison during the backswing and forward swing. The action is very similar to sweeping a household broom. Limit hand and wrist action. Hand and wrist action increases variability. Keep your head still throughout the stroke including the follow-through, which should follow the line of the putt. Peeking too early will cause the putter blade and stroke to go offline. Raise your eyes and head only when the ball leaves your peripheral vision and pay attention to the roll of the ball if it should pass the hole. This will help you determine the line on the return putt.

Allow the putter to sit naturally on the ground. Avoid tilting the putter head up or down. To get a truer roll, position the ball slightly forward of center so that you are contacting it slightly on the upswing. If the ball is too far back you will

contact it on the downswing causing it to hop. Many players press the handle slightly ahead of the ball to get a firmer roll. Further, attempt to contact it in the center of the face. Hitting the ball off the toe or heel will deaden the roll.

Finally, once addressed do not spend too much time over the ball. After you have set up on the putt, take one look at your target, draw your eyes back to the center of the ball and immediately make a smooth pendulum stroke. If you have doubts about your read or address position then back off and start again. Too much thinking or time over the putt will create tension in the hands, arms and shoulders and thereby inhibit a proper stroke.



Proper



Proper



Too Inside



Too Outside



Too Forward



Too Back

The most common problems in putting are poor reads, poor strokes, tension and doubt or coming out of the putt early. Learning how to read the greens, putts and all other influencing variables takes a little knowledge, time and experience and even then you are still going to make mistakes. All players do. So don't get discouraged. Most importantly, remember that there is a difference between making a putt and holing it. Making a putt qualifies the stroke. Holing a putt means that it went in. The two are independent. You have far more control over making a putt than holing it. Variables such as the effects of wind, grain, spike marks or other unnoticed loose impediments, nearby water or mountains can greatly affect the result but not the stroke. Notwithstanding, here are some helpful hints to improve your accuracy.

Reading a break entails assessing the slope between your ball and the hole, the speed of the green and putt as well as outside variables that influence those factors. The slope is merely the curvature of the ground contour between your ball and the hole. A read is only partially dependant on the slope. More important is the speed of the green and putt. The speed of the putt is dependent on the distance to the hole, tilt of the green, grain of the grass, grass type, grass length and moisture of the green. The grain of the grass is nothing more than the direction it is growing.

How much break a player plays is dependent upon the desired pace (firm versus lag), the slope leading to and beyond the hole (uphill versus downhill, breaking left to right versus right to left) as well as outside influences such as the

type and length of the grass and direction of the grain, any nearby water or mountains, the position of the sun, or high winds.

Bend grass greens are faster and break more than Bermuda. Obviously, the higher that the grass the slower the putt. If you are putting into the grain or on moist greens it is going to slow the putt. If you are putting with it or on dry greens, it will speed it up. If the grain is at a cross angle then the break will either be increased or decreased accordingly.

If the grass is shiny you are putting down grain. If it's dull you are putting into the grain. On level greens, shine to the right will cause the ball to move from left to right. Shine to the left will cause it to break right to left. The grain of the grass tends to lean toward nearby water or the setting sun.

If there is water in close proximity, the ball will tend to break toward it. The ball rolls where water drains. If there are mountains nearby, the ball will tend to break away from the highest peak. If there is heavy wind (i.e., greater than 20 mph) then it will likely affect the roll corresponding to its direction. If water or mountain peaks conflict with the direction of the sun, the sun tends to be a stronger influence.

The line that you take in attempting to hole the putt is dependent on all these factors coupled with how aggressively you intend to hit it. If you prefer to let the ball die into the hole then you have to play a little additional break because as the putt slows it will take more of the break. If you favor to hit it firm into the back of the cup then you can take some of the break out for the converse reason.

Most high-level players tend to fancy hitting putts firm except when they are downhill. Outside of downhill putts, it's recommended that you attempt to hit them with enough pace so that if they should miss it will travel one to three feet beyond the hole. This will benefit you in two ways. First, it assures that the putt will at minimum have an opportunity to go in (short putts never have a chance) and second, the more break that you can take out of the putt the easier it is to hole it. If you employ this strategy, make sure that you follow the path of the ball if it does pass the hole. That will give you a good read for your next putt.

Here are some other tips and drills to help improve your green reading ability and the accuracy of your putts. Always read a putt from both sides of the cup. You will often get a different perspective from each side, particularly if break is involved. Moreover, many players more accurately read one type of break. Reading from both sides allows you to assess the break from both perspectives (left-to right curvature and right-to left curvature). Additionally, downhill putts are more easily and accurately read from the opposite side. Uphill putts are more simply and precisely read from the ball side. To further aid your read, cup your hands to the sides of your eyes to create blinders and narrow your vision. This will help block out some of the potential distracting factors that may influence your read.

When reading a putt from behind your marker or ball, always do it from at least 10 feet beyond that spot and crouch down close to ground level. The closer you are to ground level the easier it will be to see the contour of the green.

Next, if there appears to be any break involved look for some type of target on the same line as the apex (high point) of the break. This could be a discolored spot on the green, a leaf or something in the background on that same line. Once you have made a read, consider whether any of the previously mentioned outside influences will come into play and make an adjustment in your read if necessary.

On uphill putts imagine the ball firmly hitting the back of the cup. When assessing a flat or uphill putt, pick a point beyond the hole to focus on and hit to. Get a feel for hitting to a spot one to three feet beyond the hole. Conversely, on downhill putts imagine the ball just rolling over the edge. Pick a spot somewhere in front of the hole to calculate the proper length of your stroke. Depending on the slope (uphill versus downhill) pick out an imaginary target in the line of the putt either beyond or in front of the hole to get a feel for the pace that you need to hit it. For example, you may need to feel a stroke of 25 feet for an uphill 20 foot putt or feel a 5 foot stroke for a 10 foot downhill putt. If you have a breaking putt then focus on the intermediate target and not the hole before you bring your eyes back to the ball to stroke it. Moreover, try to make every putt. Imagine it going in regardless of distance and break. The mind and body react much better to specific targets and intentions.

It is also important to assess the area around the hole. Look for nuances in the green around the cup that may affect the roll as it approaches or passes

beyond. If you have the opportunity, notice the roll of opponent's putts as an additional source of information.

Finally, as you replace the ball marker with the ball, align the label of the ball in a straight line toward your predetermined target. Many players actually draw a straight line on the ball and this is perfectly legal. This takes some of the guesswork out of the stroke once you are over the ball. Since you have already determined your read and line, at this point the only part of the activity that is in question is the length of the putting stroke.

Once you have determined your read, the next most important skill is getting a feel for speed or the proper length of your back-swing and follow-through to get the ball in close proximity to or in the hole. No where is feel more important than in putting. The length of your stroke will correspond directly with the quickness of the green (firmness, length of the grass and grain) and the distance to the hole. This again comes with practice and learning how to accurately assess all of the previously mentioned outside variables. Make sure that you take a practice swing or two to try to get a feel for the proper length of the stroke. During pre-round warm-up, putt to the fringe of the practice green from various distances. This will help develop a feel for speed and eliminate the possible frustration that can surface if you are outcome focused and consistently miss the hole. Here are some additional drills to assist in the feel for speed and distance.

Kinesthetic Putting Distance Awareness Exercises

Blind Man

Take out 11 ball markers and 10 balls. Place the first ball marker at your feet. Next, take one stride forward and place down a ball marker. Take one step forward, one step to the right or left and place down another ball marker.

Continue this procedure until each of the ball markers are down. After setting up on the putt from the original starting point, close your eyes and attempt to hit the first putt to the first ball marker while concentrating solely on the feel for the proper length of a three foot putt stroke. After the stroke is complete, open your eyes and evaluate your effort. If the putt is outside a three foot radius of the ball maker then begin again. Attempt to hit each subsequent putt to each ball marker while your eyes are closed. Only open them after the stroke is complete so that you may evaluate your efforts. If at any time a putt is outside a three foot radius of the ball marker then begin again. Work on this until you can get all 10 balls within a three foot radius of each ball marker in succession.

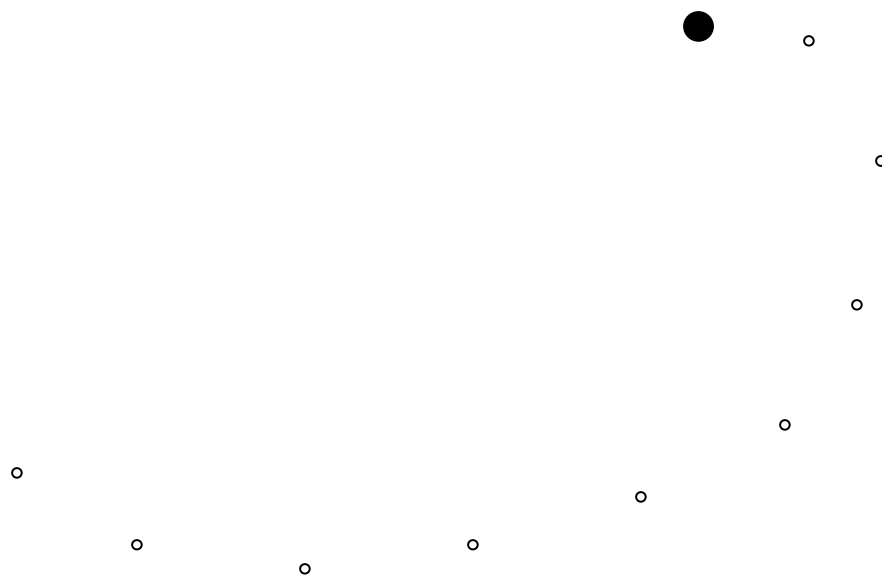
Leap Frog

Take out three ball markers and ten balls. Place one marker on the green at your feet and then take 1 stride forward. Place the second marker down, take six strides forward, two to the left or right and then place the third. Attempt to hit the first putt from the first marker slightly beyond the second marker and each successive putt a little past the previous one but before the third marker. At any time one of the balls does not exceed the previous putt or is outside the third

marker then you must begin again until you can putt all 10 beyond the previous and within the second and third marker boundaries.

Elliptical

An excellent method for working on both your reads and speed at the same time is what I call the “elliptical drill.” Start at a hole that has some break around it with 9 balls in your pocket. Take one stride forward in any direction and then drop a ball. From there, turn your back directly to the hole and take then one step forward and two sideward steps, either right or left, and drop another ball. Turn your back to the hole and continue this procedure until all of the balls are on the green. Start with the ball closest to the hole, go through your routine and hit each putt until holing it. Count the total number of strokes that it took you to hole out all nine balls, double it and you have your 18 hole putting average for the drill. Ideally, you would like to be able to finish this drill in 16 putts or less ($2 \times 16 = 32$ putts; an admirable putting average for a round). If you are a more experienced player, you can increase the difficulty of this drill by increasing the forward strides from one to two thereby doubling the length of each putt. See the illustration below for a graphic representation of what I am describing.



The putting stroke should resemble the motion of a pendulum, fluid and straight back and through. Players often get jabby, have a difficult time keeping the putter on line or contacting the ball in the center of the putter. Many times an errant swing path is caused by too much tension in the hands (i.e., grip pressure too tight). Other times, a player may lift his/her head a little early peeking to see the results of the putt and consequently send the swing path off line. If you are a victim of any of these circumstances then you may want to spend some time working on the stroke itself.

One method for improving the path of the stroke is to lay down two clubs, broom handles or 2 X 4's about 6 inches apart parallel to each other and practice putting balls with the putter in between. Another method for checking the line of the stroke is to watch it along side the lines on a tiled floor.

Other methods include variations of the kinesthetic putting exercises described earlier. Close your eyes. Feel a light grip pressure and concentrate on the movement of the stroke. Notice where the putter contacts the ball on the face. Listen for the ball to hit the bottom of the cup. If not, where did it miss? Open your eyes, are you right? Do this exercise until your tactile senses can somewhat accurately predict the result.

Another drill incorporates looking at the hole instead of the ball while putting and concentrating on feel. This, along with the other closed eyes drills, helps avoid the head coming up too early. By closing your eyes while putting and directing your attention to various aspects of the stroke (e.g., swing-path, length, angle of club-face before, at and after contact, the impact location) you will develop a better feel for control, distance and direction.

In sum, the short game strokes require a great deal of touch, feel and most importantly practice. The impending reward, however, is exponential. If executed well then these facets of the game directly translate into lower scores. Therefore, it would be in your best interest to allocate a significant amount of your practice time honing or refining these skills.

Trouble & Specialty Shots

Most amateurs have difficulty consistently hitting normal shots from good lies. When they encounter trouble or specialty shots then they really struggle. Therefore, here are some execution suggestions for executing various

shots. With proper technique and a little practice you will be certain to achieve more successful outcomes.



Buried Lie in the Bunker

Open the clubface, play the ball more in the middle of your stance, pick the club straight up and swing down. In other words create a steep path and hit down right behind the ball.

Uphill Lie in the Bunker

Tilt your shoulders to match the same plane as the slope. Use a wider stance, keep your weight on the back foot, use your normal bunker swing and swing up the slope.



Downhill Chip



Use a less lofted club, pick a landing spot, get comfortable in your stance, position the ball in the middle of your stance, press your hands a little ahead of the club and ball and keep them there as you follow through. Transfer your weight to your

front foot and swing down the slope.

Greenside Buried Lie

Use a more lofted club, open the face, position the ball slightly back in your stance and make a fuller-steeper swing.



Uphill Buried Lie

Tilt your shoulders on the same line as the slope, use a wider stance, keep your weight on the back foot, open your clubface before you grip it, hit behind the ball and swing up the slope.



Fairway Bunker

Take one more club than your normally use, choke down on the club a little, play it a little back in your stance, raise your chin up and stand a little taller, and swing easy.

Hitting Out of Wet Sand or a Bare Bunker Lie

In these situations the flange and bounce of a sand wedge make it difficult to dig under the ball and often cause a bladed shot. Therefore, choose a less lofted club. Open your stance, play the ball a little forward, press your hands a little forward and hit the ball, not the sand. Consequently, this will reduce the trajectory and increase the roll.

Greenside Rough

If the ball is sitting up, use a more lofted club and play it like a flop shot or pitch. Open the face, aim left and swing aggressively. If it's sitting down, play it more like a chip shot with a steep backswing. Play the ball farther back in your stance and use a more lofted club. This will force you to strike the ball with a more descending blow which will prevent the high grass from grabbing your club.

Fairway Rough

Shots from the fairway rough usually produces less backspin, less distance, lower trajectory and cause the face to close. Always execute to a few practice swings around the ball to get a feel for the rough and lie. If the rough is deep and thick and the ball is sitting down then the safest play is to use a wedge to get back onto the fairway. If you have a decent lie then you may be able to use anything from a short iron to fairway wood depending on the yardage. On longer shots a fairway wood will travel through the rough better than long irons, which have a tendency to grab, turn the face over and produce a pull. On shorter shots or if the rough is light then take an extra club or two, choke down a little, play the ball slightly back in your stance, grip the club a little firmer and swing a little harder.

Uphill Lie

Uphill lies increase the loft of the club. Take one more club, square your shoulders and hips to the same plane as the slope, widen your stance, aim a little

to the right, let your weight stay a little more on the front side and make a smooth swing.

Downhill Lie

Downhill lies de-loft the club. Widen your stance and keep your weight a little more on the back side, square your body to the slope, take one less club, aim a little left and swing easy.

Ball Below Your Feet

Widen your stance, take one more club, aim a little to the left with the ball in the middle of your stance, sit down in the slope so your weight is slightly back on your heels and swing easy.

Ball Above Your Feet

Choke up on the club, aim to the right of the target and make an easy swing.

Ball in a Divot

Position the ball a little back in your stance, open the face slightly, aim a little left, grip the club a little firmer and make a little steeper swing.

Hitting from the Hardpan

Treat this shot like hitting a chip. Play the ball a little further back in your stance, keep your wrists quiet and your hands ahead of the ball throughout. Attempt to hit the ball first and make a normal swing. This will produce a lower trajectory and more roll so you may have to alter your club selection.

Getting Out of the Trees

You have five potential options, going over, under, left or right or through. The lie, location, proximity and density of the tress as well as your skill may eliminate one or more of these options and predetermine your best available choice. The primary concern is getting the ball out and not making matters worse. Therefore, evaluate your options wisely. Here are some other considerations. If the ball is sitting down you will have difficulty hitting the ball with any curvature as well as low. If the lie is tight then getting the ball high will be difficult. If you are attempting to go through or move the ball left-to-right or right-to-left then take an extra club.

Draw

Maintain ball position and clubface angle, close your stance, take the club back along the line of your feet and make a normal swing.

Fade

Maintain ball position and clubface angle, open your stance, take the club back along the line of your feet, make a normal swing and hold the release.

Low Punch Shot

Take one or two extra clubs, play the ball a little back in your stance, widen your swing arch slightly by taking it back a lower on the backswing, follow through with your hands a little ahead of the ball and use an abbreviated $\frac{3}{4}$ swing.

High Shot

Position the ball a little forward in your stance, aim slightly left, keep your weight a bit on the back side, cup your wrist a tad at the top and release the club a little earlier.

½ to ¾ Shots

In between shots are difficult for all players. A player has to be able to gauge the proper length of the stroke for the shot and fully execute an abbreviated swing. Practice the clock drill to learn the swing lengths and distances produced. Swing 9:00 to 3:00, 10:00 to 2:00 and 11:00 to 1:00. When faced with these situations you must focus on execution and trust your stroke.

Getting the Ball to Check

The ball will only check if the greens are relatively soft. If they are too firm, the ball won't check it will skid. If they are receptive then make sure that your grooves are clean. If they are not then you will lose spin. Use a more lofted club and strike down on the ball with a descending blow keeping your hands ahead of the ball.

Creating Backspin

Creating backspin is a function of the equipment utilized and proper technique. Like getting the ball to check, the greens must be receptive and grooves clean. Using a higher spin ball will make it easier to create backspin but you'll run the risk of enhancing other ball flight errors (e.g., slice, hook). Play the

ball a little further back in your stance than normal and strike it about a quarter inch above the base with a descending blow.

Playing in High Winds

The direction and force of the wind will alter your target and shot. Irrespective, widen your stance to get more stability and position the ball a little further back in your stance to keep it low. If you are hitting into the wind or into a crosswind then select a longer club, shorten your swing and swing easy. The amount of club differential is dependent on the strength of the wind. Adjust your target left or right according to the direction, strength and intended ball flight. Remember that ball curvature will be magnified in the wind if your ball flight is moving in the same direction. Downwind affects are less severe and therefore a player needs less club differential.

Playing in the Rain

Take some extra gloves and towels and adjust your club selection to account for the lack of roll.

Playing in the Cold

When playing in colder weather a player has to make a few adjustments. First and most obvious is that you have to wear more clothing to keep warm. Ideally, it should be light weight and loose but not baggy or impeding. Second, you will likely have to shorten your backswing because the additional clothing and colder weather won't allow you to be as flexible or make quite as long of a rotation. Furthermore, the colder weather will decrease the compression factor of

the ball. Consequently, you will not hit the ball as far as you normally do so you will have to club down on many of your shots.

Summary Points

- Dedicate a significant portion of practice time to short game skills
- Practice executing the various trouble and specialty shots

Chapter 4

Expanding Mental and Emotional Awareness

"Competitive golf is played mainly on a five-and-a-half-inch course, the space between your ears."

Bobby Jones

Next, let's examine how the mental and emotional aspects of the game affect your swing and scores. In order to do that, you must first be aware and have a clear understanding of the various psychological factors that can impact your game. Therefore, let me briefly describe the feelings and/or thoughts associated with some of the most common psychological states so that you become familiar with their content and impact. The most basic ones are self-confidence, cognitive anxiety (e.g., negative thoughts), somatic anxiety (e.g., nervousness or tension) and anger, which generally manifest themselves in the form of self-talk or mental images coupled with varying physiological body reactions. Moreover, it's important that we distinguish the difference between the conscious and subconscious minds as well as how and when to use them.

Confidence

"I look into their eyes, shake their hand, pat their back, and wish them luck, but I am thinking, 'I am going to bury you'."

Seve Ballesteros

Most great players, coaches, and sport psychologists will agree that self-confidence is the key psychological construct for success in sport. Confidence,

simply put, is the belief that one can successfully execute a specific skill at a given time. Confidence is generally associated with clarity of thought, certainty, and feelings such as excitement, composure, or complete relaxation. It is often enhanced with psychological techniques such as visualization and positive self-talk, which we'll get into further a little later in the book.

Anxiety

"Golf is a compromise between what your ego wants you to do, what experience tells you to do, and what your nerves let you do."

Bruce Crampton

"Approaching a putt with doubt in your mind is nearly always fatal."

Bobby Locke

Anxiety is subjective, consciously experienced feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and/or worry. It is commonly delineated into two separate constructs, cognitive anxiety and somatic anxiety. Cognitive anxiety is conceptualized as doubt, awareness of unpleasant feelings, concerns about performance, and an inability to concentrate. It generally manifests itself in the form of negative thoughts, images, and self-statements. Somatic anxiety, on the other hand, is the perceived physiological arousal, which is reflected by responses such as increased heart-rate, shortness of breath, clammy hands, twitching, butterflies in the stomach, and muscular tension.

Cognitive and somatic anxiety states generally follow different temporal patterns (i.e., occur at different times), which in turn affects performance

differently. Somatic anxiety is a conditioned response to competitive situations, increasing rapidly close to the start of the event and decreasing significantly as competition progresses until such time that there is a perceived moment of consequential importance.

Cognitive anxiety states generally result from worry or concern about the possibility of negative outcome, the perception of poor execution, or high expectations placed upon the player either internally or externally. It usually remains relatively stable prior to and throughout competition and alters only as a function of anticipated or perceived success or failure. Debilitating cognitive anxiety most often occurs before a moment of apparent consequential importance or following a perceived failure.

Recent research evidence has revealed that cognitive and somatic anxiety affect performance differently. More specifically, there is a strong inverse relationship (i.e., when one goes up the other goes down) between cognitive anxiety and performance, and somatic anxiety affects performance only when it is extremely high or when cognitive anxiety is also high. In other words, more often than not it is the bad thoughts, images, and self-talk that is very detrimental to performance and not feelings of nervousness per se. This is an important point that we'll address in further detail later.

Another important point is that doubt leads to confusion, indecision, nervousness and/or tension. Doubt is not inherent, it's learned. Like confidence, it can be fleeting. Most importantly, you have the ability to determine its affect by

either ignoring it or attending to it. Thoughts only have the power that you give them.

The most common reaction to doubt is to try to force it or trying too hard. I myself, like all players, have fallen victim to this on a number of occasions. I can recall one afternoon playing with a long time friend who had come to visit me for the weekend. I had hit a ball slightly off the green in the light fringe and was faced with a downhill breaking shot of about 15 feet to the hole. I could have either putted it through the fringe to the hole or chipped it. Incidentally, I am much more confident in my chipping ability on this type of shot than putting. I decided to attempt to putt it questioning the choice the whole time, which of course caused tension and a deceleration on the stroke. Consequently, I left the putt about seven feet short. Later in the round I was faced with a similar shot. However, on this occasion I was decisive about not making the same mistake again and chose to chip it. Subsequently, I played a beautiful little shot to about 2 ½ feet past the hole. Ironically, I made the first putt and lipped out the second.

Anger

"Don't let the bad shots get to you. Don't let yourself become angry. The true scramblers are thick-skinned. And they always beat the whiners."

Paul Runyan

Anger is an emotional state marked by subjective feelings that vary in intensity from mild annoyance or irritation to intense fury and rage. Symptoms of anger may include any of the following: changes in muscle tension, elevated heart-rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure, flushing, twitching, sweating,

losing self-control, feeling hot, and so on. Although anger and somatic anxiety share many symptoms in common, I would caution you that they are completely different states that affect performance differently.

Most individuals feel that they can control their anger and the impact that it has on the body and their game. What they do not realize is that often this is not true. Elevated levels of frustration and anger produce bodily tension and decrease one's ability to think clearly, focus and properly execute their swing. Expressing frustration and/or anger can help some but in general it does not work. The expression of anger has been linked to increases in intensity and frequency. Humor, on the other hand is a much better reduction technique and method for counterbalancing the affects of anger. Make a point to find humor in the situation or alternatively, think about something funny such as a personal experience, a favorite sitcom, comedy show or joke. I instruct many of my clients to use this technique as part of their post-shot routine. It shifts one's attention away from past results, directs it to something more beneficial, lightens the mood, triggers the release of adrenaline from the brain, promotes relaxation and aids in the conservation of mental energy.

What prompts individuals to experience anxiety and/or anger and how they react afterwards also differs dramatically. There is great physical variation in the experiences of these emotions. Some say that anxiety and/or anger makes them feel good while others say it makes them feel sick. Some may experience only one or two symptoms and still others experience a wide range. The

disparity of physical reactions to these emotions is also match by the assortment of causes. A situation that may have an impact on one individual may have no affect on others. These emotions emerge and differ because of the circumstances in which they occur and primarily because of the interpretations that the individual gives to them, both psychologically and physiologically.

Therefore, it is a person's perception and interpretation that ultimately determines the amount and type of emotion experienced, as well as the impact that it has.

Players can benefit greatly by becoming aware of the situations that cause them to become angry or anxious, learning to recognize the physiological symptoms as they arise and then developing an effective routine to deal with it constructively if and when it does happen.

In summary, the majority of players do not pay conscious attention to his/her thoughts and emotions as they are occurring and more importantly have no idea of how they impact play or how to control them. Therefore, it is crucial that you gain this understanding if you would like to bring your game to the next level. When you are playing or practicing, notice any thoughts and feelings of anxiety, anger, and confidence, particularly after hitting a bad shot and previous to the next one. Note the reactions that you have before different types of shots (ex. drives, approaches, chips, putts, etc) and in different situations (ex. practice, start of competition, when playing well versus poorly). For every hole on your scorecard record each instance when lack of confidence, cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, anger or frustration had a negative impact on the outcome of a

shot and what club it was just like you keep track of your score, fairways, greens, putts, etc. Or more simply, add a subcategory entitled mental errors to the score card and place a tick mark every time that you make one. As you begin to track and become aware of all the times that you make costly mistakes and decisions you will then naturally make an attempt to reduce them. See the sample scorecard at the end of the chapter to get an illustration of how this can be done. What you will probably begin to notice is that like most golfers you play better when your confidence is high and anger and cognitive anxiety are low. Remember that somatic anxiety will generally only affect you when it's extremely high or your cognitive anxiety is also high.

Alternatively, you can use a post match questionnaire or keep a journal and reflect back after rounds. Another means of self-assessment includes constructing a subjective personal performance profile after a competition. A sample questionnaire, journal and performance profile are provided at the end of the chapter.

Psychological Awareness Exercise

This next exercise is for gaining self-awareness of your thoughts and feelings. Find a quiet place to sit or lay. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and begin to recognize the types of thoughts you are having. Just let your mind wander and pay conscious attention to each thought as it crosses your mind. Notice your thoughts without analysis or judgment. You may be saying to yourself "This is stupid" or "I don't know what to think" and that is perfectly fine.

Any thoughts that come to mind are acceptable. At this point, your only objective is to recognize and pay attention to thoughts as they cross your mind. Do this for a few minutes.

Next, start to notice how your body feels. Pay particular attention to your breathing. Notice how your abdomen moves up and down as you breathe. Feel the air enter your nostrils, travel down your trachea, and expand your lungs. Notice the cool rush of air traveling in and the warm air being exhaled. Now concentrate on your heartbeat. Place your right hand fingers over the inner left side of your chest. Feel the blood pumping in and out of your arteries while your chest thumps. Count your heartbeats. Is it beating fast or slow? Begin to control your breathing. Take nice slow deep breaths. If you slow down your breathing patterns for a few minutes your respiratory rate and blood pressure will generally follow.

Notice any feelings in your hands, forearms, biceps, triceps, neck, shoulders, and chest. These are very important areas for golfers. They are the places where tension generally gathers and as we all know, tension is the number one killer of a golf swing. Is there any tightness or tension? If there is, focus on eliminating those feelings by concentrating on creating a warm heavy sensation in any area of concern. Remind yourself to be calm and relaxed and feel the warmth and heaviness spreading through your entire upper body.

Finally, focus on any feelings in your quadriceps, hamstrings, calves, and feet. Relax those areas by focusing on being relaxed, calm, heavy, and warm

and let those feelings spread. Take a few minutes a day to practice recognizing and isolating your thoughts and feelings. This is the first step in learning how to control them.

Differentiating the Conscious and Subconscious Minds

“The greatest obstacle to learning the golf swing is the mind. The conscious mind always interferes with the subconscious. Conscious effort to control the movement of the club head handicaps the expert as well as the duffer. When the expert permits his mind to interfere with his golf it is said that he didn’t concentrate. In short, good golf must be played largely through subconscious control.”

Bobby Jones

The conscious mind receives all messages from the brain through the five senses. The conscious mind is responsible for assessing input and analytical thinking. It is equipped with a filtering system that analyzes the input against past experiences and beliefs and then uses logic and reason to determine its accuracy and meaning. It questions and attempts to find answers to problem situations. After a determination has been made the information is then sent to the subconscious mind to be recorded or acted upon. The conscious mind issues the orders to affect an end result and the subconscious mind produces it. It’s the subconscious mind that controls the muscles that control the swing.

The greatest obstacle to learning and reproducing the golf swing is the mind. The conscious mind always interferes with the subconscious. To produce a good swing the only thing that the conscious mind should do is activate the subconscious mind, which should have the image and feel of a good dominant

swing imbedded. The subconscious mind will reproduce that swing unless there is some type of conscious interference (i.e., bad thought, image or feel, all of which create doubt and produces tension). The conscious mind is what stops your swing from being fluid and automatic.

At times players attempt to use the conscious mind on the course to control one's action thereby inhibiting the automaticity and fluidity of the subconscious swing. If you have doubt or concern, feel tension or components of your swing then you are swinging with the conscious mind. The conscious mind should be reserved for technical practice and pre-execution analysis. On the course, high level players swing with the subconscious mind. The subconscious swing is achieved by letting go and letting the body and mind do what it has been trained to do.

The subconscious mind is the most important factor to play good golf. It keeps distraction during a round from ruining a good round. Errors are often created from mental blocks between your conscious and subconscious minds. They are produced by fear of doing what you do not want to do, negative thoughts and images. This prevents you from doing what you consciously want to do. In order to execute desirably these blocks must be removed.

The correct feel, images and ultimately confidence overcomes these blocks. Confidence is created through subconscious feel and images. It allows the conscious mind to focus on the ball and subconscious to produce the automatic swing. A confident swing is achieved only when it is controlled by the

subconscious mind. Confidence is when the conscious mind knows that it can call upon the subconscious mind and feel to reproduce the desired action. This subconscious program and confidence are developed through self-hypnosis, visualization, affirmations and proper practice, which will be discussed in further detail later in this book.

Summary Points

- **Develop awareness of your thoughts and feelings**
- **Assess the frequency of lack of confidence, cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and anger during rounds and how it impacts your performance**
- **Practice mental and emotional awareness exercises to facilitate control**
- **Learn to initiate the subconscious swing on the course**

Competitive Performance Emotion Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: A number of statements, which athletes have used to describe their thoughts and feelings **before and during** competition, are given below. Read each statement and then circle the appropriate number below the statement to indicate **how you generally think or feel**. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement, but choose the answer which best describes your **general** thoughts or feelings **before or during** competition. Next, based on the level that you experience each reaction, indicate whether you think that it generally **helps** or **hurts** your subsequent performance. For example, if you feel that you have a great deal of doubt before a competition, perhaps a -3, you may believe that it is very harmful to your subsequent performance and rate the excessive doubt as a -3. Next, calculate the degree of effect by multiplying the first number by the second and place it to the right.

1. **Before** a competition **my thoughts** about how I am going to play are:

	Very Doubtful	Neutral	Very Confident	
	-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3	
Does your level of this symptom help or hurt your subsequent performance?				Effect
	Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful	
	-3 -2	-1 0	1 2 3	

	Very Distracted	Neutral	Very Focused	
	-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3	
Does your level of this symptom help or hurt your subsequent performance?				Effect
	Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful	
	-3 -2	-1 0	1 2 3	

2. **Before** a competition **my body feels**:

	Very Tense	Neutral	Very Relaxed	
	-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3	
Does your level of this symptom help or hurt your subsequent performance?				Effect
	Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful	
	-3 -2	-1 0	1 2 3	

	Very Nervous	Neutral	Very Excited	
	-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3	

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

3. If performance is going **well during** a competition **my thoughts** are:

a) **Very Doubtful** **Neutral** **Very Confident**

-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3
--------------	-------	-------

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

b) **Very Distracted** **Neutral** **Very Focused**

-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3
--------------	-------	-------

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

4. If performance is going **well during** a competition **my body feels**:

a) **Very Tense** **Neutral** **Very Relaxed**

-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3
--------------	-------	-------

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

b) **Very Nervous** **Neutral** **Very Excited**

-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3
--------------	-------	-------

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

5. If performance is going **poorly during** a competition **my thoughts** are:

a) **Very Doubtful** **Neutral** **Very Confident**

-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3
--------------	-------	-------

Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance?

Very Harmful	Neutral	Very Helpful
-3 -2 -1	0 1	2 3

Effect

b) **Very Distracted** **Neutral** **Very Focused**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

c) **Very Negative** **Neutral** **Very Positive**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

6. If performance is going **poorly during** a competition **my body feels:**

a) **Very Tense** **Neutral** **Very Relaxed**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

b) **Very Nervous** **Neutral** **Very Excited**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

c) **Very Angry** **Neutral** **Very Calm**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

7. During **critical moments** of a competition **my thoughts are:**

a) **Very Doubtful** **Neutral** **Very Confident**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect
Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

b) **Very Distracted** **Neutral** **Very Focused**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

c) **Very Negative** **Neutral** **Very Positive**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

8. During **critical moments** of a competition **my body feels:**
 a) **Very Tense** **Neutral** **Very Relaxed**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

b) **Very Nervous** **Neutral** **Very Excited**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your level of this symptom **help** or **hurt** your subsequent performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

9. Describe your physical and mental routines.
Non-existent **Neutral** **Well-structured**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your ability level **help** or **hurt** your performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

10. Describe you course management skills.
Poor **Neutral** **Excellent**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
 Does your ability level **help** or **hurt** your performance? Effect

Very Harmful **Neutral** **Very Helpful**
 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3

Daily Performance Journal

Date: _____

Practice or Competition

Location: _____

What did you do well in today's competition or practice?

What area(s) could you improve upon?

Did you have any negative thoughts or reactions today?

If so, what were they and what were the situations that caused them?

If so, what were the consequences of those actions?

If so, what would be a more productive way to handle those situations in the future?

Performance Profile

Directions: On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) rate the importance of each physical, psychological, and fitness skill relative to performance, your current assessment, the effect that it typically has on performance (-3 very harmful to +3 very helpful), and ideally where you would like it to be. Deduct your current assessment from your ideal and then multiple the difference by the effect and then the importance.

Technical Constructs	Importance 1 to 10	Current Assessment 1 to 10	Effect -3 to +3	Ideal Assessment 1 to 10	Ideal Minus Current	(Difference) x (Effect) x (Importance)
Fairways in Regulation						
Greens in Regulation						
Putts						
Up & Downs						
Sand Saves						
Grip						
Set Up						
Swing Plane						
Tempo						
Timing						

Fitness Constructs	Importance 1 to 10	Current Assessment 1 to 10	Effect -3 to +3	Ideal Assessment 1 to 10	Ideal Minus Current	(Difference) x (Effect) x (Importance)
Strength						
Flexibility						
Endurance						

Psychological Constructs	Importance 1 to 10	Current Assessment 1 to 10	Effect -3 to +3	Ideal Assessment 1 to 10	Ideal Minus Current	(Difference) x (Effect) x (Importance)
Concentration						
Confidence						
Discipline						
Motivation						
Managing Mistakes						
Attitude						
Self-Talk						
Anxiety Mgmt.						
Routines						
Course Mgmt.						

Chapter 5

Identifying Mental Errors and the Typically Situations that Cause Performance Problems

Mental Errors

“A golfer should never make a mental mistake because the ball is just sitting there waiting for you to hit it.”

Tiger Woods

Mental errors generally occur when a player gets nervous, angry, tired, loses focus or is just plain lackadaisical or lazy. Here are some of the most common mental mistakes:

Failing to Do a Thorough Pre-Shot or Risk-Reward Analysis

“I can airmail the golf ball, but sometimes I do not put the right address on it.”

Jim Dent

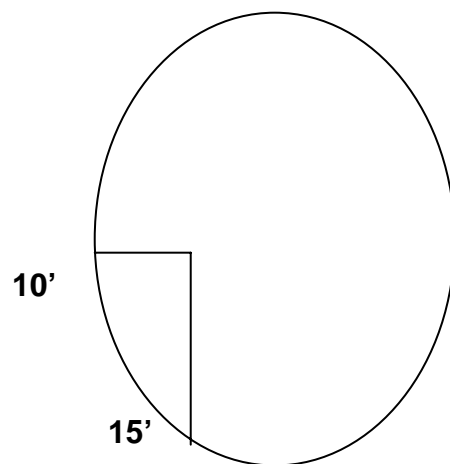
This may include any of the following:

- ✓ Not properly calculating the yardage to the target
- ✓ Making a club choice based on yardage alone failing to consider the potential impact of the wind, lie or weather conditions before choosing the club and type of shot
- ✓ Not taking into account the elevation of the target
- ✓ Hitting a shot with no specific target
- ✓ Failing to consider the shape of your ball flight before choosing the target

- ✓ Not taking into consideration the safe and ideal targets as well as places to avoid before making a decision
- ✓ Attempting a risky shot that you have a low probability of executing well or have not practiced
- ✓ Playing a low percentage shot with the possibility of gaining one stroke but losing two
- ✓ Going for too much attempting to make up for a bad shot or previous lost strokes
- ✓ Going at a risky pin position instead of hitting to the middle of the green
- ✓ Trying to hit the lesser club harder when in between clubs
- ✓ Choosing to hit the shot with the wrong club rather than returning to the cart or bag to get the correct one

To have the best opportunity of hitting the correct shot with the desired outcome, a player must consider all of these variables. The first step is to calculate the yardage to the pin. Some courses identify pin position by the color of the flag on the flagstick (red=front, white or yellow=middle, blue=back). Others have some sort of adjustable marker on the flagstick such as a mini-flag or ball. If it is located low on the flagstick the pin is in the front. Middle equals middle and high corresponds to back. Higher caliber courses have the greens segmented into thirds or sixths on the scorecard and have a corresponding pin location in a predetermined zone for that respective day. The starter will generally notify players of the pin position prior to the start of the round or it will be posted

somewhere visible. The player then merely has to look at the corresponding number on the scorecard for each hole to determine the approximate location. In tournament play, players typically receive a graphically illustrated pin sheet with the exact location of the pin placement. It is ordinarily stated as X number of feet from the front or back and left or right sides depending on which position it is closest to. For example, it may look like this, indicating that the pin is 15 feet from the front and 10 feet from the left side:



After yardage to the pin has been calculated, a player must then determine if there are any outside forces that may affect the shot. For instance, if there is any the wind and its direction. Many players do not accurately take into account the affects of the wind on ball flight and therefore hinder what might have otherwise been a very good shot. Here is a simple process for determining its approximate affect. Pick up a few blades of grass, stand with your back against the wind, raise your arm to the side about shoulder height and let the grass drop.

If your shot is directly into the wind increase your club selection by one for every three to five feet that the grass travels. In other words, if you drop the grass and it blows four feet away from the target increase your club selection by one. If the wind is blowing directly at the target then decrease your club selection by one for every six to eight feet that the grass travels. As you might have noticed, the wind has a much greater affect when you are hitting directly into it then in comparison to when it is helping you out. It is much more difficult to predict the impact of hitting directly into the wind. This is why when hitting into the wind many high-level players will attempt to hit low-punch shots to minimize its affect.

If you have a crosswind then you may have to choose a target anywhere from a few yards to several yards to the right or left of the target depending on the strength of the wind, the length of the shot and the type of ball flight that you intend to play. If the wind is working with your ball flight then you have to make more of an adjustment left or right than if it is working against the wind. The point is that you have to make an adjustment in your club selection and/or target when the wind comes into play. As you gain experience playing in the wind, the more accurate you will get in determining its impact. Even then, the precise affects are somewhat unpredictable.

Alternatively, temperature may affect ball flight if it is extreme. You will likely lose about a clubs distance if the temperature is 50 degrees in comparison to 80 degrees. The other variables regarding target and shot selection will be discussed further in the forthcoming section on course management.

When a Player Does Not Feel Right Over the Ball for Any One of Several Reasons and Attempts the Shot Anyway

“I would rather be of clear mind and decision with the wrong club than with an unclear mind and the right club.”

Walter Hagen

- ✓ The player may feel too close or far from the ball
- ✓ The ball may be too far forward or back in the stance
- ✓ Grip pressure may not feel right
- ✓ The ball may be teed too high or low
- ✓ Your stance may feel too open or closed
- ✓ You feel like they are aimed too far right or left
- ✓ You question whether you have too much or not enough club
- ✓ The wind kicks up or dies down
- ✓ You feel uncomfortable about the effects of the lie
- ✓ You feel rushed because you don't want to make others wait
- ✓ You may feel nervous or have a negative thought like “don't hit into the water” or an image of a past mistake pops in

All of these scenarios generally result in body tension and an errant shot. Most mid to high handicap players could take off 5 strokes from their game merely by learning and disciplining themselves to back off and start over when something is not right. I've never met a golfer who has not fallen victim to one of these situations. The ones who recognize when to step back and discipline

themselves to do so when necessary are generally the ones that make monumental strides.

Having Inappropriate Expectations

"The mind messes up more shots than the body."

Tommy Bolt

Expectations can have a dramatic affect on performance. If your expectations are too high then you will not likely meet them and consequently develop a negative attitude. If they are too low then you will probably achieve at a much lower level than you are capable of. Going into a round with unrealistic expectations takes you out of the present and makes it difficult to get into a groove. If you are score or outcome focused then this will lead to strategy diversion, doubt, tension and consequently, the loss of strokes. If you expect perfection then you are setting yourself up for anger and confusion, tension, attempting to force it, and errors. If you expect that there won't be ups and downs then you will possibly over-react to situations, place yourself on an emotional roller coaster and subsequently create more errors.

Here is what you should expect. Expect the unexpected. As they say, stuff happens. Expect that you will maintain a positive attitude. Expect that you will accept the results regardless of what happens and it will be OK. Expect that you do have the ability to recover from whatever happens. Expect yourself to stick to your strategy unless something dictates a change. Expect a total commitment to

your routines. And expect yourself to make a total effort to playing to the best of your ability.

Less than 1 percent of all golfers are scratch or better. Even great players hit poor shots and have bad days. Therefore, expecting to make par on every hole is unrealistic and sets you up for perceived failure. Most players are better off setting up their own personal par for each hole and attempting to play to that level. Simply take the number of strokes in your handicap, begin with the number one handicap hole and progress upwards adding a stroke to the par of each hole until you have added the total number of strokes equal to your handicap. For example, if you are a 15 handicap you will have a personal par of one over the stated par on the numbers one through fifteen handicap holes. If you are an 18 handicap then your personal par is one over on every hole. If you are a 25 handicap, then your personal par would be two over on the first through seventh handicap holes and one over for the remainder of holes. This procedure will help you maintain realistic expectations and a better attitude.

Being Too Analytical, Too Much of a Perfectionist or Obsessive-Compulsive About Swing Mechanics

"The golf swing is like sex. You can't be thinking about the mechanics of the act while you are performing."

Dave Hill

Some players are highly analytical about their games, in particularly about their swings. Few great shots are achieved when a player is fixated on

mechanics. The more that you attempt to correct and control your swing during a round, the more mechanical, erratic and less rhythmic that it becomes.

Analytical players have pre-execution swing thoughts like “Keep the left arm straight, rotate the hips and shoulders, take it back straight, smooth transition at the top, accelerate through the ball and finish high.” This is way too much for the mind or body to comprehend or execute. Telling your body how to do something is not the most effective way to improve performance during a round. Letting go and letting it do what it knows how to do is more effective.

These individuals also tend to be perfectionists and many times dwell entirely too much. They have a difficult time letting go and trusting their swing as well as spend a disproportionate amount of time working on mechanics in search of the perfect infallible swing. I've worked with many players at various playing levels that have been victimized by this fallacy. No matter how good your swing is kinks will periodically pop up for as long as you play this game. It is inevitable. It is one of the primary reasons why this game is considered so high maintenance.

Furthermore, these players generally have to have a plan, whether it is for game advancement, practice or a tournament or course strategy. They have a high need for control and when disruptions occur anxiety and tension generally ensue. After adversity, they have a difficult time letting it go, letting it happen and trusting it. They get caught in analytical mode and obsess about their swing.

They preoccupy themselves with mechanics and swing thoughts. At times they freeze up or spend entirely way too much time over the ball.

Learning to accept, trust and play with the swing that you have for the day is a key factor for playing to your maximum potential. Trust is the ability to just do it without question or concern. It is allowing the body to do what it has been trained to do. It translates into more fluid and confident swings. When assessing shots, listen to your inner voice, use a trust cue (a feeling, word, or phrase) like “I’ve got this,” become target focused, feel the desired swing, and just let it happen.

Doubt or uncertainty on the course will devastate your score. If doubt and uncertainty creep in, it is always best to step back and start your routine again. As part of that routine take practice swings trying to generate the right feel. Reflect back on a moment when you had the same club and type of shot and stuck it. See and feel that swing as vividly as you possibly can. When and only when it feels right should you then step up to hit your shot.

Letting Outside Influences Impact Your Game

“There’s a guy who won’t be in contention. There’s another one I don’t have to worry about.”

Jack Nicklaus (when fellow competitors complain about playing conditions)

This can happen in a number of different ways. For example, changing playing strategy when an opponent makes a good shot or series of shots, letting the weather, course conditions or the pace of play affect your attitude, paying attention to the comments or reactions of others that may be playing or watching,

or concern about what others may be thinking. Any one of these can negatively affect your attitude or mood, influence your focus and devastate your game. I have had clients that have fallen prey to each one of these situations. The first of these scenarios is more common and I must admit that I think that everyone who plays this game has done this at one time or another. It generally creeps up when a player is competing, whether it be in a tournament or in a so called friendly few dollar Nassau with playing partners and it generally results in a diversion from playing strategy or pressing. That is, being overly aggressive and trying to make too much happen and in turn often paying the drastic consequences.

Periodically, a player may let inclement weather, course conditions or the pace of play negatively affect their attitude. Consequently, they set themselves up for poor play. You have to accept the fact that you may not score as well if conditions are poor but also realize that everyone is playing under the same conditions. Furthermore, you have to learn to play at your own pace. Only hit when you are committed to the shot and are completely focused. If you are uncertain then back off and start again. It is not these situations themselves that affect your play and score, it is how you respond and react to those conditions.

The other situations are a little more disconcerting. I have seen countless junior players make these errors. A number of players that I have worked with would consciously attend to the emotional reactions and/or body language of a parent that was watching a match. After a poor shot, the parent would either

knowingly or unknowing display disappointment, anger, sadness or any other of a number of emotions. They may do it overtly by saying something, shaking their head, or more subtly by frowning or folding their arms and turning away. The player gets overly concerned about how that person views them or may anticipate a potentially negative conversation that will ensue after the round. Either way, the player takes note of it, preoccupies him/herself with it and consequently allows it affect their attitude, mood, focus and ultimately their play.

Occasionally, a player may bring emotions that are tied to other life events to the course. Years ago when I was coaching, we had an elite collegiate golfer who was highly recruited, achieved all conference honors during his freshman year and showed the potential for an eventual career as a professional player. During his junior year he got involved with a young woman, who he perceived as the love of his life. After a few months the relationship became turbulent, extremely emotional taxing on him and affected his whole demeanor. He was consumed by feelings of worry, despair and hopelessness. He was in a state of depression. This went on for months and unfortunately it carried right over into his game. His attitude both on and off the course was one of carelessness and confusion. It was as though he had completely lost his life and game and he didn't know where to find them. His motivation and desire to practice and play gradually dissipated. He subsequently went from one of the best young players in the country and a regular team competition contributor to one who was now struggling just to remain on the team. The relationship soon ended but it took

months for him to recover from the damage it had done to him as a person and player.

On a less dramatic note, some days it seems as though you get all the breaks and while on others you can't buy one. Unfortunately, you have very little control over this. What you do have control over is how you react to it. This phenomenon occurs in golf just like in life. You have to realize it, accept it and roll with the punches. Don't let it get to you and affect your attitude. Stay positive and focus on what you can control, which is disciplining yourself to stick to your physical and mental routines. That is what great players do. They take it as a challenge to make the most out of "one of those days." If you do allow it to get to you, you can bet that things will only get worse.

Lack of Emotional Stability or Control

"Why am I using a new putter? Because the last one didn't float too well."

Craig Stadler

Physiologically, emotions cause a narrowing of attentional focus and impede the control of smaller muscle groups. The effect of these emotional reactions on performance, however, is dependent on a player's perception, interpretation and response. Emotions are only bad if you perceive and interpret them that way. Inexperienced players generally perceive and interpret them as negative. They focus on uncomfortable feelings, anticipating the worse, tighten up and rely on smaller muscle groups to execute shots (e.g., hands, wrist, and arms). Experienced players look at it from a positive perspective. They interpret

them as the body's natural way of preparing itself to overcome the challenge, self-regulate, focus on successful execution and small targets and rely on the larger muscle groups to execute (e.g., shoulders, hips and legs). Obviously, the latter of these two responses produces superior results.

All of the arousal-performance relationship theories and models indicate that there is a direct relationship between the two. If arousal is either too high or too low then performance suffers. At what point it is either too high or low and how dramatically it affects performance is dependant upon the activity, its requirements and the individual.

A player can benefit tremendously merely by recognizing and accepting that feelings are fleeting or temporary and by initiating an appropriate regulation technique, such as deep concentration breathing and positive self-talk. It is when the person interprets the feelings as negative and dwells on them that they typically become worse. One of the best ways to deal with excessive emotions is to take a few slow deep breaths, visualize a calm and relaxing place or event, verbally remind yourself to be "calm and relaxed," take a few practice swing and concentrate on generating the right feel with your body and adhere to pre-shot routines, including positive visualization of the shot and a process swing trigger like "target."

The best golfers control their emotions. They don't ignore them or pretend that they are not there. They acknowledge them and deal with them. They attempt to maintain an even keel emotionally throughout the round, regardless of

how well or poorly performance is going. Those that can do this typically fair far better than those that ride the emotional roller coaster. The difference between the two is generally profound.

The All or Nothing-Go for Broke Style of Play

“Golf is a game where guts and blind devotion will always net you absolutely nothing but an ulcer.”

Tommy Bolt

These individuals essentially have poor risk-reward course-management skills and more often than not it costs them big. Most recreational players overestimate their ability to make shots. They attempt them and end up paying for it from a scoring and attitude perspective. They then question and berate themselves. “Why did I do that?” “I know better than that.” “That was stupid.”

There is a time and place when this style of play may be appropriate but for the average player these times are far less frequent than for those with a high level of skill and the ability to pull off difficult shots with a high degree of certainty. If you are going to play a highly aggressive style then you better be willing to accept the results if they are bad and more importantly, be able to bounce back, scramble and recover. Even at the highest level this style of play can very costly. Although I admire his zeal, Phil Mickelson plays this way and it has cost him numerous championships in years past.

Dramatizing the Impact of One or a Few Poor Shot(s)

“All year, I concentrated on ‘Forget the last shot.’ It takes so long to accept that you can’t always replicate your swing. The only thing that you can control is your attitude toward the next shot.”

Mark McCumber

This may be the most prevalent reaction of the highly-strung weekend hacker. This is otherwise known as the “here it goes again” or “I can’t get a break” syndrome. These individuals are also the ones who generally ride the emotional roller coaster and divert from any strategy that they may have had going into the round. All it takes is one or a small series of poor shots for these players to fall into a downward spiral in mood and thinking. The only recovery mechanism that they have is when fortune, unintentionally, comes their way and something good happens. These individuals fail to recognize that each facet of the game (i.e., driving, iron play, chipping, putting) as well as each shot is independent. The only way one affects the other is if the player allows it through poor thinking or behavior or lack of emotional control.

Many players are over-reactive. They fail to consider the most appropriate and beneficial response as well as the consequences of their actions before they act. When a player becomes angry not only is there an elevation in heart rate and blood pressure resulting in muscular tension but they are also likely to omit important details in the shot selection and execution process because of poor thoughts running rampant and thereby increasing the possibility for error. This omission is a direct deviation from one’s routine and would constitute a gross

mental error. Most players would greatly benefit from learning to attend to and recognize their thoughts and feelings, hesitating, and assessing the options before reacting. In this way they are much more likely to choose a constructive behavior.

Thinking Too Far Ahead or Behind

“It is nothing new or original to say that golf is played one stroke at a time. But it took me many years to realize it.”

Bobby Jones

This type of thinking is exactly the opposite of staying in the present or playing one shot at a time and more often than not results in errors and the loss of strokes. For example, thinking “if I par the last two holes I’ll win” or “if I didn’t play so aggressive on the last hole and cause myself a double bogey I could have won.” Needless to say, what’s done is done and what will be done is yet to be determined. If any part of your focus or concentration is not on the task immediately at hand then your opportunity for success proportionally declines with the amount of inappropriately allocated attention.

Staying focused on one thing at a time (e.g., object, sound, thought, and procedure) is the epitome of being in the present. If the mind is anywhere other than the present then a player will likely omit details and make a poor decision. Thinking ahead or back takes you out of the present. Thinking about past failures brings anger, frustration, doubt, worry and tension into the present and diminishes your chances of success. One of the only effective ways and times to

reflect on past experiences is during your pre-shot routine and imagining a previous success with the same type of shot. Similarly, thinking ahead may be appropriate before the round by visualizing yourself executing and achieving your goal but not during the round unless you are projecting an image of the desired outcome on the forthcoming shot.

Those That Have No Plan

“By the time you get to your ball, if you don't know what to do with it, try another sport.”

Julius Boros

As the old adage goes, “if you fail to plan, plan to fail.” Preparation is a key component of high-level performance. Those that have a plan for constructively dealing with difficult situations generally fair far better than those who do not. High-level players know how they are going to attempt to play every hole. They have a pre-determined playing strategy. They know how they are going to get physically and mentally warmed-up prior to a round to give him/herself the best chance of playing well. They have a warm-up routine. They know how they are going to react and attempt to bounce back if they hit a poor shot. They have a post-shot routine to calm themselves down, challenge themselves and refocus. They have a plan for every practice session, for the off-season and for the majors. They have a plan for virtually every conceivable scenario that may arise. They do this to eliminate doubt and confusion, both of which can be overwhelming and detrimental to optimal play when under competitive stress.

The Typically Scenarios in which Players Make Errors

“Ask yourself how many shots you would have saved if you always developed a strategy before you hit, always played within your capabilities, never lost your temper, and never got down on yourself.”

Jack Nicklaus

The majority of errors are caused by doubt, tension and lapses in concentration and not mechanical flaws themselves. In fact, tension, which is manifested by doubt, is the number one killer of a golf swing. Thoughts like “I hope I don’t screw up,” “something does not feel right” and “here it goes again” all signify doubt and produce tension. Over-tightness causes slices, hooks, tops, chunks, and yips. Shoulder tension leads to a restricted backswing and often quickness in the down-swing. Hip tension causes a lack of rotation and weight shift and consequently a loss in power. Wrist tension results in scooping or casting. In which situations each of these occur varies.

There are a number of different instances or scenarios when mental errors are most likely to surface. Some of those are as follows: pre-competitive preparation, mental and emotional reactions to the start of competition, mental and emotional reactions when play is going well or poorly, during pre-shot routines, in-between shots and during course management.

Pre-Competitive Preparation

The first time I played the Masters, I was so nervous I drank a bottle of rum before I teed off. I shot the happiest 83 of my life.

Chi Chi Rodriguez

A player must be adequately prepared both physically and mentally heading into competition in order to play at one's best. Physical preparation involves having put in the requisite training to have all technical facets of the game finely tuned with a feeling of reliability. Players do not want to be tinkering with swing mechanics before competition. This uncertainty or doubt about the stroke often translates into negative thoughts and images, which in turn cause swing errors. Likewise, a player must have supreme confidence in his/her ability to execute as well as structured routines for handling competitive pressure and other obstacles that may arise. Further, the player should have mapped the course and developed a playing strategy for every hole knowing where the trouble is off the tees and around the greens. In essence, they should know which areas to avoid, the ideal locations and safe spots.

Alternatively, pre-competitive preparation also incorporates readiness the night prior to the competition and the warm-up preceding the start of competition. A player should do whatever possible to be physically and mentally relaxed the night before. Some individuals practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga. Others enjoy a relaxing shower or bath, watching a favorite type of movie or listening to comforting music. Players should eat and hydrate well. They should make sure that all needed equipment is packed and ready to go. This may include laying out your clothing and making sure that you have the proper clubs for the type of course that is being played, that they are in good condition as well as the correct number are in the bag. Fluids and snacks

should be packed as well as gloves, tees, ball markers, a ball mark repairer, socks, shoes, sunglasses, sun block, a hat, umbrella, rain gear, etc. The player should review his/her playing strategy and attempt to visualize ideal play of the entire round. Visualization will be described in further detail shortly. And finally, attempt to get plenty of restful sleep.

The morning of competition, a player should wake early enough to make sure that they have plenty of time to eat and hydrate well, travel to the location and have at least one hour to get properly physically and mentally warmed-up prior to tee time. Avoid big, heavy meals and excessive caffeine or alcohol consumption before or during the round. Eat at least 90 minutes before your tee time to allow time for food to digest. Set the tone by listening to soothing, relaxing or motivational music on the drive to the course. Arrive early enough to allow adequate time to take care of business in the pro shop, leisurely stretch and warm-up both the long and short game strokes, use the restroom, etc. The time necessary to accomplish these things may vary between individuals but in general an hour give or take should suffice.

Stretch thoroughly prior to hitting balls, particularly the shoulders and hips. Begin with hitting shorter shots like half wedges and gradually progress to full shots with longer clubs. You do not need to hit every club in your bag. Most high level players will hit every other club. A typical progression is sand wedge, pitching wedge, 9-iron, 7-iron, 5-iron, 3-iron, 3-wood and then driver. A cautionary note; some players have a tendency to be too outcome orientated

during warm-up and if strokes do not feel quite right or the result of shots are not adequate, their attitude becomes very negative and it carries over into the start of play. A more appropriate perspective during warm-up is to focus on generating the appropriate feel of strokes, irrespective of shot outcome. In other words, concentrate on balance, generating good tempo and timing and making solid contact. Notice which ball flight pattern that you have working for the day and use it. Do not attempt to fight it. Always stay positive. If you allow your body to do what it knows how to do without forcing it, the results will generally follow. Moreover, limit the number of balls that you hit and don't over do it. Thirty balls, give or take, is generally more than enough. You don't want to wear yourself out.

After you are thoroughly warm and before leaving the practice range simulate playing the first few holes, with the exception of putts, in your mind. For example, if the first hole calls for the driver, pull it out, visualize the layout of that hole, pick out a target, go through your routine and hit the shot. Next, based on the quality of the first shot estimate what the next shot would be, grab the appropriate club, go through your routine and hit it. Follow the same procedure for the first few holes conceding putts once you feel like the shot previously hit would be on the green.

After that, proceed to the putting green to work on short game. Dedicate at least 60% of your time getting a feel for the various short game strokes that you will typically encounter on that course with at least 50% of that time going to putting. Begin with various types of chips and pitches that you will typically

encounter on that course. In other words, if the course is set up so that you can play mostly bump and runs around the green then work on those with your preferred club.

Practice long putts first and end with short makable putts to build confidence. Begin by putting to the collar of the green instead of the cups to help eliminate any possible negative attitude that may be developed from misses. Putt a few balls from fifty, forty, thirty, twenty and ten foot increments to get a feel for speed. End with three foot putts from various locations around the hole so as to include straight, left-to-right and right-to-left breaking putts. When putting, avoid an excessive number of 5-10 foot putts. You will not make a high percentage of these and it may affect your confidence.

Ultimately, your objective is to be optimally prepared to execute the type of shots that you are going to encounter on the course by practicing those specific shots. Finally, before proceeding to the tee, you may want to engage in some relaxation, psyching-up, or confidence building exercises to get mentally in your ideal playing state. I'll discuss these types of exercise in detail shortly.

Mental and Emotional Reactions to the Start of Competition

"No matter what happens - never give up a hole....In tossing in your cards after a bad beginning you also undermine your whole game, because to quit between tee and green is more habit-forming than drinking a highball before breakfast."

Sam Snead

Players have a tendency to place additional pressure upon themselves on the first tee, on the first few holes and on tee shots in general. They may

encounter nervous reactions like the jitters, shakes, sweats, butterflies or bodily tension. They may experience doubt in the form of negative thoughts or images like “don’t screw-up” or “don’t look stupid,” have mental visions of the shot slicing or hooking into the woods or water, or they may just be thinking that their round will be dictated by these shots rather than staying in the present. Needless to say, all of this is often detrimental to the desired outcome.

Smart players recognize that the first shot off the tee is just one of anywhere between 60 and 100 something total strokes that they will execute throughout the round. They understand that the first few holes are only approximately 1/6th of the total round and that tee shots, if executed fairly well, will only account for 18 total strokes. They comprehend that all of these shots are a small percentage of the total score and that no one shot is really more important than another. Therefore, do not let them influence their attitude and behaviors.

Everyone would prefer to start well whether it be off the first tee, any subsequent tee or on the first few holes. To do that, it is imperative that a player be in a physical and mental comfort zone, confident and focused. Accepting the reality of these situations and developing structured routines of thought and behavior can help alleviate any potential counterproductive reactions. Mental and physical routines as well as other performance enhancing techniques will be discussed in further detail shortly.

Mental and Emotional Reactions When Play is Going Well Versus Poorly

"The only shots you can be sure of are those you've had already."

Byron Nelson

When play is going well, most of the time individuals go with the flow and there is very little unnecessary or counterproductive thought involved. Periodically, however, a player may start to think too far ahead, lose focus by thinking about potential score, get the "what ifs" (What if I miss? What if I lose? What if I win?), change their playing strategy, play not to lose instead of to win or become tentative and then self-inflict him/herself with the physiological reactions to those thoughts such as nervousness or muscular tension. Other times, players may take the opposite approach and start to play overly aggressive or get lackadaisical and fail to properly consider the risks versus rewards of target and shot selection, miss slightly and end up paying a heavy price. Herein is another example of the importance of staying in the present, focusing on one shot at a time and sticking to routines.

Conversely, when playing poorly individuals have a tendency to dwell on the results of previous shots, get frustrated or angry, lose confidence and trust in their swing, try to steer the ball, second guess decisions, get score focused, press and play too aggressively to attempt to make up shots and subsequently fall into a continuous downward spiral until the round is over or something fortuitous happens. Some throw or slam clubs, go on verbal tirades or just beat themselves up with self-statements like "I suck" and "here it goes again" thereby

debilitating concentration, taking away from productive focus and creating physiological tension. Here is yet another example justifying the importance of well-scripted physical and mental routines.

To recover well and minimize blow-up holes a player has to stay in the present, keep emotions in check and play within him/herself. He/she has to avoid being overly aggressive and play the higher percentage recovery shot. He/she has to focus on playing the current shot to the best of one's ability, have positive expectations and solidify belief with positive self talk and visualizations.

The secret to recovery is to focus on what you learned from the shot and not on the outcome. Make a mental note of it and then move on. Patience and composure will translate into lower scores. Know that you are going to have good and bad shots. Avoid the impulse to press and go for too much trying to recover after bad shots. Choose the safer shot if the probability of success is low. Concentrate fully on the recovery shot to avoid making a poor situation worse and maintain your routines.

In Between Shots

"Golf is a long walk spoiled."

Mark Twain

What a player does during the time between shots is one of the most critical and often overlooked aspects in the game. If that time is not used correctly, a player can fall into a self-destructive zone and consume an exorbitant amount of mental energy. Many players think too much between shots,

particularly after bad ones. They overanalyze their swing, dwell on previous shots, internally beat themselves up, or think too far ahead or behind and consequently consume a tremendous amount of mental energy. You only have so much mental energy just like there is a limited capacity for physical energy before you become fatigued. If you are mentally grinding between shots, meaning that you are engaging in a lot of critical thinking, you are consuming mental energy at an exorbitant rate and will likely mentally fatigue before the end of the round thereby facilitating an end of round collapse.

Anyone who has experienced this will tell you that at some point on the back nine there came a time that it seemed like they had never picked up a club before in their lives, couldn't figure anything out, couldn't get it back together and subsequently the rest of the round went horribly. Therefore, it is imperative that you mentally relax in between shots by doing something less taxing, such as engaging in light-hearted conversation with playing partners, singing a favorite song, whistling, or thinking about something pleasant like a past or future vacation or a funny movie.

Alternatively, you can engage in what Buddhists call "mindfulness." In other words, notice everything around you, the trees, clouds in the sky, and birds. Feel the grass beneath your feet. Smell the grass, flowers or trees. Hear whatever is going on around you. This consumes far less mental energy, distracts the mind from being too analytical, keeps your attitude positive and conserves the concentration for when it is most needed, during pre-shots

routines and shot executions. Finally, when you are waiting to play your next shot, it's counterproductive to continuously analyze it. It is much more beneficial to practice a mind clearing exercise until it is time for you to start your routine.

Routines

"If things start going wrong, having a consistent approach prevents panic. There is nothing worse than entering an important situation and changing the way you do things because of pressure."

Shane Murphy

Breaking scoring barriers is dependant upon discarding any preconceived notions of what is and is not possible, dedicating yourself to improvement, practicing effectively and efficiently, and most importantly creating sound physical and mental routines. A routine is a systematic set or pattern of thoughts or behaviors. Most high-level players have pre-competition routines, pre-shot routines, post-shot routines and post-round routines.

By creating productive routines, you are essentially training yourself how to appropriately act and react in any given situation. It is also a means of developing consistency and minimizing the effects of stress. If you know how to react suitably in pressure situations, you are more likely to perform on a consistent and preferable basis. Not having functional routines or deviation from one's routines are the primary causes of performance problems.

The winner in golf is generally the player who makes the fewest mistakes and who has the best misses. The average player (20 handicap) can take five strokes off their game immediately merely by sticking to well constructed routines

and not making these costly errors. Once a player eliminates his or her own self-sabotaging habits, nothing will stand in the way of success.

Routines vary from person to person. The key to any routine is to perform it the same way on every stroke. You want to generate a smooth, deliberate and decisive flow both physically and mentally. What is also important is that the routines that you structure feels comfortable and facilitates the desired outcome.

Pre-competitive routines are fairly similar. They include everything that was discussed earlier in the section on pre-competitive preparation such as, mapping the course, developing a hole by hole playing strategy, making sure that equipment is ready to go and getting enough rest and relaxation the night before, eating properly and having a warm-up routine the morning of competition to be physically and mentally ready to play at your best.

Here is an example of a typical pro pre-shot long game (i.e., woods and irons) routine. Before every shot, stand behind the ball and analyze the situation. Formulate the information about lie, wind, yardage, and an appropriate target. Choose a club, trusting your instincts. Take a few deep breaths and relax. Take a practice swing or two to generate the subconscious feel. With the last feel swing visualize the ball flying to the desired location. Approach slowly, setting a flowing pace. Lock in on your specific target as you approach the ball. Have a positive self-statement or thought like "I've got it." Set the clubface square to your target line or an intermediate target then set your feet. Take your address. Check your alignment and club-face angle as you look at the target. Waggle a few times to

release tension. Take one last look at the target, bring your focus back to a dimple in the middle of the ball and let the shot go with little hesitation thus preventing thoughts about mechanics or negative outcome to enter. Focus your conscious mind and concentration on the ball so as to allow your subconscious mind to produce the desired swing.

If something interferes with your flow or concentration then it is wise to step back and start all over again. Doubt about your grip, stance or swing will nearly guarantee poor execution. You will fail to trust the subconscious feel and attempt to use the conscious mind to force the swing. When the conscious mind gets into the act it activates unwanted muscles that ruin your swing.

Everyone who has played this game has at one time or another swung at a ball when something didn't feel right, they had a negative thought or image or there was an auditory or visual distraction, ended up chunking or blading it, hooking or slicing it into the woods or water and then wanted to kick him/herself for not backing off. Discipline yourself to focus and step back if necessary. After backing off the shot because of indecision or lack of comfort do not immediately step back into your address position. Take a deep breath, executing a few more practice swings to regain the subconscious feel and then set up. You have to give the mind and body time to readjust to the new plan and regenerate flow. These are the keys to a sound pre-shot routine.

Professional pre-shot routines range from 13 to 20 seconds, depending on which initiation point it is being timed from. Individually, they rarely vary more

than 1 second. It's when pre-shot routines begin to vary greatly, in either direction, that play goes south. This often indicates that the player is thinking too much, too quickly and omitting important details or something else is not right. A prime example was Greg Norman's collapse in the final round of 1996 Masters. Everyone watching predicted his demise when his routine began completely discombobulated about half way through the back nine.

Chipping and putting routines vary greatly. When chipping most players like to read the break of the green as well as take several practice strokes around the ball to get a feel for the grass around the lie and the length of the desire stroke. Some players like to pick out and fixate on an intermediate target, which is highly recommended. That is, a spot that they would like to land the ball anticipating that if the ball lands near that location it will roll the remainder of the distance to the hole and be a well-executed shot. Others will merely fixate on the hole. One of the most important factors is to keep your eyes on the middle of the ball and head still through impact.

Regarding putting, it is imperative that you read the break as well as any other variables on and around the green that may affect the break. Many players will read the line from both sides of the cup and some will even assess it from the side to get a feel for distance. As suggested earlier, if there is water nearby, the ball will tend to break toward it. The ball rolls where water drains. The grain tends to lean toward the setting sun. If there are mountains nearby, the ball will tend to break away from the highest peak. If there is a heavy wind, it will likely affect the

roll. Also, notice walk off areas on the green. The area may be trampled and thus affect your putt if you have to putt through it. These are the considerations that all great players take into account on every putt because they realize that they have an impact.

As far as the routine goes, players often putt best when they are not thinking too much or spending too much time once they are over the ball. If you choose to think, then have a constant positive thought like “smooth stroke” or “I’ve got it,” focus your eyes on a dimple in the middle of the ball, execute, keep your head down and then listen for the ball to hit the bottom of the cup. Keep your putting routine simple. Be decisive in your read, visualize the line, pick out an intermediate target, step up, take a practice stroke or two, look at the target, address the ball, fixate on a dimple, and then stroke it while keeping your head down throughout the stroke. If you miss and the remaining putt is outside a foot, mark it and repeat your routine. If not, tap it in and go on. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen even the most experienced players fail to re-mark and read a two to three foot putt, subsequently miss it and walk off the green infuriated. Sound familiar? If constructed correctly, sound pre-shot routines will help you with focus, rhythm, consistency, and relieving tension.

Post-shot routines vary depending on the outcome of the shot. If the result was good then you may automatically go into one of the relaxing mental energy conservation rituals suggested earlier (e.g., pleasant conversation, singing a song, whistling, etc.) until you get to your next shot and begin your pre-shot

routine again. If the shot was poor, then you may need to find a way to release frustration, put it behind you and move on. Players do that in different ways. Most high-level players will go through a brief period of swing analysis and error correction where they will take a few practice swings attempting to correct the error and feel the proper swing and then go to some form of mind clearing exercise like those suggested earlier.

The deciding factor in determining the outcome of a match is not how many shots you hit well but how many you hit badly. More matches are decided by competitor's bad shots and your ability to recover from yours than your own good shots. All players hit bad shots. The great player's only concern is that they do not repeat it. They realize that a bad shot is caused by a mental lapse. They dismiss it from their mind, accept the result and approach the next shot with confidence. They force the bad memory from their conscious mind by taking practice swings until they initiate the subconscious feel and image of the right stroke.

Those individuals that get extremely angry, throw or slam clubs, and go on verbal tirades are the ones that generally dwell, beat themselves up and turn one bad shot into another. Needless to say, these behaviors are highly counterproductive. If you hit a poor shot make sure that you take plenty of time before you hit the next shot so that you can clear your conscious mind of the poor shot and give the subconscious mind time to initiate the feel and image of a good shot.

You have no control over shots already played. Therefore, accept what happens, breath, relax, and clear your mind. Allowing yourself to get frustrated and then carrying over the distracting thoughts, emotions and ultimately body tension, is what causes the blowup holes on the course. Most mid-to-high handicap players could take 5 to 10 strokes off their game just by improving their thinking and habits; Namely, learning to play one shot at a time, having confidence, developing sound routines, picking out small targets, using the subconscious swing, stepping back and starting over if disruptions occur, accepting the results of their shots and following intelligent game plans.

Finally, most great players will do some type of post-round assessment. Many will record their analysis in a journal format for future inspiration or merely as a learning experience. If the round went extremely well, they may record everything that they did right that translated into great play. If the round went poor, they may dissect the areas that cost them and set up a plan for remedying it. The main objective is to take away information that you can apply to further your development, whether it be about your physical game, mental game or the course. See the sample performance journal at the end of this chapter.

Course Management

“Play the shot you’ve got the greatest chance of playing well and play the shot that makes the next shot easy. It is not solely the capacity to make great shots that makes champions, but the essential quality of making very few bad shots.”

Tommy Armour

Course management revolves around knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, what the course presents to you in the form of obstacles and opportunities and choosing your shots accordingly. To score well a player has to be smart in target and shot selection.

Whenever possible always aim away or work the ball away from direct and potential shot grabbers. Shot grabbers are lateral and water hazards, out-of-bounce areas, fairway and greenside bunkers, heavy rough and other difficult lies. Furthermore, you certainly do not want to attempt to play a risky shot that you are only capable of hitting well less than 50% of the time, particularly if it may cost you strokes. All too often I see players attempt a risky shot, hit it out of bounce or into the water, and lose two strokes on the hole in hopes of gaining one. As far as I am concerned the math does not add up. Sometimes you have to play the percentages and take your medicine.

During competitive rounds, stick to the shots that you play best. Don't attempt something miraculous that you have not practiced and don't have a high percentage of executing well. For example, attempting to hit a hook, fade, low or high shot around, under or over trees instead of pitching out, a flop shot over a steep faced bunker with a short sided pin position, blading a wedge from the fringe or hitting a fairway wood from the fringe. Save these shots for practice or practice rounds until you are proficient.

Off the tee, know the yardage to fairway bunkers, doglegs or any other potential shot grabbers. Keep the driver in the bag on narrow fairways unless

absolutely necessary. Choose the club that you can hit to an acceptable distance, have the best opportunity of hitting well and will set you up for a high percentage next shot.

Stay out of trouble off the tee by swinging easy and using a low spin ball. Resist the urge to be influenced by others club choice, strength and distance and of trying to swing out of your shoes. Keep things in perspective. Drives are only a small percentage of your total score.

On all fairway, approach and greenside shots, assess your lie and determine a target before you make your club and shot selection. On par 5s or long par 4s do not automatically pull out a fairway wood or low iron attempting maximum distance. If the lie is good then trust your instincts. If it's tight then an iron may be easier to generate solid contact than a fairway wood. If the ball is in heavy rough then a fairway wood will not get caught in the grass as easily and you will generate better contact but you may be best off using a high loft club to insure that you get it out, particularly if the rough is extremely high or thick. Never try to hit a big hook or fade out of the high rough. First, the high rough will usually automatically grab the club and cause the clubface to turn over and ball to go left (for a right-hander). Second, the grass gets caught between the club-face and ball and makes it nearly impossible to generate any spin.

Alternatively, if the ball is in a divot, a fairway bunker, on some type of hillside lie or you are occluded by trees or other obstacles, you will have to alter your club selection and possibly your target to get the best results possible. On

greenside shots, hitting high shots from tight lies is extremely difficult. The flange of the clubs makes it very difficult to get the club underneath the ball. In these instances, hitting a running shot is far easier and will more often produce better results.

Here are some other general tips to help your scoring. On all tee, fairway and approach shots always determine an appropriate target. Your target is dependent on what the course presents, your predominant or intended ball flight and shot making ability. For higher handicap players with no consistent ball flight, the center of the fairway and green are generally always the safest target. Better players with more consistent ball flight or ability to work the ball need further consideration. A right-handed fade or left-handed draw player can be more aggressive on dog-leg rights and right side pin positions and has to be more conservative with the reciprocal. Likewise, a right-handed draw or left-handed fade player can be more aggressive on dog-leg lefts and left side pin positions and has to be more careful with the opposite.

When analyzing a situation you basically want to ask yourself three questions.

1. Ideally, where would I like to hit this shot to set up my next?
2. Where is the trouble (ex. hazards or difficult positions) that can potentially cost me strokes if I hit it there?
3. Where is the safest play?

Based on this information as well as how well you are playing, you should make the wisest decision to optimize your score. Only when you are playing well and the safe and ideal spots are close together should you be highly aggressive. Otherwise, the safe spots are more cost effective. Finally, keep in mind that the target area (where you want it to end up) and the target (where you are aiming) may be different depending on your intended ball flight (e.g., draw versus fade or straight), wind, etc. Further, you may have to choose an appropriate landmark (e.g., tree on the horizon, cloud, etc.) in the distance if the shot is blind.

Remember, the main objective is to keep the ball in play. Don't use the driver on narrow fairways or if it will leave you with an uncomfortable distance on your approach shot. Work the ball away from trouble whenever possible.

Prior to every shot you should consider all the variables that may come into play before you decide on the type of shot that you are going to hit. For example, the yardage, wind, lie, hazards, other trouble spots, pin position, elevation and slope of the green, can you hit the shot on a fairly consistent basis, how much do you have to gain opposed to lose, and so on.

Have a plan for every hole and target for every shot. Tee the ball on the side of the tee box that gives you the widest margin for error taking into consideration any trouble and the best position for the next shot. On par 3s and approach shots choose the correct club, target and shot to avoid greenside bunkers and other trouble areas if you have difficulty with those types of shots. Always tee your ball on par 3s. On most courses and holes, the greens are

sloped from back to front so you are generally better off hitting short than long. Leave the pin in on greenside shots. Shots fall in more with the pin in than out.

Out of high lipped fairway bunkers make sure that you use a high enough lofted club to first and foremost get it out. Use a fairway wood instead of a low iron when possible, particularly if there is trouble in front of the green or if the ball is in high rough. Use more rather than less club when in between shots and execute a more controlled swing. Take the most direct open route when hitting out of the trees. Lay up on most par 5's and play the higher percentage tee, fairway and approach shots unless the hole is wide open or you have exceptional length and shot making ability. In general, hit the club and shot that you are most comfortable with. Hit the shot you have the best chance of executing well. Finally, focus on where you want to hit shots and not where you don't.

Good course management skills are vital for scoring well as well as for proper pre-competitive preparation. As discussed previously, all great players will map a course and develop a playing strategy for each hole before heading into a competition. They note which side of the tee box gives them the best opportunity of hitting the desired shot to the ideal or safe target areas to set up their next shot. They take any hazards that may come into play, such as distance to fairway or greenside bunkers, doglegs, and the slope of the fairway or greens and their firmness and plan around them. Moreover, most possess the ability to hit the type of shot that will give them the highest percentage of scoring well.

You, on the other hand, have to develop your own plan based on your abilities. For example, if the first hole is a par 4 slight dog-leg right with trouble down the right side and you predominantly play a fade (as a right-handed player) then it is probably best that you set up on the middle to right side of the tee box and pick a target somewhere toward the left side of the fairway, which will ideally leave your tee shot somewhere along the middle-left side of the fairway. This will give you the best angle and most margin for error if you mishit the shot. Conversely, if you are a draw player then it is best to set up on the middle to left side of the tee box and pick a target toward the center of the fairway.

Similarly, for every approach shot into the green you should calculate and record the potential hazardous areas around the green which may cost strokes if the shot is mishit there. For instance, if you are hitting to an island green, then the only smart play is to the middle. Or if you are playing to a green with front side bunkers and a front pin position (otherwise called a sucker pin) then the high percentage play would be toward the middle to back of the green. When deciding on your intended target area, you may also want to consider the slope of the green and the location that will give you the best opportunity to have a realistic and makable one or two putt. In short, you should decide and plan the best way to play every hole on the course to optimize score with your game. An excellent method for evaluating how to play a hole is to look at it from the green to the tee. That will give you a better perspective on the best locations to hit tee as well as approach shots.

A few final suggestions, carry the right clubs for your game and the course. Most high handicap players have a difficult time hitting the driver and long irons. Therefore, they may benefit from carrying additional fairway woods, which are easier to hit, and eliminating long irons such as a 2, 3 and 4-irons. As you progress in skill then incorporate the driver and long irons and add more wedges.

Furthermore, remember that your game plan is not written in stone. You may have to make adjustments because of unexpected variables that now come into play (e.g., weather conditions or current playing level). In addition, there may be different ways to play every hole. You must choose a strategy that fits your game at that moment.

As a real life example, there is a par 5 at a local course that I play frequently. It's a severe dogleg right with trees guarding both sides and lateral hazards straight away, left and right. From the back tees it is possible for a long high draw hitter to set up dead right, go up and over a gap in the trees, cut off much of the distance and leave a second shot approach within 170 yards almost assuring at least a birdie. Alternatively, if you can play a long high fade down the right side tree line you can cut off the corner and leave a second shot of approximately 200 yards also allowing you a chance to get home in two. A driver straight away will generally go into the hazard as will a miss with either of the two previously mentioned alternatives. To compound the matter further, the approach into the green is also surrounded with potential stroke grabbers. There is OB left,

a pond that runs along the right side starting at about 100 yards in to passed the green, a fairway and greenside bunker on the right side and the fairway is severely sloped from left to right feeding directly toward the bunkers and pond.

The high percentage play calls for a low to mid iron tee shot straight away passed the dogleg but this eliminates the possibility of reaching the green in two. Depending on the tee shot, a player may either lay up with a mid to low iron to just outside 100 yards, go for the green with a low iron or fairway wood or possibly have a low to mid iron in. If the player has an opportunity to go for the green, the smartest and safest play is to take it down the left side where again the severe left to right slope will kick the ball down to the green. Too far left or right, however, will cost at least one stroke. Needless to say there are a lot of different ways to play this hole. A player has to carefully think through what type of game that he or she has, how well he or she is playing, how aggressive he or she wants or needs to be and then make the wisest decision.

If you are a dedicated or aspiring golfer then I'm certain that you have been or will at some time be faced with all of these scenarios. With proper consideration and decision making you can greatly reduce the direct loss of strokes and thereby maximize your scoring potential.

Summary Points

- **Assess which situations typically cause you performance problems**
- **Prepare properly prior to events to optimize the chance of ideal play**
- **Develop well structured routines**
- **Navigate the course and choose your shots based on a thorough risk/reward analysis, how well you are playing, and your predominant ball flight**

Performance Journal

Date: _____

Course: _____

What did you do well in today's round?

What area(s) could you improve upon?

Did you have any negative thoughts or reactions today?

If so, what were they and what were the situations that caused them?

If so, what were the consequences of those actions?

If so, what would be a more productive way to handle those situations in the future?

What information about the course may be pertinent for future rounds?

Chapter 6

Recognizing the Impact of Other Life Management Factors

“A moment’s insight is sometimes worth a life’s experience.”

Oliver Wendall Holmes Sr.

Other than the typical performance variables that affect play, there are a number of other factors outside of sport that may also have an impact. These include sleep and nutritional habits, fitness levels, attitude, self-discipline, time management, and means of regular physical and mental recovery. Some of these I will cover in more depth than others.

Sleep

“[S]leep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”

Thomas Dekker

Sleep is a basic necessity of life. The average person gets less than 7 hours of sleep per night and of that, far less is quality sleep. Slow-wave, deep or delta wave sleep as it’s also known, plays a major role in the maintenance of our general health. It induces the growth, development and restoration of body tissue as well as facilitates the building of immunity properties. The important functions fulfilled by deep sleep are crucial to everyone in preparing the body for the daily challenges typically encountered. Slow-wave sleep is particularly important to children, who are still growing, athletes, who need to recover, and people who are ill. Lack of quality sleep results in physical and mental fatigue, irritability,

impaired memory, reduced reaction time and alertness and can also disrupt your sleep cycles. Naturally, no one can be expected to perform at his/her best under those circumstances.

Each of us has a different sleep level that we require to feel rested. Some can fully function on less than others. However, in general, the average person requires at least 8 hours of sleep to provide for optimal balance and alertness throughout the day. Youths, adolescents, athletes, older and ill persons may require up to 10 hours of sleep to provide the awareness and general health needed to perform at or near optimal levels. Regular exercise, proper nutrition, relaxation techniques and a proper mattress have all been linked to aiding the sleep process.

Here are some other suggestions:

- ✓ Develop a regular sleep and wake-up schedule and do not deviate too far on off days
- ✓ Keep your bedroom dark or wear eyeshades
- ✓ If you work nights keep your window coverings closed so that sunlight does not interfere with your sleep
- ✓ Keep your bedroom quiet
- ✓ Keep your bedroom cool

- ✓ Do not watch TV in bed
- ✓ Take a hot bath or shower before bedtime
- ✓ Avoid eating and caffeine within a few hours of bedtime
- ✓ Do not drink alcohol or smoke near bedtime
- ✓ Limit daytime naps to 1 hour or less
- ✓ If you are a bedtime worrier, schedule time earlier in the day to focus on problems
- ✓ If you are a light sleeper and awaken frequently, turn your clock around so you can't see it
- ✓ If you are a restless sleeper, consider using a sleep diary to help identify and eliminate possible triggers
- ✓ If you do not fall asleep in 30 minutes, get up and do something else until you get tired
- ✓ Do not rely on sleeping pills
- ✓ If sleep problems are chronic (lasting consecutively for 6 weeks or more), see your doctor. You may have a treatable sleep disorder.

Nutrition

“The spirit cannot endure the body when overfed, but, if underfed, the body cannot endure the spirit.”

St Frances de Sales

The diet that you choose is important for influencing your health, fitness, and sport-specific training objectives. Whether if it is to loose weight, increase endurance, or build muscle, the type, quality and quantity of foods that you eat along with the training regimen that you engage in impact the desired outcome. Depending on your age, level of activity, body size, gender, and objective, your diet may differ significantly.

The average athlete may consume somewhere between 2000 and 5000 calories a day consisting of roughly 60% carbohydrates, 25% fat, and 15% protein. Depending on age, gender, size, and objective, calorie intake and percentages will vary. If your objective is to lose weight, your calorie intake should be lower than your expenditure and consist of fewer saturated fats and complex carbohydrates. If your intent is to gain muscle then your diet should consist of higher amounts of protein, which can be obtained from foods like lean beef, chicken or turkey, fish, beans, peanut butter, and tofu, and your exercise regimen should be geared toward weight-training. If you participate in extensive workouts or training sessions then your calorie and carbohydrate intake may need to be higher to fuel your body, particularly if your diet is low in fat.

For the competitive athlete, a well-balanced breakfast rich in carbohydrates is important the morning of a competition. Avoid fatty or high protein foods. Eat foods high in carbohydrates at least an hour before the performance leaving adequate time for the food to digest. Further, hydrate well and regularly. Drinking enough fluids is one of the most important variables in sport nutrition. The typical person should drink eight glasses of water a day. A high-level athlete or exerciser, however, will need much more than that to regulate body temperature and lubricate joints. You should be drinking at least two glasses an hour to two before the competition or workout and then at minimum another glass 5 to 10 minutes immediately prior to. Additionally, if the training session or competition is lengthy and rigorous, you may need to continuously re-hydrate as well as potentially refuel throughout. Snacks are important and will enhance performance if you have extensive matches or workouts. Snacks high in carbohydrates such as fruits, vegetables, grains like cereals, bagels or pretzels, granola bars, or most sport nutrition bars are valuable sources of energy and protect against fatigue.

Like many players, you may find that large or high fatty meals before you play will bog you down as will the lack of acceptable hydration while you play. Although they may provide a quick fix, too much sugar or caffeine will make you jittery. Excessive amounts of alcohol will impair your judgment and motor skills. The point is that what you eat and drink can and often does impact play. Therefore, if your objective is to play at your best then it is important for you to

monitor as well as regulate your nutritional habits. If you have dietary questions or concerns, please consult a sport nutritionist or see the recommended readings at the end of the book.

If you are a high-level athlete then you may want to monitor which nutritional factors impact energy levels and play. Keep a journal. Ask yourself the following questions. Do you eat properly and hydrate before you play? Do you play better or worse after a large meal? How long afterwards did you start playing? What was the meals nutritional content? In other words was it a healthy meal or junk food? How do high sugary snacks or drinks affect your play? If you ingest large quantities of caffeine, nicotine or alcohol, how do they affect your performance? Or simply rate the quality of all these on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent) along with your performance. For example:

Quantity of meal before play:

Quality of meal before play:

Timing of meal before play:

Quantity of hydration before play:

Quality of hydration before play:

Timing of hydration before play:

Quantity of snacks/fluids during play:

Quality of snacks/fluids during play:

Timing of snacks/fluids during play:

Quantity of energy throughout:

Quality of mental/emotional performance:

Quality of physical performance:

Fitness

“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.”

Plato

A proper golf swing involves approximately a 90 degree shoulder and 45 degree hip turn, good posture with a slight bend at the hips and in the knees, starting the downswing with the lower body first, maintaining your upper body coil, an impact position with your head and upper body 'behind the ball' as the hips open, and maintaining spine angle throughout the follow through. Physical limitations in both strength and flexibility will inhibit your ability to execute these requirements. Improved flexibility helps reduce the frequency of injuries and improves distance. Strength training aids balance, stability and power. Increased cardiovascular activity enhances physical and mental endurance, thinking ability and promotes consistency.

Unequivocally, the most important factor for golfers is flexibility. Flexibility facilitates a wider range of motion and more power. Lack of flexibility, on the other hand, can lead to a host of injuries. Nearly seventy percent of all amateurs play with some sort of lower back ailment, which is most common injury for male amateurs, followed by the elbows, hands and wrists. Alternatively, women amateurs primarily suffer elbow injuries first and then back.

If a player does not properly stretch and warm-up the probability of sustaining an injury is greatly increased. A well-designed stretching program can help alleviate many injuries. Every golfer should take the time to make sure their muscles and tendons are loose and flexible before they step up to hit the first ball of the day. This is especially true for senior players, who don't warm up as easily as younger players.

Here are some basic and golf specific stretches to improve your flexibility and help prevent injuries.

Hammer Wrist: 1. Grip a golf club with your left hand and extend your left arm straight in front so the club and your thumb are pointed up. 2. Using your wrist only, slowly lower the club forward so that it is parallel to the floor. If you need to, choke down on the club. 3. Do 8-12 repetitions. 4. Repeat with your right hand.

Wrist Pronation/Supination: 1. Grip a golf club with your left hand and extend your left arm straight in front so the club and your thumb are pointed up. 2. Slowly rotate your wrist and forearm to the right until your palm is pointed down. If you need to, choke down on the club. 3. Return to the starting position and slowly rotate your wrist and forearm until your palm is pointed up. 4. Do 8-12 repetitions. 5. Repeat with your right hand.

Forearm Stretch: 1. Extend your leg arm straight in front to you with your palm facing out. 2. Grasp the fingers of your left hand with your right hand. 3. Gently pull your left hand in and hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 4. Repeat with your right arm.

Oblique Stretch: 1. Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. 2. Raise your arms laterally to the sides about shoulder height. 3. Gently extend your left forearm over your head while slightly leaning to the right side. 4. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 5. Repeat with the right forearm.

Toe Touches: 1. Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. 2. Raise your arms forward to about shoulder height. 3. Lean forward, extend your arms and reach for your toes. 4. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds.

Hamstring stretch: 1. Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. 2. Grasp behind your left knee with both hands and gently pull it towards your chest. 3. Extend your right leg so that it is now flat on the ground and hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 4. Repeat with your right leg.

Calf Stretch: 1. Place a small 2-3 inch high flat object (e.g., a book) approximately 2-3 feet from a wall. 2. Stand on the object with your feet together and your knees straight so that your toes are higher than your heels and your heels are touching the floor. 3. Lean forward towards the wall keeping your heels on the floor until you feel a mild stretch. 4. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds.

Shoulder Stretches: 1. Flex your left elbow 90 degrees and gently pull it with your right hand across your chest and under your chin. 2. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 3. Repeat with your right elbow. 4. Flex your left elbow 90 degrees and gently pull it with your right hand behind your left ear. 5. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 6. Repeat with your right elbow.

Shoulder and Hip Rotation Exercises: 1. Stand with your feet about shoulder width apart. 2. Raise your arms laterally to the sides about shoulder height. 3. Gently rotate your arms, shoulders and hips to the left side. 4. Hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 5. Repeat with your right side. 6. Do 3 repetitions.

1. Stand with your feet together and arms extended at shoulder height with hands clenched. 2. Rotate your upper body as far as you can. 3. Hold it for 30s and then switch to the other side. 4. Do 3 repetitions.

1. Stand feet together one to two feet from a wall with your back to it. 2. Rotate your upper body to one side and attempt place both hands on the wall. 3. Hold this position for 30s and then switch to the other side. 4. Do 3 repetitions.

1. Stand with your feet together, arms extended at shoulder height and a club straight out in front of you. 2. Rotate back and through keeping the club out in front of your chest. 3. Make 20 to 30 swings.

Hip and Lower Back Rotation: 1. Stand with your feet together one to two feet from the corner of a wall. 2. Extend your arms to about shoulder height and grab the corner. 3. Rotate your hips as far as you can and hold it for 30s. 4. Switch positions to the other side and repeat. 5. Do 3 repetitions.

Lower Trunk Rotations: 1. Lie on your back with both knees bent. 2. Put both knees and feet together. 3. Keep your back flat on the floor and gently move both knees to the left and hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 4. Move both knees to the right and hold that position for up to 30 seconds. 5. Do 3 repetitions.

Hip Turn: 1. Lie on your back with your legs extended. 2. Raise one knee to approximately 90 degrees. 3. With your opposite side arm grab and gently pull that knee across the other leg while keeping your shoulders flat on the ground. 4. Hold for 30s and then switch to the other side. 5. Do 3 repetitions.

Spine Angle Stability: 1. Grip a middle iron and assume your normal golf posture with slightly bent knees and a slight bend at hips. 2. Keep your abdominals tight, back very straight and chin up through the whole movement. 3. Raise the club and upper body straight up by unbending at the hips and then rotate to one side. 4. Return to the raised position and then bend at the hips to the original golf posture. 5. Repeat and rotate to the opposite side. 6. Do 10 to 15 repetitions.

If you are looking to add distance to your game then you may want to incorporate some type of strength in addition to flexibility training. With additional strength in the core muscle groups (i.e., abdominals, lower back and hamstrings) and shoulders you will be able to generate more clubhead speed with less effort. Strengthening the lower back and abdominal muscles is critical for an effective turning motion. If your abs are not strong enough you may compensate by coming over the top on the downswing thus resulting in a slice or pull. Quadricep and hamstring strength helps add balance and stability during the swing. Strengthening the calves adds push-off power in the downswing. Shoulder strength increases stability at the top of the swing. Strengthening the forearms and wrists add to better club control.

Here are some exercises to add strength to specific muscle groups. When performing these exercises it is widely recommended by golf fitness professionals that you utilize free weights such as dumbbells, exercise tubing, stability balls or medicine balls to attain maximum results. Furthermore, you should perform 2-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions for each exercise.

Wrist and Forearm Curls: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides, flex your elbows to 90 degrees so your palms are pointed up. 3. Slowly rotate your wrists until your palms are pointed in. 4. Return to the starting position and slowly rotate your wrists until your palms are pointed out.

Lateral Raises: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides and palms pointed in toward the body, raise your arms up to shoulder level and then down slowly to starting position.

Frontal Raises: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides and palms pointed toward the rear, raise your arms up to shoulder level and then down slowly to starting position.

Shoulder Shrugs: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides lift your shoulders up towards the ears while keeping the elbows straight and then down slowly to starting position.

Military Press: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. Raise your arms to shoulder height so that your elbows are flexed and palms are pointed up. 3.

Press the hands directly overhead until arms are fully extended and then down slowly to shoulder height.

Chest Flies: Lie flat on your back with a dumbbell in each hand and your arms straight out at 90 degrees to your body. 2. Keep your arms fairly straight, raise your hands directly above your chest and then down slowly to the floor.

Upright Rows: 1. Stand and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. Bend at the waist until your upper body is 90 degrees, your arms are hanging straight down, palms pointed toward the rear and slightly flex your knees. 3. Bend your elbows, pull your hands straight up towards your chest and shoulders and then down slowly until your arms are extended.

Abdominal Crunches: 1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. 2. Place your arms across your chest, flex your neck and slowly raise your shoulders off the floor. 3. Hold and then slowly uncurl back to the starting position. For additional resistance, you may want to hold a dumbbell or medicine ball.

Oblique Crunches: 1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. 2. Place your arms across your chest, flex your neck and slowly raise your left shoulder off the floor and move it towards your right knee. 3. Hold and then slowly uncurl back to the starting position. 4. Repeat with your right shoulder. For additional resistance, you may want to hold a dumbbell or medicine ball.

Lunges: 1. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides take one step forward with the left

leg, flexing both knees until the left knee is 90 degrees. 3. Return slowly to the starting position and repeat with your right leg.

Squats: 1. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and hold a dumbbell in each hand. 2. With your arms at your sides bend straight down until your knees are 90 degrees and then return slowly to the starting position.

Calf Raises: 1. Place a small 2-3 inch high flat object (e.g., a book) on the floor. 2. Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your arms at your sides. 3. Stand on the object with your feet close together and your knees straight so that your toes are higher than your heels and your heels are touching the floor. 4. Raise your body by pressing your toes and balls of your feet downward and return slowly to the starting position.

A few words of caution: Do not sacrifice flexibility for increasing strength or building muscle mass. It will limit your range of motion thereby reducing power and increasing the chance of muscle pulls. More specifically, strength training without stretching produces tight muscles coupled with restricted movement. Restricted movement in the upper and lower body reduces coil or torque and thereby diminishes power and distance. Furthermore, if you are a beginner then start your regimen with light resistance. Perform each exercise slowly and carefully. Stop immediately if you experience any pain and do not increase the resistance unless you can correctly and easily complete the maximum number of repetitions recommended.

Golfers can also benefit from cardiovascular exercises, which help maintain energy and focus throughout the round, particularly if they are walking and carrying a bag. Regardless, adequate cardiovascular endurance is a necessity to stay sharp and play at your best. Which types and how much are recommended is a matter of your age, capability and overall fitness levels. Higher intensity activities such as jogging or swimming may not be appropriate for the elderly, poorly conditioned or those with heart problems. In this case, low to moderate intensity walking or bicycling for a few hours a week may initially be more suitable until endurance levels are raised. For those with good health then 20 to 40 minutes of moderately intensive aerobic activity 2-3 a week should suffice. The cardiovascular exercise will not only help you feel and play better on the course but it will also facilitate weight loss. For more detailed fitness information, find yourself a qualified trainer that is familiar with the needs of golfers, assessing skills, and designing an appropriate improvement program.

Self-Discipline

“There is no allurements or enticement, actual or imaginary, which a well-disciplined mind may not surmount. The wish to resist more than half accomplishes the object.”

Charlotte Dacre

Lack of self-discipline is the main ingredient in the recipe for failure. To have the greatest opportunity for success in any endeavor an individual must be able to self-control their thoughts, emotions and actions. One must be able to resist negative impulses and other destructive influences, say no, make

constructive decisions and take action. Without self-discipline, individuals tend to make excuses to justify their attitudes, behaviors and problems and consequently develop bad habits.

To be a more disciplined person you must first accept responsibility for the decisions that you make and the actions that you take. You must learn to recognize the situations in which you generally make a poor decision and then develop alternative methods for dealing with those types of situations in the future. It takes a deep-rooted inner desire for the attainment of your goals, conscious awareness, effort as well as persistence to overcome bad habits. To ultimately succeed you must replace bad habits with more productive ones. I'll be discussing specific techniques for improving each of these areas a little later in the chapters that follow.

Perception and Attitude

"I had played so poorly recently, I started thinking that maybe I should do something else. Then I saw my friends going to work everyday and realized that my life wasn't so bad."

Steve Pate

The world that you experience depends largely on the way that you perceive it. Perception of reality is sometimes distorted. Perception is influenced by socially instilled beliefs, in others words what others tell you, you've seen or heard, as well as the interpretation of your own past experiences and their outcome. An attitude is developed when the outcome of an experience is congruent with the social myth and/or when multiple comparable experiences

produce the similar consequences. This often results in the same expectation or thought being repeated over and over to oneself, particularly when faced with a similar type of situations in the future.

What most individuals don't realize is that it's their negative attitude that's largely responsible for the negative quality of their experiences. The negative experiences that have been accumulated through life coupled with what others have suggested about them or the improbability of success convince the average person that they can't succeed. When faced with forthcoming pressure situations the subconscious program for the stress reaction and failure kicks in, the individual will likely mentally rehearse their own previous failures or any number of the common socially accepted misperceptions about success and consequently self-fulfill the prophesy or avoid the situation all together. Repeating negative phrases generates anxiety and/or anger and is a counterproductive distraction to productive focus and optimal performance. It acts as a self-hypnotic program and shuts down your natural capacity to overcome obstacles. This is precisely why the outcome often matches the expectation.

Our attitudes shape our internal dialog and behavior. If the attitude becomes deeply ingrained it becomes a habit. If you think that you can you will. If you think that you can't you won't. If an attitude is negative or counter-productive it can be removed through the effort of regularly generating opposite, positive and more productive thoughts. In fact, the only salient method for changing an attitude is learning how to change your thoughts or directly controlling the

outcome of the experience itself. New attitudes are capable of creating new behaviors, which in turn can produce real and lasting results. A good attitude may not correct mechanical flaws but it will give you the best opportunity to score with the game that you have that day. Furthermore, believing in yourself and having a positive attitude when things are not going your way is one of the only ways to turn it around and salvage a round.

To increase the likelihood of changing outcomes from negative to positive you should reprogram your mind with positive messages about your ability and potential. Cognitive restructuring is a method by which thoughts, attitudes and ultimately behaviors are changed. It is one of the only salient methods for changing a person's disposition. Visualization, affirmations, and self-hypnosis are techniques for restructuring cognitions. They are powerful tools for mentally switching tracks so that opportunities can be approached with energy and confidence. Positive attitude, self-talk, affirmations, visualization and self-hypnosis will be discussed in further detail shortly.

Time Management

"Time is what we want most, but... what we use worst."

William Penn

Time may be the most valuable commodity that we all possess. It's one of the few things that we can't save, recover or replace. More importantly, it's essential for the accomplishment of any task. Therefore, it is imperative that you learn how to utilize it effectively and efficiently. The

three requisite keys to time management are: 1) planning, 2) prioritizing; and 3) concentrating single-mindedly on one thing at a time. Here are some suggestions for getting the most out of the time that you have.

It is often said that “1 hour of planning saves 10 hours of doing.” Plan your day, every day, either the night before or morning of. A simple plan consists of a list of all the items that you ideally might want to accomplish during that day. Prioritize those items in the order of their importance and set corresponding deadlines. If you have difficulty prioritizing then here is a simple technique. Go down your list and eliminate one out of every two. With the remaining list perform the same procedure and so on until you come up with one. The final item is your number one priority. Go back to the original list, excluding your number one priority, and repeat the process again and again. Write out your priorities as well as the details of accomplishing them. In other words, devise a plan of action; a list of ordered activities to carry out that leads to the fulfillment of the objective. Without a plan, you will likely spend most of your time in neutral or allow yourself to be consumed with other distractions.

Begin the most important item first, do something to get your project started, take the necessary steps to complete it and then go to the next most important item, and so on. Starting is the hardest part. Once started everything generally begins to flow. It is unlikely that all items on the list will be completed, but that is fine. Success has little to do with how much was left undone at the end of the day but rather, what was actually accomplished. Most importantly, if you

regularly take action and continue with the process you will eventually complete all your objectives.

Alternatively, some people rather allocate specific amounts and time periods each day, week or month to the necessary activities. In other words, they create a schedule and calendar. The key to the success of this method is for you to plan your day in advance, specifically schedule a fixed time period for a particular activity or task and then discipline yourself to stick to it.

Over-plan your day a little. "Parkinson's Law" teaches that, "a project tends to take the time allocated for it." If you give yourself one thing to do during the day, it will likely take all day to complete it. If you give yourself two things to do during the day, you will likely accomplish both. If you give yourself ten things to do during the day, you may not get all of them done, but you will get most of them accomplished. Then you can then move the few undone items forward to the next day and still feel a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

Be cautious, however, not to over-plan your day. You're only human. Things do take a certain amount of time. If you over-plan your day too much, you will likely feel frustrated at the end of the day looking at all the stuff that you didn't get done, overlooking what you did achieve and lose motivation to continue.

Furthermore, don't try to take on too much too quick, over do it or spread yourself too thin. Focus single-mindedly on one thing at a time. If you try to do ten things at once you will not be effective. You will see little progress in the short-term and will subsequently lose motivation.

Be ready and accepting to shift priorities when and if necessary. The "20/80 Rule" indicates that we will typically accomplish 80% of our results through 20% of our activities. The other 20% of additional results comes from about 80% of additional effort. Therefore, regularly evaluate the return on your time investment and activities and make adjustments when necessary.

Use your time wisely. The average American watches 28 hours of television per week and sends and receives 190 email messages per day. Cut down on frivolous time consumers like TV and going through email, and use that time to read, write or something else to further your development.

Get up a little earlier and get started before you encounter distractions. Minimize interruptions and distractions when you are working. The average person gets 1 interruption every 8 minutes, or approximately 7 an hour, or 50-60 per day. The average interruption takes 5 minutes, totaling about 4 hours or 50% of the average workday. 80% of those interruptions are typically rated as "little value" or "no value" creating approximately 3 hours of wasted time per day. Turn off the TV, radio, phone, beeper, etc. Find a quiet place where you can be by yourself. Put up a do not disturb sign and focus on completing the task.

Delegate or ask for help when and if needed. Delegation is an unlimited method to multiply time for achieving results. The hardest part about delegation is simply letting go and overcoming the controlling notion of "if I want to get a job done right, I have to do it myself."

Make every minute count. The average person spends 35 minutes per day commuting. Most individuals spend that time listening to garbage on the radio. There are a plethora of valuable self-help audio programs on the market. Why not use that time to educate yourself. The same can generally be said for flights. Use that time to plan, visualize, read, write or listen to educational material. By taking 1 hour per day for independent study, 7 hours per week, 365 hours in a year, one can learn at the rate of a full-time student. In 3-5 years, the average person can become an expert in the topic of their choice, by spending only one hour per day. As another example, if you take 5 minutes per day, 5 days per week to improve yourself, you will create 1,200 little improvements over a 5 year period.

Maintain equilibrium by dedicating time to each of the Seven Vital Areas of Life Balance: Health, Family, Financial, Intellectual, Social, Professional, and Spiritual. If you grossly neglect any one of these areas, never mind two or three, you will eventually sabotage your success. Much like a car, if one tire is out of balance, it makes the entire car shake. If you neglect your health, you may not be able to spend quality time or experiences with your family. If your professional life is out of balance, you may not have the financial resources for a fulfilling social life, etc. You do not necessarily have to spend time every day in each area or equal amounts of time in each area. But if in the long run, you spend a sufficient quantity and quality of time in each, your life will be in balance.

In short, do more of the things that work. Identify the activities that generate the highest return on your time, refine them, get better at them or do more of them. Eliminate or do less of things that don't work. You'll have much more time when you eliminate the work, tasks, projects, and people that take up your time, but don't give you value for your investment.

From a golf perspective this means allocating enough time to the appropriate activities that are going to facilitate your improvement. Monitor how you spend your time. How much do you practice versus play? Is either enough for you to reach your goal and is the time allocated appropriately? How much time are you spending on each facet of your game? Is it allocated appropriately? What percentage of practice time are you focused versus wasting it by socializing or going through the motions? Far too often I see players misappropriate their practice time, which I'll discuss in further detail later.

Finally, be realistic about your rate of improvement if you do not have sufficient time to practice. No one has ever gotten to scratch by practicing only a few hours a week. It takes more time than that. If you do not have enough the time to practice, you have to scale back your expectations.

Stress Management/Recovery

"... stress without recovery can kill you. So you have to balance stress with recovery."

Dr. James Loehr

Health problems, financial difficulties, conflicts at work, home, school or in relationships, extensive training regimens, external pressure to perform as well

as the normal day-to-day rigors of life may all qualify as significant sources of stress. The degree to which they impact a person's life, and in this case their game, may vary depending on the coping strategies and recovery mechanisms or lack thereof that one does or doesn't employ.

You only have so much physical, mental and emotional energy. The mind and body can only handle so much before they need to be recharged. Time off and rest are requisite for proper mental and physical preparation as well as recovery. In addition to food, water and sleep, regular relaxation is essential for a long life and personal daily effectiveness. Therefore, here are some suggestions for physical and mental recovery.

Take time off every week. All work and no play not only make Jack a dull boy but it also leads to burnout and a shortened lifespan. If you are an aspiring professional, make sure that you schedule at least one day off a week away from golf and do something else that you find enjoyable, like spending time with family or friends, engaging in other types of physical activity, going to the beach, an amusement park, a ball game, or the movies, taking a nature walk, doing yard work, crafts or other means of artistic creation like painting, poetry or writing.

Additionally, it is highly beneficial that you participate in some type of daily recovery exercise. There are several difference exercises listed in the section on relaxation techniques. I would encourage you to take at least 15-20 minutes a day doing either one of these or others activities that you find relaxation, preferably before bedtime. In substitution to the traditional relaxation techniques

discussed later some individuals like to listen to music, read, or take a nice warm bath, shower, Jacuzzi or sauna.

Incorporate micro-breaks into the day, meaning at regular intervals throughout the day take 5 minutes to perform some breathing or visualization exercises. In addition to your yearly vacation, take mini-vacations a few times a year. Go off on a two or three day get-away and leave everything behind. Most importantly, when you are engaged in recovery time make sure that your mind stays there. Discipline yourself to shut off thoughts centered on work, school, or golf if that's your job.

Summary Points

- **Assess the influence of outside variables such as sleep, nutrition, fitness, attitude, self-discipline, time management as well as recovery on your performance and daily functioning.**
- **Make sure that you are getting adequate quality sleep**
- **Develop a proper diet for your objectives**
- **Incorporate fitness training for overall health and well-being.**
- **Discipline yourself to develop more productive habits**
- **Your attitude determines your rate of success**
- **Manage your time more effectively**
- **Integrate physical, mental and emotional recovery time into your daily, weekly and yearly regimen**

Weekly Development Checklist

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=very poor, 5=average, 10=Excellent), rate your quality of accomplishment in each one of the goal areas listed below on a daily basis. Also, at the end of the week answer the journal questions below.

Life Mgmt. Factors	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Overall
Sleep								
Nutrition								
Fitness								
Self-Discipline								
Attitude								
Time Mgmt								
Stress Mgmt/Recovery								
Performance								

What did you do well this past week in competition and/or practice?

Describe in detail a moment of superior performance and what your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were in that instance.

What area(s) could you improve upon?

What will you do this next week to improve those areas?

Chapter 7

Implementing Performance Enhancement and Emotional Control Techniques

“I never prayed that I would make a putt. I prayed that I would react well if I missed.”

Chi Chi Rodriguez

So by this time, you must be asking yourself, well if these things affect my performance then what do I do about it. In this next chapter I am going to explain some of the common psychological principles and techniques that pros, sport psychologists, and all other high-level athletes use to help themselves self-regulate. Keep in mind, however, that each of the techniques described takes practice just like the physical part of the game and without a conscious and dedicated effort, the results will not follow.

Emotional Control

“Out-of-control emotions can make smart people stupid.”

Byron Nelson

It is commonly accepted that thoughts manifest emotional reactions, which in turn influence behaviors. In learning to control your thoughts and emotions it is important that understand that emotional reactions in pressure situations are normal; it is a biologically conditioned response that was ingrained long ago when humans were first learning how to deal with the environment. Remember,

however, that it is not the emotions themselves that impact performance but how you interpret and react to them. Even the pros get nervous, have occasional negative thoughts, hit bad shots, and get upset. What differentiates them from the average player are their reactions. When they get in pressure situations, they understand that this is a natural part of the competitive process. They try to interpret the feelings that arise as excitement rather than nervousness. It represents a cue that tells them that the situation is important and that they should get ready. They take it as a challenge to completely focus, stick to their routines and put forth their best effort. The average player allows him/herself to be consumed by feelings of nervousness and consequently has thoughts like “don’t screw up”, “don’t hit it in the water” or “don’t miss this putt,” which are counterproductive distractions away from productive focus.

Similarly, after a bad shot, the average player gets frustrated or angry and has thoughts like “I suck,” “I can’t hit the ball today” and “now my whole round is ruined.” They subsequently dwell on these types of distracting thoughts, carry them into upcoming shots, and consequently fulfill the prophecy because they are not focused on hitting the shot and they convince themselves that they cannot do it. Alternatively, elite players know that there is absolutely nothing that they can do about the results of the previous shot; they cannot replay it. Therefore, they put the shot behind them, and instead begin to focus on what they can do on the next shot to salvage the hole. These are very different ways of thinking which make a profound difference on the ensuing result.

Positive Attitude

"Most golfers prepare for disaster. A good golfer prepares for success."

Bob Toski

Right thinking is the first step in mental, emotional and physical health. You think positively by replacing negative thoughts with positive self-statements and actions. By deliberately changing your mood, expectations, attitude and basically your internal cognitions you increase the probability of success. Attitude is a personal choice. Successful individuals see setbacks as temporary, don't take them personally, don't beat themselves up, and don't let them become a focal point. Instead, they concentrate on what they can do and they move on. Likewise, where the average player sees difficult shots as an intimidating problem, a better player sees it as an opportunity to demonstrate skill or pull off the miraculous.

Think of problems as an opportunity to learn and grow. Broaden your interpretations. Attempt to look at things from a different perspective. It is a different way of thinking; a different attitude that produces superior results.

Here a few other suggestions to help maintain a positive attitude. Focus on the present and future rather than on the past. Keep the big picture in mind. Focus on where you want to be, what you want to do, how you are going to do it, visualize it, make a plan and then take action.

Focus on solutions rather than problems. Construct alternative ways of overcoming obstacles as they arise. Write down a list of potentials solutions on

paper. If you've tried plan A on different occasions and it doesn't work then go to plan B, C or so on. Eventually you will find an adequate solution.

Assume the something good is going to come out of challenges. At minimum, it's an opportunity to learn and grow. The more knowledge one possesses about the inappropriate manner in which to handle obstacles then the more likely an alternative plan is to be a better solution.

Self-Talk

"Tiger, come on now, you've still got work to do. This round and golf tournament are not over. Hang in there and finish the race."

Tiger Woods (1997 Masters)

It has been estimated that nearly 75% of all our self-talk on a daily basis is negative. With all those negative expectations preoccupying and consuming our thoughts and ultimately controlling our behaviors it's no wonder that most individuals fail considerably more than they succeed.

Your internal and overt verbal dialog shapes the way you practice and play. If you keep repeating to yourself long enough that you are incapable of doing something, it eventually becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. By repeatedly telling yourself that you can't do something you program your mental pathways to reject attempting it and thereby guarantee no possibility of success. Your mind accepts what you reiterate as factual.

Your body responds to negative self-talk from deep down inside your mind. At the moment you become aware, reverse its affect by counter-programming your subconscious with the statements opposite. When you learn

to catch yourself mentally just before or while in the process of the negative talk and replace it with the opposite positive statement, you allow your own inherent recovery potential to surface and possibly flourish.

Avoid negative self-talk at all costs. When negative self-talk arises, convert it into positive words or phrases. For example, rephrase “don’t hit it into the water” to “hit it 20 yards right of the bunker on the left side of the fairway.” Or “don’t miss this putt” to “hit it six inches off the right edge.” Your targets should be specific and your self-talk should be phrased in a way that you are telling yourself what it is that you want to do opposed to what you don’t want to do. When you say “don’t do something,” the only thing that your mind and body hears and understands is the key words in the phrase like “water” or “miss.” When you think about what not to do, it creates that image in your mind, which your body will then respond to and produce. Therefore, you are actually increasing the chance that you will do exactly what it is you are trying to avoid doing. On the other end of the spectrum, you may grossly overcompensate. It is much more advantageous to say “hit it to the middle of the green” or “keep it in fairway.”

Whenever possible, try to rephrase statements into one or two key words or a short phrase. For example, you may start by saying “hit it 20 yards right of the bunker on the left side of the fairway” and then transform it into “right of the bunker” and “hit it six inches off the right edge” into “six inches right edge.” Shorter phrases are more deliberate as well as easier to remember and repeat. Repeat the word, words, or phrases over and over to yourself just prior to

execution. This will keep your mind focused on what it is you are trying to accomplish as well as prevent negative thoughts from creeping in. You can't think about two different things at the same time. So your one thought better be a productive one. Here are some other examples of typical self-talk:

Positive Self-talk

Stay calm; this is not life or death.

What's done is done. One shot at a time.

A couple of cleansing breathes and I'll be fine.

I had a bad day. I've played better before and will do so again in the future.

My swing is my swing. I can't change it. No one will be watching it that carefully.

No one will ever care if I don't get off the first tee. Their only thought will be "better him than me."

Hang in there. Believe in yourself. Stay on task.

One round at a time. One hole at a time. One shot at a time.

Play the percentages.

Negative self-talk

I have to nail this drive or I'm done!

I'll be so depressed if I lose this match.

If any of those putts would have went in this match would be over by now.

I'm so nervous and tight! I can't wait to get this over with.

I'm horrible. I can't do anything right.

My swing is so ugly. I wonder what others will think.

I'll be so embarrassed if I don't get off the first tee.

I really hope that everyone watching is impressed with my game.

I'm dead. This shot is impossible. I don't have a chance.

I would encourage you to construct a positive self-talk regimen as a pre-competitive strategy, as well as to incorporate it into your pre-shot and post-shot routines. For example, as you approach your shot and prepare to execute you may say "I have this shot," "This is in" or "I've got this one" and then let it fly. Or after bad shots you might say "how interesting," "that's funny" or "that's unusual," quickly analyze what caused it, take a few practice swings until you feel a good one and then move on. Constructing a self-talk regimen helps quiet the mind

from thinking about past or future results or mechanics and will help improve concentration and results.

Finally, positive self-talk can also be used as a means of correcting mechanical errors. When you recognize a specific mechanical error such as swinging too hard, it may help if you continuously remind yourself “slow down” ... “swing easy” ... “tempo.” Or to improve technique you may have swing thoughts like “extend down the line,” “left shoulder under” and “excel through impact.” Similarly, on putts you might repeat to yourself to “keep your head down” ... “head still” ... “smooth stroke.” Technical self-talk, however, is a poor performance strategy. It often acts as mental interference and inhibits the body from doing what it naturally knows and has been trained how to do. Therefore, technical self-talk should be used as an instructional technique in practice only and not a performance tactic. Use feel, target or confidence thoughts during rounds such as ‘smooth,’ “loose,” “right side of the fairway,” “beneath the pin,” “I’ve got this shot” or “target.”

Like most of the points in this book, it is of the utmost importance that you identify, recognize and take action against things that may be detrimental to your performance. Therefore, let’s begin by identifying any situation specific negative thoughts and then develop a plan for controlling them.

Identifying and Restructuring Negative Self-Talk Exercise

List any negative self-statements that you typically make to yourself before competition begins. For example, "I hope I do not screw-up today."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List any negative self-statements that you typically make to yourself after unforced errors or when play is going poorly. For example, "I'm terrible."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List any negative self-statements that you typically make to yourself when way ahead or when play is going extremely well. For example, "Don't blow it."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List any negative self-statements that you typically make to yourself at critical moments in the competition. For example, "Don't screw-up now."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Rationalize the accuracy and validity of negative statements and beliefs. In other words, is it absolutely true? In most cases the answer to that question is no. Just reflect on how many times you have done things well, dealt with distractions and setbacks and succeeded.

Next, reverse each of these statements and convert them into positive phrases. For example, "I hope I do not screw-up today" into "I am going to play well today" or "Don't blow it" to "Stay focused."

Negative Statement**Positive Statement**

Repeat each of the positive phrases over to yourself three times.

Changing long-ingrained ways of thinking takes time, but you don't have to wait until you have completely stopped your negative thoughts to change your attitude. Instead, you can use your awareness of old self-talk patterns to alert you to switch your mental track to more successful language. Once you have done this several times, positive situational self-talk will become stronger, easier to initiate and old self-talk will slowly disappear.

Affirmations

"The more I practice, the luckier I get."

Gary Player

Affirmations are self-statements made to increase one's positive thought processes, attitudes, and behaviors. An affirmation is an instruction that you send through your conscious mind into your subconscious mind. You can't

communicate with the subconscious directly, at least not through ordinary language. You can, however, reach it by flooding the conscious with simple positive statements. The conscious mind programs the subconscious mind. Affirmations have the power to program your mind to shift to your Ideal Performance State (IPS). The IPS is mostly a mental state and mental states are highly susceptible to affirmations. Affirmations repeated often constantly remind you of your objective. Affirmations fill the spaces where negative thoughts and phrases might have become dominant. They replace and take over false beliefs and can lead to empowered action.

To be effective, statements should be positive, not negative in nature, detailed, and believable. One way to devise appropriate statements is to reflect on past positive experiences and structure the statements to the present. In other words, restructure “I was ...” to “I am ...” Another way to construct them is to create a wish list of dispositional, attitudinal, behavioral, emotional, or cognitive characteristics, again writing them as present or desired attributes. Statements should be realistic. Avoid absolute and perfectionist statements such as “I must ...,” “I always ...” or “I never ...” Listed below are numerous examples of golf specific affirmations. You can choose from the extensive list below or construct them according to your own needs.

Golf Specific Affirmations

I focus on my own game rather than what others are doing.

I practice putting immediately before a round of golf.

I seek outside advice from a professional when I am struggling.

Bunker shots are one of the strengths of my game.

Putting is one of the strengths of my game.

Before each stroke I visualize where I want the ball to finish.
I play best under the pressure of competition.
I regularly read, watch or listen to instructional resources to improve my game.
I play at least one practice round before a major competition.
I easily reproduce shots I have just visualized.
Short-iron play is one of the strengths of my game.
I am highly consistent in the way that I play the same hole from round to round.
I am a consistent putter.
Before putting I visualize my stroke and the ball rolling into the hole.
I am energized and focused before a round of golf.
When driving off the tee, I make a smooth stroke and play for position.
I stay positive and focused when I'm playing poorly.
I practice the specific techniques that will improve my play in competition.
I am extremely focused and resilient in competition.
I perform a cost/benefit analysis before choosing every shot.
I am a mentally tough competitor in golf.
I execute at least one practice swing before every stroke to generate the right feel.
I make sure that all the necessary equipment is packed before each round.
My golf swing is well grooved.
My actions are automatic when I'm playing a shot.
I'm on automatic pilot when playing well.
I learn about golf by watching professionals play in major events.
I adopt the habits of professional players.
I am highly interested in and motivated to do what ever it takes to improve my game.
I mentally rehearse each shot before I play it.
I calculate all variables before choosing my target.
I am a good competitor when playing golf.
I directly or indirectly work on my game even when I am not playing.
During competition I easily move past mistakes and stay in the present.
I play conservatively if I am unsure about my ability to make the shot.
I am confident that my clubs can get the job done.
I have a consistent golf swing.
I am highly focused when playing a shot.
Before playing a shot I work out carefully where I intend to place it.
I go back to basics if I feel like I've lost my touch.
I am good at reading greens.
I have a consistent pre-shot routine.
When driving off the tee I sometimes sacrifice distance for accuracy.
I have given a lot of thought as to how best to play each hole on my home course.
The more frequently I play the more that my handicap drops.
I get a lot of satisfaction from seeing the results of my hard work.

I am calm and collected under the pressure of competition.
I am consistent in the distance that I hit my irons.
I am physically fit relative to others my age.
I play to the heart of the green when there are numerous hazards nearby.
I like to play with players that are better than me.
I am confident when playing competitively.
After a round of golf I can remember vividly every shot that I played.
Playing more often would thrill me.
I regularly do whatever it takes to improve my performance.
I always try to do my best.
I properly assess the risks versus the rewards before choosing my shot.
I am patient on the course and let little bother me.
The ball often finishes very near to my target.
After hitting a poor shot, I quickly assess what caused it, correct it and move on.
My self-talk during competition is often positive.
When playing a shot, I focus on the target and swing instinctively with little conscious effort.
I stay within myself during a competition.
Little that others say or do affects me.
In competition I stick to what I can do rather than trying new shots.
My golf score at my home course is within a consistent range round after round.
My swing is so automatic that I could drive from the tee almost as well blindfolded as sighted.
I select the right club for the type of shot that I am executing.
My golf equipment is well fitted and reliable.
I am often enthusiastic and confident before hitting off the first tee.
I putt the ball and listen for it to hit the bottom of the cup without ever lifting my head.
I enjoy playing with all types of players.
I challenge myself at new course often.
I regularly perform basics checks to insure proper setup, alignment, swing plane and tempo.
Whenever possible I bump and run the ball rather than play a lofted shot.
I am confident of my ability to play at my current handicap.
I use a new ball every time I play in a golf competition.
I have a happy-go-lucky attitude when playing golf.
I am always trying to reduce my golf handicap.
I properly stretch and warm-up before a round of golf.
I make adjustments to my equipment and game whenever necessary.
When I play golf my concentration is unshakable.
I treat major competitions the same as any other round.
I am confident in hitting woods from the fairway.
I am extremely loose and relaxed during competition.
I am confident that I will beat others in competition.

I scale my practice and playing time in accordance with my desired level of achievement.

My long irons and woods are accurate.

My putting stroke is smooth and deliberate.

I am consistent in driving from the tee.

I perform better when I am comfortable and relaxed.

Compared to other types of events, I play well when competing.

Accuracy is a strength of my game.

I am confident, self-disciplined and mentally strong.

I am physically relaxed and focused when competing.

I focus only on positive thoughts and expectations.

I focus on playing one shot at a time and only on things within my control.

I back off of shots when things do not feel right or I have a bad thought.

I accept that a shot does not need to be perfect to be adequate.

I recognize errors, correct them and then move on.

In between shots I mentally conserve energy and relax by singing my song, thinking about something funny or relaxing, or talking with playing partners.

I am patient and take things as they come.

I have a predetermined objective for every practice session.

I give 100% focus and effort during practice.

Develop a list of your own personal objectives and write them on index cards. Review the cards at least three times a day. Read them in the morning, mid-day and just before you close your eyes at night. Look at yourself in a mirror and repeats the words out loud. Take the cards with you to practices and/or competitions and review them periodically, particularly when an adverse event occurs. The more that you say them, the more that they will seep into your subconscious mind. The constant reminder of what to do correctly will replace negative reactions and influences, rewire your brain and eventually make the desire behaviors automatic. And since you'll be saying them so often, you'll soon begin to believe them. That's how most beliefs start, periodic repetition of thought. Your attitudes will then change your emotions and will dictate your actions and steer your game in the direction that you want it to go.

Attention, Concentration and Focus

"The secret of concentration is the secret of self-discovery. You reach inside yourself to discover your personal resources, and what it takes to match the challenge."

Arnold Palmer

To consistently hit the ball well you have to be single minded. You must be impervious to distractions and immune to thoughts that can make your swing fall to pieces. If you allow something to break your concentration and upset your rhythm or tempo, you are in deep trouble. For example, if you are focused on the hazards immediately before executing a shot your body will tighten up. Any perceived danger triggers the body to tense. It's a biologically conditioned response. High-level players focus on specific targets. High handicappers generally focus on mechanics, hazards or potential negative results.

Competitors are constantly faced with potential auditory or visual distractions. Where you decide to direct and allocate your attention has a tremendous impact on the quality of play. What you direct your visual, auditory and/or tactile attention to determines what you think about and how you react.

Most individuals intensely focus on what they are doing only about 1/3 of the time. The majority of their attention is preoccupied with socializing, distracting thoughts, personal problems, or previous or future experiences. You can't do two things at once, at least not well. When you split your attention you cut your effectiveness in half. Therefore, by merely paying conscious attention to what

you should be doing or want to do, while you are doing it, you will double your effectiveness or efficiency.

There are four different attentional states (internal, external, broad, and narrow). An internal state indicates that you are consciously paying attention to yourself (your thoughts and feelings). An external focus suggests that you are paying attention to things around you. The sights and sounds generated from the crowd or your opponent for example. A broad perspective would point out that you are taking in a lot of general details whereas a narrow one means you are fixated on something specifically. Certain situations call for particular types of attentional states if an athlete is to perform at peak levels.

Learn to direct your auditory and visual attention between these four fields. The psychological awareness exercise discussed earlier was an example of narrow internal focus. Next, try a narrow external perspective. Focus on a specific object and/or sound. Try to block out everything except the one thing you are focusing on. See how long you can maintain concentration on the specifics. Now let's move to a more broad perspective. Let your vision and hearing expand and try to notice everything that is going on around you. List how many things you see and hear in a minute. Before shots, it is beneficial to engage in a broad external perspective so that you recognize and take into account any outside variables that may affect the shot. During shots, it is more beneficial to have a narrow external focus. The only things that matter are your target and the ball. After poor shots, you may want to scan yourself for unproductive thoughts or

feelings (narrow internal) and correct them. Between shots, you should relax and let your attention wane (broad internal or external). If you allow yourself to become distracted and misappropriate your attention at crucial moments, you are more likely to commit errors.

The shut eyes drills suggested earlier are effective methods for learning how to direct your attention and for increasing self and kinesthetic awareness. Essentially, it blocks out your primary means of information gathering (i.e., vision) and allows you to direct and allocate your attention to other senses that may be more important to the objective, such as feeling the correct stroke. It brings perception closer to reality. Creating a “feel” state brings you closer to achieving the desired outcome.

Cues and Triggers

“When it's breezy, hit it easy.”

Davis Love, Jr.

Once you have determined what your typical internal dialog is and/or should be, as well as any physical or strategic limitations that may be causing you performance problems, it is important that you have some way of consistently reinforcing the proper reactions to help you change these potentially destructive habits.

A cue, or trigger as it is sometimes called, is anything that reminds you to do something. It can be a physical symbol, an action or a verbal statement. For example, one of the physical cues that I've used with many of my clients is have

them write a big “R” on their golf gloves beneath the “V” where their index finger and thumb meet. One client would periodically get quick in his decision making and execution, particularly when play was going poorly or very well. This quickness frequently cost him strokes. Another client regularly failed to do a proper risk/reward shot selection analysis, made bad decisions and it often cost him strokes. The “R” was a symbol and reminder to follow their individual pre-shot routines. And it was placed in a spot where they saw it on virtually every shot. Needless to say, their behaviors and scores gradually improved with the regular reminder of proper assessment and execution.

I’ve also utilize physical and action cues to help clients that have dwelling or anger management issues. These included include wearing an elastic band on a wrist and automatically snapping it after a bad shot or alternatively, slapping their thigh. This action reminds them to initiate their post-error routine, which may include something like rationalizing it, laughing it off and automatically start thinking about how they are going to recover on the next shot to salvage the hole or they may quickly analyze the error, take a few practice swings to feel and visualize the intended shot and then immediately engage in a mind clearing exercise like singing a song. Some players will use a forward press of their club to initiate a shot. The press signifies something like “clear your mind, focus on execution, be loose and let it happen.”

If physical symbols, words or phrases are used then it is imperative that they be situated in a place where you will regularly see them. Here are some

suggestions for other possible locations. Write cues on a note card and place them in the same pocket as your tee and ball marker. Write them on your scorecard before the round, on the yardage book if you use one, or under the bill of your cap if you habitually wear one. Any place where you will recurrently be exposed to them will serve the purpose.

Verbal or image cues, on the other hand, have to become a ritual. These are the self-talk statements or visualizations to keep you on track and are generally implanted into some part of a routine. For example, as you approach a putt you may say to yourself “target, line, ball, go” to remind yourself that once over the ball take one last look at the target, see the line as you draw your eyes back to the ball, focus on the back of the ball and then instantaneously initiate the stroke without hesitation. Alternatively, as the last thing that you do before shot execution, you may say something like “I’ve got this shot” to add confidence or “tempo” to reinforce a smooth swing. Or following a poor shot you may automatically conjure up an image of walking on the beach, sitting in a hot-tub or getting a massage to help calm you down. The options are limitless. Physical, verbal or visual cues/triggers can be used to shape virtually any behavior. It’s merely a matter of designing the cues to fit your needs and then consistently utilizing them.

Thought-Stopping

“You ever go up to the tee and say, ‘Don’t hit it left, don’t hit it right’? That’s your conscious mind. My body knows how to play golf. I’ve trained it to do that. It’s just a matter of keeping my conscious mind out of it.”

Tiger Woods

Thought-stopping is a process by which you learn to recognize irrelevant, irrational, or counter-productive thoughts, the situations that provoke them, their consequences, and develop a means of discontinuing them. This is generally done through the implementation of a physical distraction and more productive internal dialog.

One method for recognizing and extinguishing bad thoughts is to start logging their frequency. In other words, keep a small notebook with you all times. If a negative thought enters your mind, jot it down immediately or soon after if time doesn’t permit. After writing it down, rationalize it and then rewrite the phrase as a positive statement. This will help to reshape your thinking patterns.

Another way to get rid of this problem is to wear an ordinary elastic band around your wrist during rounds and/or practice sessions. And when you notice a negative thought has popped in, snap the elastic. This will remind you that those type of thoughts are counterproductive to you playing well and that you need to change them in order to give yourself the best opportunity to hit a good shot. Other methods include slapping your thigh, snapping your finger or yelling “STOP.” Upon recognition, stop your mind from reiterating destructive self-

statements by replacing them with a regimen of self-talk that reinforces your own natural capabilities or desires.

Visualization

"I never hit a shot, even in practice, without having a very sharp, in focus picture of it in my head. It's like a color movie. First I 'see' the ball where I want it to finish, nice and high and sitting up high on the bright green grass. Then the scene quickly changes and I 'see' the ball going there: its path, trajectory, and shape, even its behavior on landing."

Jack Nicklaus

We all have the capability to create images in our mind. Imagining something vividly has a profound effect on the mind and body. When you visualize you send the same electromagnetic signals down your neural pathways as when you actually go through the experience. The subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between real experiences and those that are imagined.

Visualization activates the subconscious mind and releases powerful internal forces that can bring about astonishing reactions and changes. That is why you may feel similar emotional reactions when you are reflecting on a past experiences or why dreams sometimes seem so real. Because we imagine these experiences to be true, they influence our feelings and reactions. Therefore, by changing your mental pictures to more positive ones you can in turn change your emotional reactions and behaviors to more productive ones.

Visualization is the most common psychological technique used by professionals in all sports. There is an impressive body of scientific evidence documenting the power and effectiveness of visualization techniques to

reprogram doubts or negative feelings and reinforce the subconscious belief in the ability to succeed.

There are many different types of and methods for utilizing visualization. For the sake of brevity, I'll refer to only the most important of these here. Reflective visualization is the act of imaging or reflecting on a past experience. Projective visualization is the art of creating a new mental image of an anticipated outcome. Either of these can be positive or negative. However, it's generally the negatives images that have grave consequences. For example, standing on the tee of a par 3 over water and reflecting on a previous time that you played the hole and hit it into the hazard. Subsequently, you step up and do the same thing again. Or preparing for your drive on a tight tree-lined dogleg right, having a vision of slicing it into the woods and consequently fulfilling the prophecy. We've all been there. Creating positive mental images is far more effective to obtain the desired results. Therefore, let's create a list of positive past experiences.

Reflective Imagery Exercise: Reflect back on your most vivid memories of success with each of the shots listed below. Describe it in as much detail as you can. Where was it? When was it? Who were you playing with? What kind of day was it? How did you feel before and after? What were you thinking before and after?

Drive:

Fairway wood:

2-iron:

3-iron:

4-iron:

5-iron:

6-iron:

7-iron:

8-iron:

9-iron:

PW:

SW:

Chip:

Long Putt:

Short Putt:

Visualize these shots every night before you go to bed and before playing a round. Relive the experiences in your mind as best as you can. If you have a difficult time filling in all the blanks then start to build on this list after each round that you play from this moment forward.

Visualization can be used at different times, the most common of which is during a pre-shot routine. In this instance you want to create a mental video in your mind of yourself executing an effective shot. This can be a reflection of a past experience or a projection of the desired result. With all of your senses, try to imagine as vividly as possible your swing, the flight of the ball, the ball landing and rolling until it comes to rest.

See and feel the proper grip and setup. See and feel the appropriate takeaway, the right elbow tucked in, the pause at the top of the backswing, the front hip start to open up and back knee bend as the club travels down to the ball. Hear the “whoosh” of the club as it descends on its path and the “smack” of the clubface as it contacts the ball. Feel solid ball contact and see the follow through finishing high. See the ball flying through the air and landing in the desired location. This will prepare your body for the actual execution and add confidence.

Another use of visualization is as a pre-competitive technique. Prior to a competitive event, imagine as vividly as possible yourself executing the round to the best of your ability. Imagine playing each hole with proper execution, choosing the appropriate club and shot selections, as well as handling the pressure and any setbacks in a positive way. In other words, playing one shot at a time, putting bad shots behind you, breathing, refocusing, and recovering from the mistake with a brilliant shot to salvage the hole. See yourself come through

from start to finish and experiencing the feelings of joy and exhilaration as you acknowledge your triumph.

Alternatively, you can use visualization to anticipate and plan your practice sessions or other upcoming tasks that need to be accomplished. At the end of each evening, just before bed, spend 5-10 minutes thinking about what you would like to achieve the following day. Plan in your mind and write down exactly what you would like or need to do, as well as when and how you are going to do it. Further, try to anticipate any potential obstacles and how you are going to handle them. By preplanning and preparing for potential distractions, you increase the likelihood of responding more effectively.

Modeling

“If you want a quality, act as if you already had it. Try the 'as if' technique.”

William James

One of the primary methods by which we all learn is through observation and imitation. This is the conceptual framework of modeling. If there are certain aspects of your game or life that you would like to change for the better, then who better to learn from and copy than those who do it right.

For example, ask yourself, who would you like to swing like? If you could do it, what would it look or feel like? What is different than your swing? Observe how that person sets up to the ball. Notice the flex in their arms and legs, their balance, head position, swing path and tempo. Take notes and identify the characteristics that you want to incorporate.

The next time that you practice, attempt to emulate the desired swing. However, if you attempting to copy a certain swing, make certain that you choose someone who is similar in height and body type. No two swings are exactly the same. Size and body type affect positioning and swing plane. What works for one type may not work for another. Imitate a swing that is right for you.

Catalog the techniques and strategies that the best players utilize when playing well and how they turn it around when playing poorly. Incorporate them into your own game. In difficult times ask yourself what would the expert do? How would the expert do it? Act the part. By acting the part you begin to develop and ingrain the positive emotions and reactions that you desire.

Journals and List

Producing journals and lists enables you to record your ideas, assess your progress, learn from your experiences and acts as a prompter for taking action. Various types of journals or list have been described in detail throughout the course of this book. Therefore, to avoid redundancy, please refer back to the appropriate sections.

Relaxation Techniques

Under pressure, one of the most important things I have to remember to do is breathe.”

Curtis Strange

Relaxation techniques are centered on the notion that it is beneficial to performance to be physically and mentally calm and tension free. They employ a variety of different physiological and cognitive methods ranging from controlling

breathing patterns to directive self-talk or a combination of these and other skills. I'll start with some of the basic techniques and then gradually progress to some of the more combinatorial methods.

Deep Concentration Breathing

Heart rate and blood pressure are affected by our respiratory or breathing rate. In other words, how quickly, slowly, deeply or shallowly we breathe influences how hard and fast our heart pumps blood into our circulatory system. Increases in heart-rate and blood pressure are two of the primary physiological responses when an individual faces situations that are anxiety and/or anger provoking. These situations also generally result in debilitating cognitions as well as bodily tension, the very things that negatively affect the quality of the swing. Deep breathing supplies the body with oxygen, which helps the mind stay alert and keeps muscles strong. Moreover, by controlling your breathing patterns and directing your thoughts appropriately you can reduce heart-rate, blood pressure and muscular tension.

Breathing Exercise

Find a quiet place free of distractions. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed. Close your eyes, take a slow deep inhale through the nostrils for a count of eight, pause briefly and then exhale through the mouth for that same count of eight. As you inhale deeply, feel the air flow into your nostrils, down your trachea and expand your abdomen and lungs. As you exhale, feel the warm air flow in the opposite direction and out through the

mouth. Place your right hand over your heart, feel its beat and take notice of its rhythm for a few moments. Now direct your attention back to your breathing and continue this slow rhythmic breathing pattern for the next several minutes. Finally, redirect your attention back to your hand and heart and notice any differences in its rhythm.

Progressive Relaxation

Progressive relaxation is a technique for recognizing and controlling muscular tension by systematically tensing and releasing various muscle groups within the body while consciously attending to the difference between tension and relaxation.

Progressive Relaxation Exercise

Find a quiet place free of distractions. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed. Clench your fists and squeeze as tight as you can. Hold it for 10 seconds while you feel the tightness in your hands, fingers and forearms. Now, release it all at once. Feel the tightness dissipate as you let your hands hang loosely for the next 10 seconds. Next, isolate and squeeze your biceps. Notice how the tightness radiates into your shoulders and chest. Hold it for 10 seconds and then release it all at once. Again, let your arms hang loosely and notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Now tighten your entire upper body, your fists, forearms, biceps, shoulders and chest. Hold it for 10 seconds and then release it all at once. You may get a tingling sensation as you release the tension. Don't worry. It's completely normal. Pay particular attention

to the difference between tension and relaxation in each area of your upper body. These are the areas that tension generally gathers for golfers thereby constraining the swing. Therefore, it is imperative that you learn to recognize when tightness surfaces in these areas.

Now shift your focus to your lower body. Isolate and tighten your groin, quadriceps and hamstrings. Squeeze them as tight as you can, hold it for 10 seconds and then release it all at once. Relax those areas for 10 seconds then extend or press your toes tightening your feet, shins and calves. Hold it for 10 seconds and then release it all at once. Now tense up your entire lower body and hold it, your groin, upper and lower legs as well as feet. Hold it and then release it entirely. Finally, squeeze your entire body all at once. Notice the tightness in each area of your body. Hold it. Now release it all at once. Again, notice the distinct difference between a tense and relaxed muscle group.

Players hit their best shots when they are free of tension and self-consciousness. On the golf course, deep breathing can help slow down autonomic reactions, calm a sense of panic or rage and slow down thoughts that are running rampant. During anxiety or anger provoking moments, step back, notice the feelings, concentrate on controlling your breathing patterns, take a few deep relaxing breathes and then begin. The easiest and best way to incorporate breathing into your game is to make it part of your routines along with a quick upper body tense and release to remind you to relax.

Autogenic Training

Autogenic training utilizes concentration and the power of the mind to facilitate a state of relaxation. Similar to progressive relaxation, you isolate individual and specific parts of the body. Alternatively, instead of tensing and relaxing muscle groups, you concentrate on creating a warm, heavy and relaxed feeling in each of these areas by visualizing warmth and heaviness. You imagine the tension melting away and leaving your muscles with each and every breath. You progressively spread the feeling across each muscle group and your entire body. Start with your hands and arms. Concentrate on generating warmth and heaviness. Imagine the tension melting away and then let that feeling slowly spread into your shoulders, chest, and abdomen and then into your legs and feet.

Again, as described with most of the concepts in this book you must be aware of your physical and mental states in order to facilitate relaxation. If you experience anxiety or anger, take slow deep inhales through the nostrils and exhales through the mouth while you internally remind yourself to be “calm and relaxed.” Scan your body for tension or tightness. If certain body parts feel tight, systematically and intentionally tense each area one at a time. Hold the muscle group tight for 5 to 10 seconds, and then release it all at once. Concentrate on relaxing your body wherever you feel stress or tension. Focus on generating a warm and relaxing feeling in any part of your body where you may be experiencing tension. Imagine the tension melting away. By practicing these

exercises for 15-20 minutes a day, you will soon develop the ability to regulate your arousal levels and control your thought patterns.

Meditation

“My mother’s a Buddhist. In Buddhism, if you want to achieve enlightenment, you have to do it through meditation and self-improvement through the mind. That’s something she’s passed on to me: to be able to calm myself down and use my mind as my main asset.”

Tiger Woods

Meditation produces a profound state of relaxation. It takes us deep into ourselves, taps into the subconscious mind and helps us examine ourselves from the inside out. The subconscious mind is a source of inner power and guidance. It is much smarter than the conscious. It is the source of those creative ideas and insights that suddenly flash into your conscious mind at unexpected moments. It is also the source of negative expectation, doubt and reluctance to act. Therefore, in order to be effective you must change negative subconscious thoughts and memories and replace them with positive ones. You can also become more effective by learning to tap into its inner guidance.

You can discover a profound and deeply significant part of yourself through meditation. Meditation can change your level of consciousness and the way you see the world. Meditating makes us aware of our self-imposed limitations, wills it out and allows us to function at maximum potential. By meditating you’ll make fewer mistakes primarily because through meditation you are searching for and considering alternative solutions before reacting. It is also a great way of changing the body’s physiology, leading to an improvement in stress

hormone levels and a reduction in blood pressure. There are many different types of meditative exercises. I'll share just one example with you here.

Meditation Exercise

Find a quiet place free of distractions. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arms and legs uncrossed. Let your eyes focus gently on a point in front of you and take a deep relaxing breath all the way down into your abdomen. Take another deep relaxing breath, and another. Close your eyes. Let your breathing patterns relax and become natural. Imagine yourself traveling down a wooden path surrounded by exotic trees and plants. At the end of the path there is an opening. As you come to the clearing there stands a wise looking man in flowing robes. The man states that he is your guide and offers to help you find the answers to all your questions about life and happiness. Ask your questions slowly and wait for a response. When you feel content with the quality of the experience allow your eyes to open. Record any insights that you may have had in a notebook or journal.

Self-Hypnosis

Self-hypnosis is a powerful technique that can be quickly and easily learned to help you relieve stress, relax and reinforce any positive changes that you desire. Hypnosis is a state of heightened suggestibility which enables an individual to make appropriate responses. Self-hypnosis bridges the gap between the conscious and subconscious minds. Self-hypnosis allows the conscious and subconscious minds to perform their separate functions with a

minimum effort for the best results. It distracts the conscious mind from multiple thoughts so that direct contact can be made with the subconscious mind and allows it to focus on a single thought or object without interference.

Hypnosis is a term derived from the Greek word for sleep. Although similar to sleep, during hypnosis you never completely lose awareness. In fact, hypnosis is probably more similar to the trancelike state of daydreaming than sleep. During hypnosis the heightened state of concentration and imagination allows you to suspend disbelief, become absorbed in the moment and experience your thoughts and images as real. And if you recall, the subconscious mind does not know the difference between real and imagination. Therefore, this deep state of relaxation and suggestion can be tremendously effective for bringing about changes.

There is no real mystery or mysticism behind hypnosis. Nor is there cause for any stereotypical trepidation or concern. Hypnosis is a safe, harmless procedure that is only as effective as the willingness of the participant to be open to its potential benefits. Particularly true of self-hypnosis, which is self-induced, you are in charge of what you want to think about, imagine, feel and do.

The self-hypnosis process incorporates one's willingness to experience the highly suggestive state along with self-recording a personalized self-induction, affirmations and visualizations. The initial stages are nearly identical to the other relaxation methods discussed previously. It involves a comfortable position, deep breathing, some calming words and muscle relaxation. Where

hypnosis carries it one step further is in the deepening of the relaxation state through the repetition of key suggestions. Once an individual is deeply relaxed then various self-affirmations and visualizations are rehearsed. The final stage revives the individual to a full state of consciousness and potentially adds a post-hypnotic suggestion to facilitate a desire action. Here is a sample script that combines each of these basic components.

Sample Self-Hypnosis Script

Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your arm and legs uncrossed. Let your eyes focus gently on a point in front of you...and take a deep relaxing breath all the way down into your abdomen. Take another slow, deep, relaxing breath...and another. Even though your eyes are getting tired, keep them open just a little bit longer and take another slow, deep breath...and another. Your eyes are becoming heavier and heavier. Now take a nice deep breath, close your eyes and begin to relax. Just think about relaxing every muscle in your body from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Just begin to relax. Notice how very comfortable your body is beginning to feel. You are supported, so you can just let go and relax. Inhale and exhale.

Notice your breathing; notice the rhythm of your breathing and relax your breathing for a moment. Be aware of normal sound around you. These sounds are unimportant. So discard them. Whatever you hear from now on will only help you to relax. And as you exhale, release any tension, any stress from any part of your body, mind, and thought; just let that stress go. Any stressful thoughts that rush through your mind, feel them begin to wind down, wind down, wind down, and relax.

Begin with letting all of the muscles in your face relax, especially your jaw; let your teeth part just a little bit and relax this area. This is the place where tension and stress gather so be sure and relax your jaw and feel the relaxation go into your temples and relax the muscles in your temples and as you think about relaxing these muscles they will relax. Feel them relax and as you relax you will be able to just drift and float into a deeper and deeper level of total relaxation.

You will continue to relax and now let all of the muscles in your forehead relax. Feel those muscles smooth, smooth and relaxed, and rest your eyes. Just imagine your eyelids feeling so comfortable, so heavy, so heavy, so relaxed and now let all of the muscles in the back of your neck and shoulders relax, feel a heavy, heavy weight being lifted off your shoulders and you feel relieved, lighter and more relaxed. And as all of those muscles in the back of your neck and

shoulders relax, feel the soothing relaxation go down your back, down, down, down, to the lower part of your back, and those muscles let go and with every breath you inhale just feel your body drifting, floating, down deeper, down deeper, down deeper, into total relaxation. Let your muscles go, relax more and more. Let all of the muscles in your shoulders, running down your arms to your fingertips, relax. Let your arms feel so heavy, so heavy, so heavy, so comfortable, so relaxed.

You may have tingling in your fingertips. That's perfectly fine. You may have warmth in the palms of your hands, and that's fine. And you may feel that you can barely lift your arms, they are so relaxed, they are so heavy, so heavy, so relaxed. And now you inhale once again and relax your chest muscles. And now you exhale, feel your stomach muscle relax. As you exhale, relax all of the muscles in your stomach, let them go, and all of the muscles in your legs, feel them relax and all of the muscles in your legs, so completely relaxed to the tips of your toes.

Notice how very comfortable your body feels, just drifting and floating, deeper, deeper, deeper relaxed. And as you relax deeper and deeper, imagine a beautiful staircase. There are ten steps, and the steps lead you to a special and peaceful and beautiful place. In a moment you can begin to imagine taking a safe and gentle and easy step down, down, down, down on the staircase, leading you to a very peaceful, a very special place for you. You can imagine it to be your home course, one of the major championships sites or any other place you choose; any place is perfectly fine. In a moment I'm going to count backwards from ten to one and you can imagine taking the steps down and as you take each step, feel your body relax, more and more, feel it just drift down, down each step, and relax even deeper, ten, relax even deeper, nine...eight...seven...six...five...four...three...two...one...deeper, deeper, deeper, relaxed.

And now imagine this special place and perhaps you can even feel it. You are on the golf course. You are alone and there is no one to disturb you. This is the most peaceful place in the world for you. Imagine yourself there and feel that sense of peace flow through you and sense of well being and enjoy these positive feelings and keep them with you long after this session is completed, for the rest of this day and evening, tomorrow. Allow these positive feelings to grow stronger and stronger, feeling at peace with a sense of well-being, and each and every time that you choose to do this kind of relaxation you will be able to relax deeper and deeper. Regardless of the stress and tension that may surround your life, you may now remain more at peace, more calm, more relaxed, and allow the tension and stresses to bounce off and away from you, just bounce off and away from you. And these positive feelings will stay with you and grow stronger and stronger throughout the day as you continue to relax deeper and deeper.

Imagine preparing yourself for the challenge of a round of golf. Your equipment is good and adjusted to your needs. You are prepared both physically and mentally. Now just imagine for a moment stressful situations that may arise,

such as noises when you are trying to concentrate, the actions of another golfer or the course conditions, and see yourself react to these conditions in a cool undisturbed way.

Imagine yourself enjoying the round, see yourself competing and enjoying it enjoying it very much, and from now on whenever you feel afraid or intimidated know that these are negative feelings that restrict you from having a good time, from enjoying challenge, from exhibiting your skills. You take each one of these negative feelings and you place these feelings in a box, just take each one and put it in a box, and now put a lid on that box and place it in your closet. Now begin to see yourself having fun, competing, doing your best, playing your very best, you are secure and confident, you take your own mistakes in stride, you learn from your mistakes, you are a champion, a real champion, and just imagine for a moment any situation that may be stressful, imagine any situation that may be distracting or make you feel unimportant, and see yourself handle each situation easily, effectively, assertively, and kindly. You simply refuse to accept negative thoughts and feelings, they have nothing to do with you, nothing at all, you handle situations easily, effectively, assertively, and kindly. You imagine yourself playing your best round; imagine yourself competing, winning, secure and confident, feeling that great rushes of pleasure that comes from meeting a challenge and doing it like a champion.

You are in control and see obstacles as challenges, you are unshakable, like a rock, you are prepared and eager to begin.

Imagine your body position just as it should be, it feels completely perfect and natural, comfortable, now imagine a perfect swing; you are in control and you execute your shot, making perfect contact with the ball. See the ball follow the exact course it should take, as you watch the ball it is as if you can make it go where it is suppose to go just by following it with your eyes, it's easy because your stroke was perfect. Now review in your mind your entire round from start to finish, see it in slow motion [pause] See it in as much detail as you can. You played a perfect round, and now review all the perfect strokes you made. [Pause] And review all the strategy you used. [pause] This perfect round, your perfect round, can be played again and again, imagine yourself reaching your goal. You have reached your goal, you have reached this goal and you can go on to other goals whenever you like.

Now just imagine how you felt during your perfect round, imagine that confidence and ease, you were focused and strong; imagine yourself begin again, take a few deep breaths and in slow motion see every action, feel every move in the most positive way. [pause] See yourself act and react, more perfectly, every muscle in harmony with your thoughts, see your strategy, see yourself moving perfectly, see every perfect move, and now notice how you feel, you are relaxed, at ease, strong, alert, and clear-minded, your vision is sharp, your reflexes are perfect, you feel great, and now see yourself conclude and win the challenge, you feel pleased with yourself, and every correct move, every stroke is imprinted into your subconscious so that you can repeat your perfect

round over and over like a film, now go back and once again replay the sequence from start to finish. [pause] And see it in great detail, in great detail, imagine making all the right moves and playing a terrific round, playing a terrific round, the best round you ever played.

Enjoy this special feeling for another moment and then I will begin to count from one to ten and as I count from one to ten you can begin coming back to full consciousness, and will come back feeling refreshed as if you had a long rest. Come back feeling alert and relaxed. Begin to come back now. One...two... coming up, three...four...five...six...seven...eight...nine, begin to open your eyes, and ten, open your eyes and come all the way back, feeling great. The next time that you do hypnosis you will be more relaxed and focused. From this moment forward anytime that you want to enter hypnosis all you have to do is breathe, relax and count to three.

Self-hypnosis will help to train the subconscious mind on how you want to react in pressure situations when they arise. Structure your script with affirmations that address your own individual needs. Finally, do it off the course in a quiet stress free environment (e.g., the night before a competition or immediately before). Never practice self-hypnosis while driving.

Summary Points

- **Develop a positive attitude**
- **Identify your self-talk**
- **Construct affirmations**
- **Visualize success**
- **Learn how to direct your attention appropriately**
- **Model the experts**
- **Keep lists and journals**
- **Incorporate relaxation and the power of the subconscious mind**

Chapter 8

Putting it All Together

Successful individuals have incredible optimism that helps them confront and move around, over or through all challenges and obstacles. They see opportunity in every crisis. They are prepared for challenges. They embrace challenges and the insight that they will gain from dealing with them. They believe that there will eventually be a good outcome as long as they stay focused on what they want and persist.

Goal-Setting

“I have those (goals) written down, but don’t want to discuss them. Right now, I just want to keep on improving.”

Justin Leonard

The ability to set appropriate goals and carry out the plan for their attainment is one of the fundamental skills of all highly successful individuals. When set properly goals are realistic, specific and measurable. In other words, you have to have an accurate perspective of what is attainable, when you would like to achieve it by, and most importantly, how you are going to do it. Furthermore, it is important that you distinguish the outcome goals from the process goals. So for instance, you might want to drop 5 strokes off your game in the next three months (the outcome), which may be realistic for most mid-to-high handicap players as long as you construct an effective and efficient plan to do it

(the process). When designing your plan it is imperative that you have a clear understanding of what you need to do to achieve your goals. Dropping five strokes off your game in three months may be reasonable, but how and when are you going to do it. This is where many people err. They have the desire but not the plan on how to make it happen. This leads us back to the earlier discussion on self-awareness. Where is it that you are losing strokes? And what areas of your game need the most improvement? Once you have determined this, then you can start constructing your plan for improvement. For example, you may be averaging 38 putts per round and getting the ball up and down an average of 25% of the time. This should tell you that you would seriously benefit from working on your short game and here alone you can probably drop the five strokes that you desire just from some properly structured short game practice.

Next, how much time do you have, when, where, and how are you going to do it? Given the fact that you have a rigorous schedule, let's say you are able to muster up 3 hours a week spread out over 3 different days. Therefore, you plan on spending an hour on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at your local course practicing short game. Next, come up with a structured practice regimen and some log sheets to keep track of your progress. Write down specific drills or correction techniques for every practice.

For example, on each day you are going to hit 10 chips from the rough 20 yards from the pin and count how many you are able to get up and down in two strokes or less. You are going to hit 10 bump and runs from just off the green to a

hole located 30 feet away and count how many you are able to get up and down in two strokes or less. You are going to hit 10 flop shots to a pin 10 yards away and see how many you can get up and down in two strokes or less.

Finally, you are going to hit 10 putts each from 5, 10, 20, and 40-foot increments and count how many you able to sink in two putts or less. Further, you are going to do all of this while you are focused, following your routines, and keeping track of the results. Your plan will obviously differ from this example. However, having a set regimen and charting your progress will help you establish where you are as well as will allow you to see gradual changes when and if effort does not appear to be paying off. This evidence of improvement can help sustain motivation during difficult times. See the sample goal-setting sheet and daily practice logs at the end of the chapter.

Deliberate Practice

"Practice puts brains in your muscles."

Sam Snead

Another key difference between top players and wannabes is their commitment to continuous learning and improvement. Honestly assess what is costing you strokes. Set realistic and measurable goals. Identify the actions needed to improve those areas. Define your practice regimen and take action.

If you want to achieve any significant improvement you have to be willing to make some changes in what you practice, how you practice or how much you practice. You must commit yourself to a practice regimen that will, over time,

improve your game. You must have a practice objective for every session. You must take personal responsibility for the player that you would like to become. You have to have patience, persistence and resiliency. You have to expect that there are going to be ups and downs. However, if you want to improve your play, you have to accept that this is part of the game and process.

A golfer's short-term goal should be to improve a little every day or whenever time is available. You have to be realistic about your expectations if you don't have or can't make sufficient time to practice. No one has ever gotten down to scratch by playing or practicing a couple of times a week. Players who get to scratch spend more time than that. They find an hour to practice or play virtually every day. If you can't spend that much time, it may be necessary to lower your expectations and goals until you can.

Furthermore, too many players make one of several common errors in their approach to practice. The first is that they socialize too much on the practice range or green. Their minds are not focused on the golf shots that they are practicing and consequently they waste time and are more likely to create or ingrain bad habits.

The second common mistake is beating balls. Beating balls further ingrains bad habits. You should have a specific objective for every practice session. It may be correcting a mechanical flaw that has seeped in. It may be working on your routine; developing more feel or simulating course play but you must have an objective. If not, you are likely wasting your time.

If your swing does not feel right and you are getting frustrated, stop fighting it. Sometimes it is better to let it rest overnight than keep on beating balls and ingraining mistakes. Spend the extra time practicing chips, putts, and pitches. True discipline, at times, means stop beating balls and get some rest rather than keep practicing until you are frustrated or physically or mentally fatigued.

One-way to determine whether you are beating balls is to compare your typical mental process on the course to those you are using on the range. Are you following your routines? Are you assessing all the variables like the distance, lie, wind, slope, speed, and so on? Did you pick out your target and visualize the shot? If you didn't go through each step of your routine every time you hit a practice shot, then you are probably beating balls. The exception to this rule would be if you were specifically focusing your attention on correcting a mechanical flaw. Remember, the intention of practice is to refine skills and create dominant habits that will come through on the course, particularly during competition.

If you take your time as you practice, and your time is limited, you will probably hit fewer balls. But that is all right. It is better to hit fifty practice shots with your mind focused on every one, than to hit two hundred shots while not concentrating. The quality of a player's practice is more important than the quantity. Practicing with a focused mind will make your practice more efficient

and effective. Quality practice is focusing your mind on the range in the same way you would in a major championship.

Furthermore, too many players don't allocate their practice time properly. During a typical round, the average player will hit 14 to 16 balls off the tee with a driver, 3-wood or low iron, attempt a combined 22 to 30 fairway and approach shots with the 3-wood through wedge, will have to chip, pitch, and/or hit a bunker shot between 9 and 15 times, and putt approximately 32 to 40 times. So, roughly 60% of their score will be determined by short game. Yet, how often do you see players hitting irons and drivers for $\frac{3}{4}$ of their practice time and then spend the other $\frac{1}{4}$ practicing just putts. Or worse, they may not practice short game at all. A more intelligent practice regimen would be structured as follows: 15% driving clubs, 25% low to high irons, 20% chips, pitches, and bunker shots, and 40% putts ranging between 3 and 60 feet. More simply, spend about 1/3 of your time on long game, 1/3 on putting and 1/3 on chips, pitches and bunker shots. Naturally, your allocation of time will be different depending upon which areas are costing you the most strokes but you must understand that in order to score you must have a solid short game.

Alternatively, how often you hit the same club or type of shot consecutively should be a function of your skill level. High handicap players are better off practicing skills in a block format. In other words, depending on how much time that you have, it is better to hit the same club and type of shot over and over before moving on to something else and practice only one or two things per

session. Practice one thing until you are satisfied or start to feel frustrated, then move on to the next skill. Attempting to practice too many activities or complete too long a session can lead to frustration, confusion, physical or mental fatigue and diminish the learning effects. For high handicap or beginner players, the blocked method facilitates the learning of new or deficient skills much better than trying to incorporate too much at once.

On the flip side, low-to-mid handicap players are better off combining multiple clubs and different types of shots in a variable fashion. More specifically, unless you are working on mechanics, a high-level player shouldn't continue to hit the same club and type of shots repeatedly. He or she should switch selection after every few shots. In this methodology, the mind and body will have to make more adjustments; a process which is more similar to course play and more beneficial to better players.

A word of caution when working on fundamentals or mechanics for all skill levels; often players try to work on too many things at once. This rarely works. If you need to make fundamental or swing changes, it will be far more effective to do them one at a time. Work on one facet until it feels correct and then incorporate another. Trying to make too many changes too quickly will only lead to frustration and bad habits. Incidentally, it generally takes a few weeks of regular practice for each change to take effect.

Alternative ways of practicing on the range include playing the course in your mind. After warming-up, envision how the fairway of the first hole on your

home course would fit on the practice range along with where the hazards would be. Then, go through your routine and hit the tee shot. Estimate how many yards and what type of shot you would have left for your approach along with any hazards that may come into play. Then select a club, go through your routine and hit the shot. Concede two putts per hole if you hit the green and your approach is outside 3 feet. If it's within 3 feet concede a one putt. If you miss the green, guesstimate the distance, pick a target, play a chip or pitch and hit the shot. Again, if its within 3 feet concede a one putt and if it's outside then it's a two putt. Play your entire course. How did you score? Is it close to your normal score? It is probably not too far off if you were honest.

If you have a vivid imagination and are familiar with the course layouts, instead try pretending that you are in the final group on Sunday afternoon standing on the 1st tee at the Master's or U.S. Open. This type of practice is more productive than beating balls because you are more focused and it enables you to simulate playing in a much shorter period of time.

If you have others with you, make a game or competition out of your practice sessions. Play the equivalent of "horse" in basketball on the practice range with another player. Or simulate playing a nine or eighteen hole match with different aspects of you game. For example, the first person to hit nine or eighteen greens wins. Or the closest chip to the hole wins the hole and calls the next location. In short, the more real and fun that you can make your practice the better it will be.

To summarize, if you are going to practice on the range follow a disciplined regimen. Stretch, begin with shorter clubs, focus on your objectives, block out distractions, pace yourself and anchor the good shots in your mind. In other words, make a mental note of them and connect as many feelings and emotions to the shot as possible. Furthermore, record practice notes (what you learned) after the session is complete.

If the course is not too busy, another excellent way to practice is to do it alone on the course. One way to do this is to play two balls on every shot and play the forthcoming shots from the location of the worse of the two. In this instance, you must be completely shot focused rather than score and it will help your scrambling skills. Conversely, you can play the better of the two to help build confidence.

Another method is to play the course with only three or five clubs of your choosing. This will force you to grip up and down the club, open and close your clubface and stance and shorten or lengthen your swing. This will help your imagination, creativity, touch, feel and knock down shot making ability.

Alternatively, you can play different types of shots from different types of lies to learn the course and the various situations that may arise. In other words, practice full shots from uphill, downhill and side hill lies, light rough and heavy rough, chips and pitches from heavy and light rough, tight lies and over bunkers and against the collar, sand shots from normal, uphill, downhill side hill and

buried lies from hard and soft sand and long putts with small and large breaks and multiple tiers.

Finally, keep playing rounds of golf during your training and occasionally play with better players. You want the habits, the techniques, and the expectations of better players to rub off on you. Remember, the goal of your training is to lower your scores and handicap. To lower them, you have to play.

Periodization

Whether it is one the four majors, the Doral Publix for juniors, or your local annual club championship, certain events throughout the year hold greater importance for players across all levels of ability. Therefore, if a player's objective is to be among the elite at his or her respective level, it is imperative to be peaking, both physically and mentally, at the right time. Reaching this peak at the optimal time is the primary intent of periodization (scheduling the training regimen to work on specific skills along a timeline in an attempt to maximize those abilities at the right moment).

For example, one of the last things that a player wants to be worrying about heading into a big tournament is his/her physical conditioning or swing. The player should have worked on developing stamina for the proceeding months and already be in tip-top condition. The last few weeks heading into the event a player may be exercising to maintain his or her achieved level but not actively pushing to increase it. Likewise, prior to important events, strokes should

be fundamentally sound and confidence in the ability to execute should be high. This is not the time to make a swing change.

Most other sports have a structured annual preseason, competitive season and off-season in which the athletes train to get physically and mentally prepared, regularly engage in competition, and then recover, all for specific periods of time. In this respect, golf is slightly different. There are often several mini-seasons throughout the year leading up to more prominent events and golfers can compete all year long.

It is hard to convince individuals that are trying to advance their careers that it is in their best interest to regularly take time off, particularly when the more one plays the more potential there is for earning valuable ranking points or making money. This, however, is the logical fallacy that many aspiring players make; they over-train. The body and mind are not equipped to endure long periods of intense workloads without periodic downtime for rest and recovery. Prolonged periods of high intensity physical activity frequently results in physical and mental fatigue, staleness, and can potentially lead to burnout. To avoid staleness and burnout, it is imperative to schedule downtime to let the body and mind recoup. Following major events, particularly if there is ample time before the next big tournament, players should take at least a week or two off to recover from the physical and mental demands of training and competing. A player will typically come back fresher and more eager to tackle the next obstacle following a rest interval.

Leading up to big events, ideally there should be a 6 to 8 week comprehensive training program where a player is working on all the vital physical and mental aspects of high-level performance. This program should specifically address aspects such as flexibility, strength, endurance, balance, all the technical aspects of the various strokes, strategy, concentration, focus, and confidence, in addition to anxiety and anger control. Depending on the individual's strengths and weakness, and their competitive needs, time should be distributed to take into account the player's respective needs to attain greater success. Along the training timeline each practice session should be structured and time proportioned to incrementally increase the player's ability level in each of the prioritized areas. More specifically, the frequency, intensity, duration, and/or rotation of the activities should shift from start to end. For instance, if endurance is low, begin with a higher frequency of low intensity/short duration endurance based exercises and then gradually increase the intensity and duration throughout the training period.

From a technical standpoint, the start of the training regimen is the appropriate time to get back to basics and refine mechanics or style of play if necessary. During this time there is a lower concentration of simulated play or competition and a greater volume of drills. As you move along the timeline there is a steady shift in which the number of drills decreases and more simulated or course play increases.

Mentally, the process is slightly different. The initial procedure begins with setting long-term competitive goals for the year. For instance, get into the top 10 rankings and win two tournaments. Next, the process of how to achieve those goals is outlined with short-term technical and fitness objectives leading up to each tournament. Throughout the course of training, psychological skills such as relaxation, imagery and self-talk are regularly implemented into the practice regimen. You should recognize, however, the specificity of those exercise generally changes from the start to end of each training period. For example, imagery and self-talk exercises may initially be geared toward motivation and technique mastery coinciding with physical practice. Visualize hoisting the championship trophy and waving to the crowd. Coupling that with a technical self-talk phrase such as “rotate, load, release” with iron practice to constantly reinforce rotation of the hips and shoulders, getting weight back on the right side, shifting the weight from back to front and releasing the club through impact. As competition nears, the content should shift more towards confidence building, emotion regulation, and solidifying the skills into functional pre-performance, pre-shot, and post-shot routines.

In order for the periodized schedule to be most beneficial it is important to map out the year in advance. Develop a calendar of potential events that are available to you as a player. That information can generally be acquired through various websites such as the USGA (United States Golf Association), AJGA (American Junior Golf Association), FCWT (Future Collegians World Tour), or

contact your local club professional. Next, determine which are most significant, and where the gaps are so that you can optimally plan downtime. Additionally, your training regimen should begin with a thorough assessment of individual skills to establish a baseline and then determine which ones, when thoroughly worked on, will most improve your competitive performance. Following each event and during your rest interval, critically reevaluate your skills and make adjustments in your proceeding plan to optimize the necessary skills for the next tournament. This learning model of progression will ensure continuous player development.

Peak Performance Moments

“All seasoned players know, or at least have felt, that when you are playing your best, you are much the same as in a state of meditation. You are free of tension and chatter. You are concentrating on one thing. It is the ideal condition for good golf.”

Harvey Penick

We all have had moments of supreme performance. You may doubt that you have had such experiences. However, if you think back over your lifetime you should be able to recall at least one instance that went extremely well in some area of your life, so well that it stands out vividly in your memory. These moments have been referred to as the zone, peak performance, peak experience, the flow state, ideal performance state, etc. From this point forward I will refer to them as Peak Performance Moments (PPM). PPM's are characterized by heightened awareness or perception, physical and mental

relaxation, supreme confidence and optimism, strong and undivided desire and choice, and heightened trust in potential and an absence of self-doubt.

When you experience a PPM there is an absence of mental interference. When a player is in a PPM they are process focused and not outcome. Essentially, you are playing with the subconscious mind and taking the conscious mind out of it. Conscious thinking includes focusing on score, thinking ahead or behind, negative self-talk, overanalyzing your swing, concern about what others are thinking, etc. The fastest way to take yourself out of this state is to begin thinking too much, either about score, negative outcome or mechanics. To play your best you have to train yourself to focus on the process of executing without fear or concern about outcome.

A PPM is a state of mind and body working in perfect harmony. Too much self-instruction, self-judgment, critical thinking, doubt or fear of failure takes you out of this state. They interfere with the creative flow experience and hinder free expression of the mind. When you try too hard to concentrate it exhausts a tremendous amount of mental energy and pushes you further from the elusive PPM experience. Authentic interest, deep involvement and a quiet mind bring you closer to attaining a PPM.

There is no magic formula that automatically puts us into this state. There are, however, methods for increasing the possibility. Let me explain. Most key states of awareness from sleep to full consciousness produce distinctive brain wave patterns. When sleeping our brain emits electromagnetic waves in the

range of 1 to 3 cycles per second (CPS), a classification known as delta waves. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we produce between 18 and 40 CPS during normal day-to-day consciousness. The 4 to 7 CPS range, called theta waves, is associated with intense emotion and concentration. States of relaxation and meditation emit 8 to 12 CPS or alpha waves.

When individuals are experiencing Peak Performance Moments their brain wave patterns are in the theta state. The theta state cannot be brought on consciously. However, the alpha state, which is as little as one CPS away, can be consciously achieved. By bringing your mind and body to the alpha state you are bordering the illusive theta state and thereby increasing the opportunity to make the transition into a PPM. More importantly, if you can lower the alpha state a few CPS then you will have entered the theta range and can activate your peak state.

Most low scoring rounds are played in and out of this optimal state. Supreme physical and technical skills don't increase the likelihood of peak experiences. Mental skills do. Almost all pros have solid repeatable swings. And the swings of the many of the legendary players were no better and sometimes worse than far lesser accomplished players. The great players were able to perform on a much more consistent level and achieve peak performance more often than all these others because of their finely honed mental and emotional control skills.

The combination of deep breathing, relaxation, positive affirmations and power visualizations can breach the theta barrier and facilitate a PPM. Deep breathing is the most fundamental factor involved in producing a PPM. There is a mountain of empirical evidence which justifies that deep breathing can facilitate the conditions that underlie all optimal performance experiences. The reasoning is simple. The brain requires more oxygen when performing at peak levels and proper deep breathing meets this need. Further, it relaxes the body, clears the mind of tension, and establishes a rhythmic cycle that attunes the brain to the alpha state.

Simply put, deep breathing quiets the mind and energizes the body and brain. However, unless the alpha state is deepened or maintained, the brain will automatically shift back into full consciousness (beta), the state it was designed to normally function in. Therefore, to get to your peak state it is imperative to induce and then deepen the alpha state. To intensify the alpha state, visualize tranquil images, use focused concentration breathing. When breathing and relaxation have brought you to the edge of theta, you can deepen it and shift yourself the rest of the way with positive affirmations.

For centuries, individuals have used techniques such as deep prayer, meditation, and yoga to deepen the alpha state and move closer to the peak state. Whether or not we are in a peak state, the subconscious mind always is. Often we tap into without even realizing it. Sometimes we call this an epiphany or creative flow. Fortunately, we all have this ability. Periodically, we all achieve

moments of brilliance, weeks of peak performance or months of consistency but no one is perfect. So relax. Accept it. Strive to achieve balance on a more consistent basis, practice relaxation and meditative type exercises and the frequency of these experiences will soon increase.

Summary Points

- Set goals that are realistic, specific and quantifiable
- Write out a deliberate plan for action
- Periodize training for championship performance
- Facilitate more Peak Performance Moments through self-hypnosis, relaxation, visualization and affirmations

Goal Setting Worksheet

Construct	Current Rating	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	Short-Term Goal	Long-Term Goal

Process Statements

Starting Date _____

Ending Date _____

Mission Statement

I _____ agree to actively commit to and pursue my goals. I am aware that I have control over my future success and that hard work and persistence will be required to attain my goals. I also understand that adjustments in my plan may be periodically necessary due to unforeseeable life circumstances. If such situations should arise I will make the appropriate amendments to my plan to help me achieve my goals. Upon realization of my goals I will reward myself with _____.

Signature _____

Date _____

At the end of each interval following your starting date, calculate your current assessment for each of the above constructs. Additionally, on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = rarely, 5 = always) estimate your level of adherence in the previous interval to the process statements made for self-improvement.

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6

Sample Training Regimen

Begin with a thorough stretch and then warm-up with a wedge concentrating solely on generating the proper feel. Players should then execute 10 shots with each club in the following order: Distance wedges (10 from approximately 50 to 75 yards (1/2 to 3/4 swing), 10 full wedges, 10- 6 or 7-irons, 10-3 or 4 irons, and 10 drivers or 3-woods. Players should then proceed to the bunker and execute 10 shots with a sand wedge out of the bunker.

Next go to the chipping and putting area and execute 10 chips from at least 10 feet off of the green toward a designated hole using either a pitching wedge or sand wedge. After the chips are complete, putt each ball out beginning with the closest ball to the hole and working your way to the farthest.

Now, from the fringe area, execute 10 bump and runs of at least 30 feet using a 5, 6, or 7-iron. Again, after all shots have been hit putt out each ball beginning with the closest and ending with the farthest. Finally, place 10 balls in an ellipse around a hole ranging from three to thirty feet and putt each one out beginning with the closest and ending with the furthest. Keep track of how many shots out of each set of 10 that are executed appropriately. The entire practice routine should take no more than 1½ hour.

Alternatively, you can dedicate ½ hour to 45 minute session five days a week to these respective activities with three days going towards short game and the other two to long game.

Chapter 9

Keeping it Together

Sustaining Motivation

"Golf is 90 percent inspiration and 10 percent perspiration."

Johnny Miller

Initially, you must have the desire to achieve and the belief that you have the capability to attain the aspired level of play. Everyone can accomplish some degree of success. However, you have to be realistic about your expectations and capabilities or the dedication to train will not be strong enough to help you sustain the motivation, persist and persevere in the event of setbacks or slow progression. Those that generally do follow through and succeed have the characteristics of high achievers. High achievers are extremely persistent. They focus on the completion of tasks and do so with exceptional quality and at a high rate. They are willing to take risks and look for challenges. And finally, they are self-responsible, motivated and determined, and regularly seek out quality feedback. Here are some suggestions for sustaining the motivation to reach your golfing goals.

Start and End Each Day with the Right Attitude

Start each day with a list of what you would like to complete. Think of tasks as easy and they will be. Practice regular positive self-talk, visualization and affirmations. End each day by checking off what you accomplished.

Find and Use the Motivational Tools that Work for You

Individuals are motivated by money, power, respect and a host of other reasons. Find out what motivates you and use that as an incentive. Create a vision that inspires you and work diligently at trying to live into it. Imitate your heroes. Put their pictures up. Become an expert in their lives. Model their behaviors. Write-down motivational quotes or affirmations, such as those outlined in this book, and find pictures that represent your goals and display all these where you will see them often.

Commit to Using Your Imagination

Visualize the best possible scenario instead of the worst. See yourself being the person that you desire. Meditate and seek answers to your questions. Keep a journal by your bed and spend a few moments in the morning or evening jotting down insights or new visions. Become a creative list maker. Start each day with a list of ideas or goals that will move you toward the ultimate objective.

Know Who You Are

Know your own strengths and weaknesses. Be aware of your own negative attitudes and change your outlook. Debate your pessimistic thoughts and develop an optimistic perspective. Identify your bad habits and true potential. Replace bad habits with something more productive. Develop a ritual that helps you take action. Be willing to take risks and look for opportunities and challenges.

Recognize Your Fears

Identify them, face them and work through them. Remember that fear is nothing more than unfamiliarity with something and the uncertainty of the outcome. Be honest with yourself. Take self-responsibility for problems and create the solutions. Build your will power by abstaining from negative choices and intentionally do things that you don't want to do but that you know will be beneficial. Do not blame others. Take responsibility and change yourself.

Plan Your Path and Anticipate That There May Be Obstacles

Outline the activities that will help you reach your objectives. Focus on the completion of tasks, do so with exceptional quality and at a high rate. Be persistent and view setbacks as an opportunity to learn and grow. Develop contingency plans for when obstacles arise. Rehearse your challenges under more difficult circumstances. Look for the opportunities that generally arise out of obstacles.

Use Your Time Wisely

Focus single-mindedly on tasks when you are engaged. Minimize nonsense TV and other forms of propaganda media and do something more productive like read instructional or inspirational materials. Find and regularly participate in other outside enjoyable activities that build skills. Listen to educational or motivational materials as you drive or fly.

Develop a Sense of Urgency and Rarely Put Things Off

Stay focused on the present and what you can accomplish today. Take action, make progress and learn along the way. Say no to negativity and take a learning perspective. If you are not motivated to do something then just do it half-fast and learn from it. At least you will be making some progress.

Only Make Commitments that You Can Keep

Don't try to do too much at once. Don't try to force things; don't try too hard, just let it happen. Finish one thing at a time and build a record of finishing personal tasks. Make a list of small tasks to finish on a daily basis and finish them. Make each day a day of progress. Turn the process into a game. Make completing tasks a competition.

Eliminate Negative Influences in Your Life

Surround yourself with optimistic and positive people. Create the relationships to help you get where you want to be. Be curious. Ask questions and seek out others knowledge. Develop working partnerships. Announce your intentions to others and ask them to hold you accountable. Find someone to coach you in needed areas. Regularly seek out feedback and make adjustments along the way.

Do Things that will Help You Create More Energy in Your Life

Participate in some type of fitness program. Make a regular practice of physical and mental recovery by engaging in various types of relaxation

exercises. Walk and think things through. All of these will help supply the brain with oxygen, which is mandatory for peak moments.

Decide to be Happy Today and Everyday from this Moment Forward

Recognize when you are feeling down and then consciously fixate on something more productive. Focus on what is good in your life and what you can do to make it better. Take things lightly. Get out of your comfort zone. Take an active approach. Be independent and take responsibility for generating your own happiness. Ask yourself what you can do about it.

Recognized that Today is the First Day in the Rest of Your Life

Start your life over beginning today. Do not wait until you hit rock bottom. See yourself as a work in progress and move slowly to who you want to be.

In structuring your training program, there are few other important details that need to be addressed to help you adhere. The activities should be challenging, yet enjoyable and exciting. If they are not, you will not likely do them; you won't do them well or won't persist to do them. View them as learning experiences, which is a perspective that you control. Further, they should be personally fulfilling where you gain success and receive the support, recognition, and reward for your hard work. In other words, the difficulty of the activities that you incorporate should progress in a manner in which they challenge you but at the same time you are achieving some success. Only increase the difficulty level when the rate of success is high.

Coincidentally, there are two types of motivation that need to be considered, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is internal; it comes from within. It identifies personal choice and desire, dedication and the feelings of satisfaction from moving towards objectives. Conversely, extrinsic (external) motivating factors include the various types of rewards for achievement, such as winning, recognition, trophies and potentially money. Although it is acceptable to have a healthy combination of the two, intrinsic motivation is more likely to facilitate the long-term achievement of goals. Therefore, feel good about the effort that you are putting in and the progress that you are making and occasionally give yourself a token reward for that effort and progress, particularly after achieving short-term goals.

Regarding your goals, design your plan starting with the long-term goals and then break it down into smaller achievable steps. Indicate dates for accomplishment. Evaluate your progress regularly and modify your plan if the attainment of your goals and dates are convoluted. Make sure that you keep your daily and long-term goal sheets somewhere easily visible and accessible, such as a copy on your refrigerator and one in your practice bag. Read and re-read them often. Cut out pictures from magazines that represent your goals and keep those somewhere visible. For example, pictures of players that you would like to resemble or of players winning championships. Visualize yourself being that person in that situation. Imagine what it will feel like when all your hard work

finally pays off and you achieve your objective. These constant reminders will help keep you motivated and fixated on the process to attain the end result.

Avoiding Staleness and Burnout

Athletic staleness and burnout have become a major problem in golf, particularly among juniors. Players either self-impose or are socially influenced to endure prolonged periods of extensive training to try to reach their competitive goals or gain a perceived advantage. They hold on to the ill-conceived notion that more is better, sometimes working four or more hours a day, seven days a week, for months on end. However, at some point, the intense duration of training becomes counterproductive and may lead to irreparable physical and/or psychological damage. Over-training is the primary factor contributing to athletic injury as well as staleness, which in turn may develop into burnout and complete withdrawal from the activity.

Given the potential severe consequences resulting from over-training it is critical that you learn how to recognize the symptoms of staleness prior to it developing into burnout and more importantly, perhaps take a preventative maintenance approach when structuring your training regimen.

The psychological characteristics associated with staleness may include any combination of the follows:

- ✓ Loss of self-confidence
- ✓ Lack of interest
- ✓ Loss of satisfaction

- ✓ Feelings of helplessness
- ✓ Irritability and impatience
- ✓ Increased perceived exertion
- ✓ Chronic mental fatigue
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Anger/hostility
- ✓ Confusion

The physical characteristics of staleness may include:

- ✓ Performance decrement
- ✓ Low energy
- ✓ Chronic physical fatigue
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ All over body aching
- ✓ Sleep disturbance
- ✓ Weight loss
- ✓ Lack of appetite
- ✓ Gastrointestinal problems
- ✓ Bowel irregularities
- ✓ Respiratory Irregularities
- ✓ Higher resting heart rate
- ✓ Delayed return to normal HR

- ✓ Higher systolic blood pressure
- ✓ Elevated Basal metabolic rate
- ✓ Elevated body temperature

You don't need to display all of these symptoms to be considered stale or be heading toward burnout. In general, if you demonstrate three or more of these symptoms on a consistent basis for over two weeks it is likely that you are stale and may be approaching burnout. If the symptoms persist for six weeks or greater then it is likely that you are burned-out.

The causes of staleness and burnout include:

- ✓ Length of total season
- ✓ Infrequency of scheduled breaks
- ✓ Monotony of training
- ✓ Lack of positive reinforcement
- ✓ Feelings of helplessness
- ✓ Abusiveness from authorities
- ✓ Stringent rules
- ✓ Prolonged periods of high level competitive stress
- ✓ Perceived overload
- ✓ Boredom
- ✓ Perceived low accomplishment

As the old adage states, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

This is the most important point of this discussion. Below I have listed some

preventative maintenance tips for minimizing the chances of staleness and burnout.

Periodize Training

Keep the season length in proper perspective. Create a calendar of the season's most prestigious events appropriate for your skill level. Schedule downtime in between events proportionate to the time needed to prepare for the next. During downtime distance yourself from direct involvement in the activity. Participate in other activities that you find enjoyable or relaxing.

Regulate the Amount and Type of Training Depending On Age, Skill and Physical Fitness Level, and Weather Conditions

There is an optimal amount of training for everyone. This is going to vary based on the previously mentioned factors. What is not optimal is four or more hours a day, seven days a week for eight consecutive weeks. Even the most well conditioned players do not train that much. For the average aspiring player a three-hour combination of technical and fitness training per day, five to six days a week is more than adequate. If your aspirations are not that high, you are preteen, aging, in poor physical condition, or if weather conditions are severe then shorten the duration accordingly.

Structure Practice Sessions to Eliminate Boredom

Make practice challenging but enjoyable. Incorporate different types of drills and games to achieve similar objectives. Periodically, rotate the sequence

of activities to avoid becoming overly repetitious. Strive to make practices and matches more rewarding by setting goals and incorporating incentives.

Cooperatively Develop a Plan and Review

Get other key individuals involved in the process. Allow them to make some suggestions with regard to your training and competitive play. Others knowledge and insights can increase motivation and create an open line of communication. In most cases, you know your physical and mental states and limitations better than anyone. Be aware of any warning signs and frequently assess thoughts, feelings, and physical responses.

Modify Your Support Cast's Behaviors

Parents, spouses, significant others, and coaches can be the greatest allies or worst enemies depending on their attitude and behavior. Make sure that everyone is on that same page with regard to your ultimate objective, the level of their level of involvement and appropriate behaviors and are acting accordingly. Eliminate negative influences whenever possible.

Control Outcomes

Make sure that the activities are appropriate for your skill level, that you obtain ample positive feedback and are experiencing, at minimum, moderate levels of success. Increase the difficulty when the ratio of success to failure becomes high.

Develop Mental and Emotional Control Strategies

The precursor to developing mental and emotional regulation and control is increasing your awareness of your physical and mental states. This is one of the primary objectives of the *Better Golf Solutions* approach: to heighten your awareness and develop the skills necessary for regulation of the mind and body. Incorporate the various relaxation and performance enhancement techniques into your program such as deep breathing, concentration breathing, meditation, progressive relaxation, goal-setting, visualization, attention control, and positive self-talk. Create functional pre-performance, pre-shot, post-shot and post-performance routines. Finally, integrate a learning mentality approach to competition and practice.

Summary Points

- Incorporate motivational strategies to sustain your desire to achieve
- Learn to recognize and prevent staleness and burnout before it happens

Summary and Conclusion

The basic objective of this book has been to provide you with simple deductive methods for assessing what is causing you the loss of strokes and what areas of your game would most benefit from appropriate and dedicated practice to lower your scores. During the course of this book you have learned how to monitor and assess the performance, technical, mental and emotional aspects of your game as well as other life elements that may be impacting your scoring. You have also learned about the common errors that players make both on and off the course, as well as the techniques to improve them. The program ended with various suggestions on how to construct your own plan for self-improvement and maintain the motivation to see it through.

Now that you have all the tools that it takes to think, train, and play like the pros you are ready to embark on the journey towards self-improvement. Gather the information that you need to get started and formulate your plans. Take responsibility for developing yourself into the player that you would like to be and take action. Challenge yourself to achieve. Look for every opportunity to broaden your knowledge and resource base. Experiment with the various performance enhancing techniques and implement the ones that work best for you. And finally, stay focused on your goals and be persistent. If you take my suggestions seriously, make a dedicated effort to apply the techniques described and stick to the process, you will be certain to make advancements in your game. With

regular and consistent application of the principles described, you will one day approach your maximum potential and truly see how good you can get. Good luck, have fun, and remember that **YOU ARE IN CONTROL!**

The Dr. Golf Prescription

- ✓ Assess the statistical areas of your game that are costing you the most strokes
- ✓ Determine the technical, mental and emotional errors that impact your scores
- ✓ Practice the 6 kinesthetic swing awareness exercises daily (10 swings each)
- ✓ Assemble a personal affirmation list and rehearse it 3x daily
- ✓ Construct a reflective imagery list and visualize it nightly before bed
- ✓ Integrate one of the relaxation methods into your nightly bedtime routine
- ✓ Develop functional pre-competitive, pre-shot, post-shot and post-performance routines
- ✓ Devote practice range time to improving the performance areas that are costing you strokes dedicating at least 60% of time to short game
- ✓ Set process and performance goals, monitor your progress and modify your plan when necessary

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