



PRACTICING YOUR SHORT GAME

This much-neglected part of the game is critical for consistency, at least as far as scoring is concerned. A breakdown in this area will serve to put extra pressure on other aspects of your game, which can very easily start a vicious cycle of inconsistency and poor performance that will not only cause your scores to become worse but eventually lead to a confidence problem that will compromise your entire game.

Conversely, having a great short game will make up for poor ball striking virtually every time. Why? Because poor ball striking doesn't always penalize you a stroke. Short game problems however...usually do. Therefore, it behooves us to not only become more proficient with technique around the greens, but also have the knowledge and understanding to choose the right shot for the situation.

Let me quote what I call "The Golden Rule Around The Green!" "Keep the ball as low as you can, only use as much loft as you need and get the ball rolling as quickly as possible." Adherence to this rule will substantially help your ability to score if you do not presently use this philosophy.

You might have to learn how to run the ball up to the hole with a seven iron instead of flying it most of the way with a wedge. Learning the three-wood run up would also be beneficial. The putter, although specifically designed for use on the green, is quite often the right club when you are off the green but fairly close. If you can force yourself to learn different shots around the green so that you feel you can hit a variety of shots for any given situation, you greatly enhance your ability to score well.

There is a disease that plagues male teenagers. I call it "flop-happy disease." It is very easy to spot. Under just about any situation around the green, the player reaches for his lob or sand wedge to execute the shot. Even if the player is two feet off the green and has 30 or 40 feet of green with which to work. The reason why this disease plagues male teenagers is because at this age, they are producing more testosterone than they ever have and they tend



to make many of their decisions based upon what that hormone tells them to do.

This is one of the reasons why male teenagers have astronomical insurance rates for driving a vehicle. They just tend to take more chances and live a little more on the edge. Discretion is not usually an accurate word with which to label them. That same boldness tells them to play the “hero-shot”, if I may use the term. Many times, the worse thing that can happen to them is to pull that kind of shot off. When they do pull it off, they will tend to think that not only was it the right shot to play, they will also satisfy the craving that testosterone gives them to be a hero.

Well...let me add another famous saying “The difference between men and boys, is the size of their toys.” You get the point here don’t you? Most of us men are guilty of the same mistakes that we made when we were younger, we just make them on a different scale. I would like to make a suggestion that will help you to be confident that you are playing the correct shot for any given situation.

Take six balls, your favorite wedge to use around the green, and a seven iron. Also, go ahead and include a measuring tape, writing tablet and a pen. Mark three of the balls with a “P” (pitch) and three with a “C” (chip). Then take your tablet and write “pitch” on the left center of a page at the top and “chip” on the right center of the same page at the top. Now mark one through five on the far left side of the page, one at the top and then two under the one and so on, so that you can record results for several different shots that you are going to hit.

Choose five different shots around the green where either playing a low chip or playing a lofted pitch are possible options. You might stick a tee in the ground at each of the positions so that you know exactly where each spot is and can return to that spot after playing some of the other shots.

Now, start at one of those positions marked with a tee and hit six shots. Three that are low chips hit with the seven iron and then three shots that are more lofted pitches that were hit with the lofted wedge. Set your club down and go measure how far each of the balls are from the hole. Record the



average distance from the hole of the three balls that were hit with each club by marking that average distance under the word “pitch” or “chip” and to the right of each number from one through five. Go around to each tee and repeat the hitting and measuring procedure from each spot.

After hitting six shots from each tee and recording the results, you’ll start to get an idea of which club and technique is correct for you on each shot. Don’t stop there though, if you have the time during a practice session to hit those six shots from each tee three or four times, you will get a more accurate statistic of how you performed with each club.

On the golf course, you will not only have a better feel for which shot you usually get closer to the hole, you will have statistics to back up your decision. Believe me...the person that knows that he/she is playing the right shot for each situation, will consistently produce better strokes than if they are distracted by indecision as to whether they are playing the shot that is best suited for them to play.

I would like to suggest something else that you can do to strengthen your game. Practice the shot that usually ends up further from the hole every now and then. You never know when a certain situation might call for that shot. The golfer that has more than one shot in their quiver has an advantage over the golfer that doesn’t. Try your best to re-evaluate your short game every month or so by repeating this procedure, recording the results, and memorizing how you do for any given situation around the green.

You may not always pull off a good shot from around the green. However, let’s increase the odds of hitting a good shot by making wise decisions that are based on fact...not wishful thinking or what your testosterone levels are telling you.

Good golfing!

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