

A Consistent Routine Will Aid In Consistent Results

By Trent Warner

What you do in preparation for a shot, both physically and mentally, along with the consistency to this pre-shot routine is crucial and directly relates to the consistency of your results. Having a sound routine on the course is of the utmost importance. It is your foundation and what you rely on during every situation in golf. Some of those situations include first tee jitters, a pressure-packed putt, a must up-and-down and any other imaginable circumstance.

A routine, while often overlooked by the golfing public, is where the pros and top amateurs find comfort and confidence. It is a component to the game that should be practiced and yet created with a touch of individualization. There are many different processes that you will see when watching the world's top golfers and it is this pre-shot ritual that allows them to perform so well in what seems to be the most anxious of times. Begin to watch what great golfers do before they hit the ball. They hit quality shots but it is their preparatory skills, physically and mentally, which propels them, and what can propel you, into quality golf.

Three areas of a routine you can look to develop include the following:

- **PRE-SHOT:** this is where you evaluate all of the factors that go into choosing the appropriate target, shot and club. These factors sometimes don't allow you to hit the shot you'd like to hit and sometimes you find yourself in a predicament in which you're not sure what to do. Those are the situations to remember and go over with your teaching professional or at the least, recreate in practice so that you can find a way to hit the shot. Regardless, you want to do a complete evaluation of things like elevation change, wind speed and direction, location of hazards and obstacles so that you can find an appropriate target, the yardage to your intended target, etc. This evaluation will aid in making the best decision. Hit the type of shot that you know you can hit.
- **JUST BEFORE:** this is the few seconds just before you hit the shot and where you need to create your own trigger that confirms you're in a beneficial frame of mind and ready to swing. One of my students says that he sees a "runway" from his ball to his target just before he swings. This personal cue tells him that he's focused and not distracted. Matter of a fact, most people who find themselves in this committed mindset state that they don't hear or see distractions and don't think about the realm of possible results except the best one. They're fully committed and that's a healthy way to play golf. Jack Nicklaus said he never hit a shot until he could see where he wanted it to go before he hit it.

A high handicapper will be surprised at how often the mind will make the muscles hit the ball to the target, even with a far less than perfect swing.

-- Harvey Penick

- **POST-SHOT:** this is the part of your routine where your reaction to a shot can make or break you. It can be quite detrimental to bring negative emotions and thoughts to your next shot or next hole. You want to leave it all behind you and move on. A process that many good golfers adhere to is to take a practice swing immediately after watching their shot, which was less than desirable, come to rest. This practice swing should feel more like what you wanted to do. You might even imagine the shot going exactly where you had intended. Then stick the club back in your bag and get excited to hit your next shot. This post-shot routine is a trigger that will help you forget the bad shots and carry on regardless of its result.

Golf will always be an inconsistent game. Less inconsistency is what all golfers are striving for. What you do physically and mentally before, during and after each shot will enhance your game and your attitude. Developing and honing your routine even if it's only five minutes in your backyard can benefit you greatly.

Trent Wearner was most recently nominated for Golf Magazine's Top 100 Teachers in the Nation. He was the 2004 Colorado PGA Teacher of the Year and is recognized nationally as "Best Teachers in State" by Golf Digest and a "Top Teacher in the Southwestern U.S." by Golf Magazine. He teaches side by side Colorado's top teaching professionals Tim Odegard, Tom Talbott and Dana Smith also recognized nationally by Golf Digest at the Meridian Golf Learning Center. 303-645-8000 or www.mglc.net.