



CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS

People that do not play golf may not be able to appreciate just how difficult this can be. For those of us that do play, we know that it is an ongoing struggle that we sometimes seem to have in control and yet at other times, undeniably out of control. Sound familiar? Kind of like life...wouldn't you say?

Is it really that important to control our emotions on the golf course anyway? Giving way to emotions allows us to experience things that can be life changing. Why squelch something that can be a vehicle of enjoying success, passion, fulfillment or many other things that bring joy or happiness? Well...quite simply, because emotional decisions, whether positive or negative tend to be reckless and very often lead to undesirable results.

When feeling either jubilation or frustration, we will have the tendency to make decisions that stray from logic. Decisions made in that manner can oftentimes lead us into regrettable situations that prudence would have kept us from. This is why having certain playing principles and guidelines...are necessary and can be used to guide us when we are feeling emotion to any extreme.

Equipped with those guidelines, we won't have to block out emotion but can actually use it to our advantage. You see, some people simply have to find a way to eliminate emotions while playing because they lack the guidance of strategy principles. Those who have recognized the importance of disciplined thinking on the golf course can go ahead and enjoy the moment...or even vent some frustration, that is if they'll look to their guide when planning their next shot.

You see, you can go ahead and let the emotions come, whether jubilation or



anger. Just let your course management decisions be based upon sound strategy principles that you have memorized and found to be successful. Emotion can actually be a valuable tool in helping us to play better...again, as long as we use already established guidelines to govern our decisions about how to play.

Frustration brought to the surface can actually help us! Sometimes, you need to give yourself a swift kick...in order to shake your mind to the extent necessary to get focused again. This is an instance where getting angry can be beneficial. Use anger though, as an opportunity to right the ship or...regain your focus. Don't let anger cause you to stray from being focused. This is where I see many people wreck (for lack of a better term) a round of golf.

They might be focused and playing quite well. Maybe they missed a short putt because it hit a spike mark. They get so angry at the bad luck of hitting a spike mark that they lose their composure for a hole or so. That might have been all it took for them to board the slow train to disaster. You know the rest of the story; their round went from great to just another round in the long line of unfulfilled rounds that started off with so much potential and then slowly disintegrated.

Now...let me give you an example! Let's say John is playing well but on the fifteenth hole he three putts from seven feet. He is angry and when he steps up on the sixteenth tee, he decides that he is going to cut the inside of the dogleg so that he can have a chance of reaching this par 5 in two shots. He knows from prior experience that cutting the inside of this dogleg can be disastrous because there are many trees on the inside of the dogleg. He also pauses to think about how his instructor has told him that it is better to err to the outside of doglegs when a lot of trees are present on that particular hole.

His knowledge of that rule of thumb suddenly says to him "play smart and avoid the inside of tree lined doglegs." His emotions are saying "ahhhhh go ahead and go for it so that you can regain the lost shot on fifteen." Then another principle comes to his mind. Don't let past bad decisions make you



stray from sound decisions now. The past is the past! Forget it and move on.

John realizes that there will be other opportunities to play aggressive but will wait for those to present themselves rather than push the issue right now. Maybe he ends up bogeying the hole because he pulls his drive into the exact situation he was trying to avoid...to the left of the fairway and in the trees.

That happens even when we play smart. That's just the nature of golf. However, it wasn't a course management or loss of focus issue, he simply hit a bad shot.

He then needs to have the composure necessary to say to himself...it was just a swing error, not something that was the result of me losing my temper and deciding to go for broke to get back the shot that I lost on fifteen.

In summary, establish guidelines that will lead you to make good decisions while playing golf. These guidelines must have preeminence over what you are feeling at the time. Be careful to notice how much emotion is too much for you to be able to continue thinking correctly. Train yourself to make wise decisions even when your emotions want to explode. Consider it a victory in knowing that you can control your thoughts on the golf course and not be controlled by them.

Good golfing!

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