



*BOOKLET #3:  
IMPROVE THE MENTAL SIDE OF  
YOUR GOLF GAME,  
DURING THE ROUND*

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## IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL GAME DURING THE ROUND

### #1: AN EAGLE THREE AFTER MY FIRST DETAILED POSITIVE VISUALIZATION

If golfers visualize successful outcomes prior to hitting the shot, they are more likely to hit a better shot. In contrast, if they visualize an unsuccessful outcome, their muscles become tense, causing shot results they do not want.

I am sure you have watched Tiger Woods stalk a clutch putt that he must sink on the last hole to win a tournament. You sense that he is confidently and intently visualizing the exact line the putt must take to go in the cup. He often says he visualizes the exact action and result he needs. He often recalls or visualizes past successes in similar situations to bolster his confidence. One thing is certain: at this stage in his career, when the tournament is on the line, Tiger Woods sinks a higher percentage of those clutch putts than anyone I can recall.

Statistics show that virtually all of his key competitors, at least up until his win at the U.S. Open in 2008 on a badly injured knee, consistently shoot higher scores when playing directly with him in that day's pairing than they do when not playing with him. They must be thinking of how excellent players as a group consistently wilt when they are in face-to-face combat on the last holes with this extraordinary golfer.

How can you develop the behavior of intently visualizing success just before hitting the shot and producing better shots when it really counts? Let me first tell you how you will *not* do it. You will not do it by the fuzzy and simple admonition to "think positive."

Dr. Gary Wiren is the former Director of Education for the PGA of America and one of the Top 100 golf professionals in the country. He is now the head professional at Donald Trump's course in West Palm Beach. I have the highest respect for Gary. He wrote a valuable booklet on visualizing positive shots prior to hitting them that scored with me and produced behavior change and instant success.

Gary recommended seeing, hearing and feeling the positive shot you want to hit in exquisite and complete detail. After the shot, he listed specific questions in a printed checklist you should read and answer on the course to provide feedback as to how detailed your visualization was.

Here are questions you should ask yourself in evaluating how accurate you were in your pre-shot visualization:

1. Did you hear the swish of the club in the air?
2. Did you hear the sound of solid impact?
3. Did you feel the ball hit solidly in the sweet spot of the club?
4. Did you see in which direction the ball flew initially in relation to the intended starting line?

5. Did you see how high the ball flew?
6. Did you visualize whether it flew straight or in a curving direction?
7. Did you see the effect of the wind on ball flight and distance?
8. Did you see in which direction(s) the ball curved and by how much?
9. Did you visualize the exact spot where it landed?
10. Did you visualize how many times the ball bounced and in what direction?
11. How far did the ball roll and in what direction?
12. Did you see the exact spot where it stopped?
13. If you did not visualize it going in the cup, in what direction did it stop from the target and at what distance?

At first, I had to answer “No” to most of the questions. I had a hazy, vague process of visualization. I decided to use Gary’s suggestion of being far more specific in my pre-shot visualization.

Here is what happened on my first shot after visualizing in detail what I wanted the ball, my club and body to do. While playing the 12th hole at the Dominion Club with Bruce Rector, a friend of mine, I decided to try Gary Wire’s method of visualization.

After two shots, I was 56 yards from the pin on a par five hole over 500 yards long. I decided to hit a 60-degree wedge. First, I “listened” to the sound of the club hitting the ball and “felt” the club hit the divot. I “watched” the initial flight of the ball as being three yards to the right of the target and its exact height. I “saw” the ball curving three yards to the left. I “watched” the downward flight and the exact point on the green where it was to land. Then, I “observed” the ball taking two more bounces and the ball rolling into the cup.

What actually happened to the shot? The ball flew straight, reached the exact height I imagined, curved three yards, hit the exact point on the green I envisioned, bounced two more times, rolled on the planned path and -yes- rolled into the cup for my eagle three.

Bruce Rector looked at me and yelled at me, “You son of a gun. You eagled it the last time we played this hole when you hit the green in two and rolled in a 35-foot putt. Since we had played only three rounds together, he must have thought I eagled the hole in most of the rounds.

I shrugged my shoulders nonchalantly as if it were a common event to eagle this hole. I did not tell him those two eagles were the *only* ones I recall making on the hole.

Now, you would think I would have visualized *all* future shots in such positive detail. I did on many shots, but I am embarrassed to say I did not do so on more than half my shots. In the next headline point, I tell you how to evaluate your positive visualization techniques during a round, increase these desired behaviors and sustain them long term. I will use these evaluation techniques myself far more often and will never have to admit again that I failed to use them on every shot.

## INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF DETAILED PRE-SHOT POSITIVE VISUALIZATIONS

You should visualize in exquisite detail hitting a good or great shot before you actually strike every ball.

The odds are 100 to 1 that you do not do so. Instead, you probably recall previous *bad* shots or look at places you do *not* want the ball to stop. What actions should you take to increase sharply the percentage of great shots you visualize in detail before you hit the shot? As an expert in creating behavior change, let me urge you to take the following steps:

### PRIOR TO PRACTICE OR PLAYING

1. Print out the List of the Positive Pre-Shot Visualization Behaviors above
2. Place a copy in your golf bag, protected by a clear-plastic sleeve.

### DURING PRACTICE

3. At practice, select a narrow target, such as a flagstick, for each shot.
4. At the outset of practice, read the list of behaviors on the list above.
5. Try to execute all or a partial list of these behaviors before each practice shot.
6. After the shot, re-read the list to see which steps you did or did not use.
7. Tell yourself that any step you used in the positive visualization process prior to each shot is an improvement.
8. Continue this cycle until you do not have to look at the list to recall all of the steps.

### DURING THE ROUND

1. Once you are doing them on all practice shots, or at least 90% of them, try it on the course.
2. Record the number you used of steps you used on each shot during the round on the following Positive Visualization form
3. Congratulate yourself on whatever number of steps you use on each step

POSITIVE VISUALIZATION FEEDBACK ON SHOTS EXCEPT PUTTS								
LOCATION: PRACTICE OR COURSE ..... DATE								
.....NAME.....								
HOLE #	SHOT # ON HOLE	# OF VISUALIZ STEPS	HOLE #	SHOT # ON HOLE	# OF VISUALIZ STEPS	HOLE #	SHOT # ON HOLE	# OF VISUALIZ STEPS



When you are under pressure, too many thoughts can circulate in your mind, distracting you and causing you to become nervous. If you become too conscious of a string of swing thoughts, you are more likely to hit the ball into a troublesome spot.



I suggest you use a simple, easy-to-recall mantra. “Here is the ball. There is the hole.” You focus only on *what* you are to hit and *where* you want the ball to go. You crowd out many conflicting swing thoughts. Just keep repeating this on every shot, from the drive to the final putt: “Here is the ball. There is the hole.”

## **#4:** *CLICK AN IMAGINARY REMOTE TO CHANGE VIDEOS IN YOUR MIND*



Joanne Kitusky, a member of the Dominion Club, was about to compete for the club championship. She asked me to help her with the mental pressure of competing. She said, “I can play as well or better than the other players in club, city and state tournaments, but I do not perform as well as I should under pressure.

She said she gets negative thoughts and “videos” in her mind. She said her tee-to-green shots were excellent, but her putting was below standard.

As to the mental side, I asked her what she did watching a TV channel when a show appeared she did not want to watch. She said, “I switch channels. I am a hyper-active channel-switcher.”

“Show me the physical action you take doing that.”

She laughed, stuck her arm out straight, and pushed down on the channel-switching button and said, “Take that, wrestling match!”

I said, “Great. Whenever you see any negative golf action or result during practice or a golf round, I want you to stick your arm out straight immediately, click the remote and say to yourself, ‘Take that, negative video.’” Delete the negative image and insert a positive video of you playing a great shot. The reason for actually sticking your arm out and not just imagining yourself doing it is that it helps to trigger the desired positive visualization.

She said she used her “remote-control, channel-switching behavior” often and won the club championship.

Four year later, I asked her after her latest club championship victory whether she was still using the mental-video, channel-switching behavior. She apparently had not, because she seemed to pause trying to recall it. If I am correct, I did not ask her to take written notes on any instruction, store them in the golf bag and review them often. That was my mistake. I find almost all golfers forget much of the instruction without taking and reviewing notes.

However, she started taking lessons from Janet Phillips, an instructor in Chesterfield County, near Richmond, Virginia. Joanne's handicap dropped from a seven to a two, meeting my criterion for a great teacher. Much of the instruction dealt with the mental game. Any instructor whose teaching helps lower a player's average score or handicap is someone I wish to promote. I mention the instructor's name because others may wish to take lessons from her.

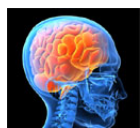
## **#5:** GAIN CONFIDENCE WHEN YOU SEE YOUR COMPETITOR IS NERVOUS

When you see your competitor is nervous, feel a surge of confidence. I used to compete with a player in Senior Club Championships in match play who had a *plus* four handicap when he was younger. As you may know, that means that if you have a handicap of four (which is really a "minus" four), they *subtract* four shots from your gross score. In his case, a *plus* four handicap means he scored so low, they *added* four shots to his score. In this tournament, we were playing based on the gross score (no handicap).

On the first several holes of such tournaments, I noticed his hands shook slightly, especially on chip shots and putts. Bobby Jones wrote that he looked for such signals and felt more confident when he saw them.

In one year, he shot a 71 in the first round. I hit the ball well, but I could not get the ball in the hole or on our treacherous, small, undulating greens to save my life. I shot 80, a high score for me at the time. At first, they placed me in the next to last group going off Sunday. I wanted to play in the last group, and my score and the rules entitled me to be there. My reasoning was that if I played well — and I was determined to do so — I wanted the scoring leader to see me play; thereby adding to the pressure he might feel. They rearranged the pairings to place me in his foursome.

I noticed that his hands shook slightly on the first hole. Our scores were the same on the first two holes. Then, I scored lower than he did on eight holes in a row. The pressure of seeing his lead vanishing was too much for him. As I played close to par, his game collapsed. I won by a wide margin.



The lessons here? One, watch for any evidence that your opponent is nervous. Two, use such evidence to build your confidence. Three, visualize winning, even when you are nine shots behind with one round to play. Four, make sure your opponent sees or hears about your comeback round early, so that it applies mental pressure that may cause a collapse.

## **#6:** I DID NOT MENTALLY PREPARE FOR MY COMPETITOR'S FAMOUS TEE SHOT ON THE 18<sup>TH</sup> HOLE OF THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

I lost two extra-hole matches out of 19 I played in tournaments. In one loss, I had a downhill putt of about 55 feet at Ridgewood Country Club in Danbury, CT. The greens were super fast and this putt took an even more precipitous downward slope 12 feet from the cup. Most everyone's putt from that spot would reach the hill and either stop about twelve feet short or roll a few inches more and keep rolling until the ball was 10 or more feet past the cup. Putting first, I decided to make sure I two-putted because my opponent's ball was 53 feet away, almost on the same line and downhill. I stopped the ball two feet from the hole. Perfect. Unfortunately, my opponent sank that extremely difficult 55-foot putt to win.

In another tournament, I was playing the final match for the Virginia Super Senior Championship at the Cascades course. My opponent was the former winner of the Virginia Amateur Championship and the Virginia Senior Championship. I came to the 18<sup>th</sup> hole one up, not having been down in any match. The 18<sup>th</sup> hole was uphill, over water, against a 25-mile wind and into a green so slick that it was almost impossible not to three-putt if you hit it past the cup.

My tee shot stopped 20 feet below the cup, a great position to par or birdie the hole. After five days of golf and never having been down in any match, it looked like the Championship was mine. However, my opponent made a *hole in one*.

I was shell -shocked. I try to anticipate everything my opponent can do well so I am not surprised, but I never anticipated a hole in one. I would like to tell you I won on the 19<sup>th</sup> hole. I did not, he did.

When I arrived at my course in Florida three months later, four golfers came by one at a time within two minutes and gave me condolences on my hole-in-one loss. It surprised me because I had not yet told anyone at my Florida course about the heartbreaking loss. I finally asked the fourth golfer how he heard of it. He said the story made the USGA's monthly national magazine.



The lesson to me and to you: Anticipate *everything* your opponent will do, including getting a hole in one on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole of a State Championship.

## **#7:** FOCUS ONLY ON THIS SHOT, NOT THE CONSEQUENCES OF IT





While you are playing in a tournament, do not dwell on the *consequences* of winning or losing. If you do, you will probably soon be in deep trouble. You want to avoid thinking of accepting the cup, giving a victory speech or seeing your name in the paper. You can do that *before* the round, but you should not do it *during* the round.

The same goes for thinking of negative consequences, such as visualizing the bad shots or the spectator's groans at your miserable shots. If you hit a bad shot, analyze what caused it and what you will do to avoid a similar result in the future. Then forget it.

Instead, keep thinking about the process of hitting one shot — the *current* one — not the next ones.

## **#8:** ONCE THE DOWNSWING STARTS, A THOUGHT WILL NOT CHANGE BALL FLIGHT

Can you alter your swing if you decide to do so at the top of the swing or later, before impact? One neat experiment strongly says you cannot. Researchers using an indoor net told golfers that whenever a strobe light went off at the top of their swing, they were to miss the ball. No one missed the ball. It suggests strongly that golfers cannot think of a swing change at the top of the swing and execute it. The downswing occurs in about a fifth of a second or so. Once the swing reaches the top of the backswing, the result is preordained.



Research adds evidence that the golfer who is attempting to learn how to make a swing change on the practice range at full speed do so at swing speeds far slower than normal, say, *ten times slower* than normal. This allows the student time to observe, evaluate and modify the swing. Once they train their muscles, they can gradually increase speed.

## **#9:** SHOULD YOU THINK ABOUT HOW TO MAKE THE SWING OR JUST DO IT

Byron Nelson, the golfer who won 11 straight tournaments in 1946, said about golf, "It's like eating. You don't have to think to eat."

I think the world of Byron Nelson and respect him greatly. I prize the hand-lettered brown envelope I received from him at his Texas ranch, containing an autographed copy of his book personalized to me. The famous portrait painter Everett Raymond Kinstler, who painted his portrait for the book, asked him to autograph it and send it to me.

However, Byron is not a behavioral scientist. Eating does take thought, training, reinforcement and/or correction, at least during many years of childhood. Which eating utensil do I use?

Which one do I use with this type of food and quantify? How do I get it in my mouth without spilling it? What do I do if I drop a piece of silverware on the floor? Should I return the insult my brother just gave me by throwing food at him? Should I slip food to my pet dog who is sitting at my feet? What do I do if I get a fish bone in my mouth? What do I do with the tomato sauce I dropped on the white rug?

What Byron meant was that after a child had received many months and years of parental instruction, correction and consequences (praise, criticism and punishment), the teenager could eat to meet parental standards and do it on a subconscious level.

That is similar to golf. At first, we need to receive a considerable amount of instruction or learn to observe in specific terms what great golfers do. Then, we must mimic them accurately or we can conduct experiments in how to swing that millions of golfers have attempted. It is like reinventing fire and the wheel. Then we need to have self-correcting feedback systems that tell us how we are doing. In addition, we need to hit a huge number of shots with all the clubs and in a wide variety of shots. Maybe then, we can play without thinking, that is, until the shots fly in strange places too often and we need to correct the ball flight.



Therefore, if you are a beginner learning to play golf or you are an experienced golfer wanting to improve, do not shun *thinking* about golf. Instead, you should avoid having *too many* swing thoughts for the shot at hand.

## #10: HOW MANY THOUGHTS BEFORE AND DURING A SWING

In an ideal world where you hit shot after shot perfectly, you would not have any specific swing thought prior to the shot or during it. Just think about where you want the ball to fly and swing away. Alas, our golf performance is rarely, if ever, perfect. It seems one or more parts of our game are giving us trouble that day. Once we correct that, some other part of the game is giving us fits.

If you are not hitting a certain shot well, you can keep repeating the swing and hit a high number of shots that cost you extra strokes. However, most golfers will attempt one or more adjustments until they hit a more satisfactory shot. I will occasionally hit shots where my head has moved too far forward at impact. It usually results in a shorter shot and one that goes too far left.

Instead of not having any thoughts during the swing, I will tell myself just *prior* to the shot to take a stance with the head on a line set behind the ball and at impact on a vertical line from my nose back of the ball.



How many swing thoughts can you safely entertain prior to the shot? I do not recall reading or hearing of any experiments that truly tested this. Bobby Jones writes that he did not want to have more than two swing thoughts at any one time,

preferably one. Here is my advice.

1. *PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SWING*

If the thoughts involve the grip, aim and alignment, stance or projected ball flight — all static positions — you can have many thoughts prior to the swing. The reason is that you have more time to think of what to do and briefly monitor to see if you have done it correctly. That is not true of the actual swing, which takes less than two seconds to complete.

2. *BACKSWING*

If the swing thoughts involve a change in the backswing, you can have fewer thoughts than for the pre-swing behaviors, as in #1 above.

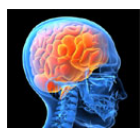
3. *DOWNSWING*

If the thoughts involve the downswing, the swing is so fast from the top of the swing to impact that it is probably impossible to have a thought during it and react to it.

4. *AFTER IMPACT TO THE FINISH*

If the thoughts involve the swing from impact to the finish, I would question whether the swing thoughts or swing changes after impact have any value. After impact, you could fall into a ditch and it will have no effect on ball flight. Trying to change the swing movements *after* impact is like trying to change the path of a tracer bullet after you fire the gun. The tracer bullet gives you slightly delayed feedback on how accurate or inaccurate you were at the moment you fired the bullet. In golf, the only value of the follow-through is to give you delayed feedback, and possibly misleading feedback, on what you did earlier in the swing.

## *#11: IF YOUR OPPONENT IS UPSET AT YOU OR A RULING, YOU HAVE THE UPPER HAND*



In tournaments, you may encounter an opponent who becomes upset with you or an adverse ruling. Instead of becoming irritated at your opponent, rejoice. Most such opponents spend so much time railing against their bad fortune that they lose focus and play worse.

## *#12: VISUALIZE WHERE YOU WANT THE BALL TO GO, NOT WHERE YOU DO NOT WANT IT TO GO*

The coach of a former number one player in the world, now over 50 years of age has a player who had won the Masters and the British Open. As a result, he has played in it for over 20 years. He knew every nook and cranny of the course and where *not* to hit it on each hole. The

coach told me that he dwells too much on where *not* to hit it on this course. Instead, he should visualize where he does intend to hit it.

However, the player, who is now over 50 years of age, made the 36-hole cut at the Masters the last two years. They toughened the course considerably in recent years. Therefore, I must admire his feat of making the cut the last two years, especially in a player who had lost some of his youthful skills. Perhaps the player talks about where not to hit it, but thinks about where to hit it just prior to the shot.



In advance of the round and the shot, think about where you want to hit the ball on each shot and hole.

### **#13:** *GIVE A FIRM HANDSHAKE AND LOOK THE OPPONENT IN THE EYE*



When first meeting an opponent you are to play that day, offer a firm handshake and look the opponent in the eye with a steady gaze. That was the advice Bobby Jones gave readers of his instruction books. I believe there is something to that, though I have no data to prove it. Golfers who are losers seem to walk, talk, act and play as a losers.

I have seen many of the game's greatest players close up. They have a dominant look in their eye. That includes Ben Hogan, Bobby Jones, Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Sam Snead, Lee Trevino, Gary Player, Tom Watson and Annika Sorenstam. Do the better players start out with that look or do they acquire it because they play well? I do not know. What I do know is that I first saw some of these players when they were starting out, looked them in the eye, saw them hit just one shot and concluded they were star material. I believe it is what they radiate, rather than any talent-detecting antennae I might have.

### **#14:** *RECORD DATA AND SUMMARIZE IT DURING THE ROUND*

You will have more confidence if you play better golf. To play better, you should record data on your performance. I have mountains of case histories that prove golfers play better when they record data on their performance immediately during the round, summarize it periodically during the round and adjust something during that same round based on the data. While we see every shot, our minds do not sort and summarize the data on a cumulative basis like a computer. As a result, even super star professional players do not accurately perceive their performance unless they receive cumulative data. In the absence of such feedback, 80% or more of all golfers overestimate their performance, often grossly.

Golfers record data that is of little use to them in correcting their shots and score. If they do record data, it is almost always one or more of these that I found to be almost useless: fairways hit, greens hit, number of putts taken, number of holes they got it up or down in one putt from around the green and number of sand shots where they took one putt to hole out.

The problem is that none of that data tells the golfer the direction of where the ball stopped in relation to the target or its distance from it. It does not list the distance of the original shot, the club used or the lie or target conditions. It does not state the initial direction of ball flight or later curvature. It would be like a stockbroker's report that lumped the data on all stocks into just one statistic at the end of the year: "You lost 60% of the value of your ten investments."



To find useful measurements and forms to record the data, go to Recording Forms on my web site [ApplyGolfLessons.com](http://ApplyGolfLessons.com) and select one or more of them to use during rounds and practice.

## **#15:** NEVER DISPLAY OR STATE DISGUST WITH A SHOT

### IN A MATCH



When you hit a bad shot, you should never display or state a feeling of disgust. The competitor will see the bad shot anyway. Do not give the opponent a further boost in confidence by demonstrating that you have also lost control of your emotions.

Instead, play calmly, as if you are confident you will come back and win. Besides, the time you spend venting your spleen is time you could better spend analyzing what to do differently and correctly on the next shot.

## **#16:** CHECK AIM AND ALIGNMENT FOR ACCURACY AND CONFIDENCE

All golfers aim their clubface and align their body inaccurately. Some do it on virtually all full shots and others do it periodically or for a given shot. Golfers will often have their feet going in one direction and their shoulders in another. They will not only be incorrect in aim and alignment, they will be inconsistent. It afflicts all golfers, even superstars. The amount of misalignment can be astonishing.

There are many reasons why they aim and align inaccurately:

1. The basic reason this occurs is that they do not seek to obtain accurate feedback on where they aim the clubface at address and align their body.
2. In addition, they often do not know how to obtain accurate feedback.
3. They seldom check on this during practice and almost never during a round.
4. During practice, they almost never place a club on the ground to aid aim and alignment. Only 1.5% of amateurs have a club on the ground during practice at any one time. Only 6.0% of Tour players do, usually the major tournament winners.

5. In addition, amateurs aim at a wide target, such as a fairway, green, wide tree or over a sand bunker, instead of a narrow target, such as a flagpole, the narrow trunk of a small tree or the edge of a green.
6. Amateurs even have trouble placing the club on the ground accurately.
7. They also are inaccurate in selecting a very narrow spot on the ground through which they draw a narrow line to act as the starting line of the shot.



For help in aim and alignment see “Written Solutions” on my web site. Then, click on Aim and Alignment. Some players say it transformed their game. It will definitely cause you to aim and align more accurately and hit straighter shots. Equally important, it will cause you to be more confident and to see how inaccurate your opponent(s) aim and align and how they never check the accuracy of their aim and alignment.

## **#17:** *WATCH YOUR LAST BALL FLIGHT TO KNOW WHAT TO CORRECT AT IMPACT ON THE NEXT SIMILAR SHOT*

You improve your scores and build your confidence when your shots stop at or close to your target and you do that consistently. To produce that, you must control the direction of ball flight to that stopping location.

Other than the wind and the slope of the lie, what controls the direction of ball flight are the direction of the clubface at impact and the direction of the clubhead at impact. When I ask 100 golfers on the practice range what caused each of their last five shots to go where they did, over 90% cannot tell me accurately. They not only do not mention the correct direction of their clubhead and clubface at impact, they do not mention their club at all. Instead, they only mention some movement in their body that they did or did not make. Their body movements are only the means of moving the clubhead and clubface.

On full shots, you cannot see accurately the direction of the clubhead or the direction of the clubface at impact, but you can accurately state the general direction of the clubhead path and the clubface direction at impact by observing the ball flight and applying ball flight laws.

How? You start by selecting an imaginary line on which you want to start the ball. Wind or slope effects aside, if you intend to hit a straight shot, that imaginary line will be straight to the target. In that case, the ball should start on a line straight to the hole. If you hit the ball on this straight line, you had the clubface at impact on a line that matches that intended starting line.

However, you may wish to start the shot to the right or left of the target line and later curve the ball back in the opposite direction. For example, suppose you wish to fly the ball about 10 yards to the right of the line to the target and then curve it back an equal distance, 10 yards to the left. In this case, the clubhead path at impact must be on a line ten yards to the right of the line to the target. However, the clubface at impact must be looking to the left, on a line to the target.

Suppose you observe your ball flight in relation to the intended starting line and find it flies initially to the right or left of your initial intended line. In that case, the clubhead path was looking at impact in the same direction the ball initially takes.

The clubface direction at impact controls the direction of any later curvature. Thus, if the ball curves later to the right, the clubface was looking to the right at impact. If a ball curves later to the left, the clubface was looking to the left at impact.

Nothing is more important in golf than controlling ball flight. Nothing is worse than hitting shots and having no clue as to where the clubhead path was at impact or where the clubface was looking at impact, or thinking you know and being wrong. My research with golfers practicing at the driving range reveals that only 10% of them could tell me accurately where the clubhead path and the clubface direction was at impact on five consecutive shots.

Here is an important piece of information that you probably do not know and use, but should. If the clubhead was in one direction at impact and the clubface was looking in the opposite direction, the effect of the clubface direction at impact is about *twice as powerful* in affecting ball flight as the path of the clubhead.

One other caveat: The above rules apply to *full* shots, not putts. In contrast, the slow movement of the putter head causes the direction of the putter face at impact to be *five times* more influential in controlling the path than the putter head path. In contrast, on the full shot, as we saw above, the clubface is only *twice* as controlling as the clubhead path.



To learn what the ball flight laws are and where the clubhead path and the clubface direction were at impact on the last shot, go to Written Solutions and click on Analyzing, Controlling and Correcting Ball Flight (coming soon).

## **#18:** OBSERVE, ANALYZE AND CORRECT BALL FLIGHT IN PLAY AND PRACTICE



There are five steps *all* golfers should use on *every* full shot during practice sessions and golf rounds *for the rest of their playing careers*:

1. Plan the general flight path you want the ball to take: straight at the target, or start it to the right or left of the target and curve it back in an opposite and equal direction.
2. Choose a distant narrow target and a ground marker about 3 to 12 feet from that ball that is on or close to the initial intended starting line.
3. Observe the ball flight accurately as to where it initially starts in relation to the planned starting line and in which direction it later curves.
4. To determine where the clubhead path was at impact and in what direction the clubface was looking at impact, apply Ball Flight Laws.

5. Based on the last shot, plan any necessary change in the path of the clubhead at impact and the direction of the clubface at impact.

Notice, I said nothing about changing the body movements and positions. Here are the major reasons for emphasizing the club and not the body:

1. The club is the only element in the swing that hits the ball. However, if your ball and body collide during the play of a hole, it is a penalty.
2. The body movements are only the *means* of moving the club, not the direct *cause* of ball flight.
3. Students find that golf instruction is greatly simplified when the students focus on the *club*, and not the *body*.
4. Students improve ball flight, do so sooner and sustain it longer when they focus on the club movement, especially at impact. This is in lieu of attending to the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of body movements that teachers as a group advocate, much of which is irrelevant, conflicting or of minor significance.

## **#19:** RECORD, ACCUMULATE, SUMMARIZE AND ANALYZE DATA

My research reveals that unless golfers receive cumulative data on their shots hit with the same club, from a similar lie condition to a similar target, they do not know what their cumulative performance is on such shots. In addition, 80% of them overestimate their performance innocently and are startled when told what it really was. When they innocently overestimate their performance, often by wide margins, they will make no effort to correct performance.

This behavioral pattern does not apply only to beginners or hacks, I found that it affects superstars as well. As a result, the player makes no attempt to improve on that shot, or only a half-hearted one.

That is why I urge you to look at “Recording Forms” listed on the Home Page of my web site ApplyGolfLessons.com. There are 16 or more forms on the web site that you can download free of charge (assuming you register first) that guide you to record, accumulate and summarize simple data on specific shot results. This site gives you a completed form, an explanation of how to use it and a blank form that you can copy from to your heart’s content.

Included are forms on putting, chipping, irons and woods. They will help you to observe more closely your ball-flight directions and ball-stopping patterns in relation to the target. They can help you observe, quantify and record data on body and club movements. More importantly, they will lead to measurable improvement.

You should also read a booklet on why and how to record performance data. Just click on “Booklets” on the Home Page of ApplyGolfLessons.com. You can copy it free of charge if you register first.

Record the data during practice and especially during your rounds. It only takes a few seconds to record the shot. That is a small price to pay for receiving far better cumulative data than any of your competitors are likely to have.



## **#20: MAKE THE CHANGE IN BALL FLIGHT BY FOCUSING ON THE CLUB PATH AND FACE AT IMPACT, NOT BODY MOVEMENT**

OK, how do you make that change in ball flight? That is particularly difficult when the driver's clubhead starts from a momentary stop at the top of the swing and moves between 70 and 115 miles per hour at impact, all in about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a second. That is about 20 times faster than a Ferrari can accelerate. Very few players are successful attempting to make such a swing change at that incredible acceleration in clubhead speed. If they eventually do make the desired swing change, it takes a long, frustrating time to accomplish it.

Your chances of making that change soar if you *start* by making short, very slow swings with a lofted iron, with the clubhead only moving two feet back and through impact. Why, that would hit the ball only about 20-yards, you say. *Correct.* Once you hit five in a row virtually dead straight, you advance one grade, as in school. One grade is hitting it 10 or 20 yards further.

Meet a measurable standard five times in a row at each distance. You would express the standard as the amount of right-left deviation from a narrow target, such as a flagstick. As one suggestion, you could express the deviation as a percentage of the distance to the flagstick. Suppose the distance to the flagstick was 100 yards, and the standard was to hit it within five (5) yards. That would be a 5% deviation ( $5/100 \times 100 = 5\%$ ).

Once you met the standard on five consecutive shots, you advance the distance, say, 20 yards. In learning this new swing, do not jump from hitting short shots to hitting a driver as far as you can. I do not see any golfer make that jump in distance and speed.

## **IMPLEMENTING ALL OF THESE SUGGESTIONS**

Well, there you have a number of practical ways to improve your golf game by changing your mental game. Here are a few suggestions to help you accomplish the changes:

- Print a copy of these booklets and store them in a clear plastic bag in your golf bag. (To copy any of this material, you have to register first. If you do not register, the software will not let you copy even a comma.)
- Each time you practice or play a round, take out the booklet and apply one or more of the suggestions.
- Record data on how many shots you applied one or more of these suggested procedures.