

Target and Club Selection Factors

By Trent Wearer

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There are several factors to evaluate when choosing a target and club for each full swing shot. Some golfers may not even realize that they're going through all of these factors while others don't spend enough time evaluating each characteristic pertinent to the shot in front of you. The following is a complete list of the factors to be included in your evaluation of choosing a target and club.

1. Lie
 - The lie of the ball is a crucial determining factor for what club you can use effectively. A ball that is sitting down in the rough, for instance, may require a club with more loft than what would get you to the hole, but forwarding it close to the green is better than not getting it out at all. If the ball is in a depression or divot, your setup and swing may need to be altered causing a lower shot and therefore more roll.
2. Total Yardage of Hole
 - Breaking the hole into playable yardages is extremely advantageous, especially shorter holes or ones with hazards. You may not need to hit driver. Instead you can tee off with an easier club avoiding all of the trouble and still having a short club in for your approach.
3. Yardage of shot at hand
 - Determine the yardage the ball needs to carry. Of course, knowing the distances you hit each club is crucial and some consistency is necessary.
4. Wind/Weather
 - Gauging the wind can be quite a chore as you'll often feel the wind going in one direction from where you stand in the fairway while the flag flutters in the opposite direction. This is typical of courses that are more tree-lined. Learning to feel the wind and discover how much club to add when the wind is against you and how many clubs to go down when the wind is with you is very feel oriented. Don't forget that in colder weather the ball tends to travel in the air a shorter distance.
5. Elevation Change
 - Is the green above or below me? Take more club if the green is above you and less if the green is below. There is such an equation that has to do with the distance you are away from your target blended with the change in elevation but a common rule is to add a club for every ten feet in increased elevation and subtract a club for every ten feet reduction in elevation.
6. Location of the Hazards/Obstacles
 - Directionally find a target away from any hazards or obstacles and commit to it. Regarding the distance, would you rather be short or long of your intended target. In other words, where's the best place to miss this shot. Better players spend time during practice rounds scanning for such areas.

7. Ball Striking
 - Having consistent contact certainly relates to the distance that the ball travels. If you've been consistently hitting the toe of your club, you've been losing distance so moving up a club is appropriate. On the other hand, many good players get pumped up during the actual tournament and hit it further than they did in a practice round.
8. Curvature
 - Any curvature, either from your natural ball flight or from an uneven lie, will make you have a target in which you'd like the ball to start and then an ending target of where the ball end up.
9. Surface of Landing Spot
 - You may find the greens to be hard as a rock or the fairways to be soft. In the winter in Colorado, the fairways and greens tend to harden and create more roll. Hard or soft areas need to be accounted for when choosing a target and selecting a club. Like in the Curvature Factor, you may have a landing target and then an ending target for your distance especially if the surface is hard.

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