

Golf Tips 2007

Eric Shillinger
PGA Golf Professional
Moselem Springs Golf Club

With all the golf publications and internet resources available today, it is very easy for a golfer to become interested in and start implementing golf tips in their own game or swing. I caution this! Every tip I have ever heard or read is helpful to some one at some time. Most tips you will read or hear will not pertain to your swing. Here are a few tips on course management, practice, and beating first tee jitters that don't involve changing your swing.

Course Management

This past year we hosted the Pennsylvania Amateur Championship. The winner, Chad Bricher only hit driver two times in each round of the championship. His usage of great course management skills definitely helped in him winning the championship; for example, our par five seventh hole was unreachable for Chad in two. Rather than hitting driver off the tee and bringing both bunkers into play, he played a two iron safe off the tee – and a mid iron for his second shot – leaving a full wedge into the green. He was very cautious in his choice of clubs for his second shot. He wanted to leave himself a full wedge rather than a half wedge into the green.

The great Horace Hutchinson, in his book called “The New Book of Golf – 1912” stated, as in billiards, make each shot with a definite view as to the next one. The premise is you must hit each shot with the idea of leaving yourself in the best possible position for the next shot.

Practice

“Practice” does not necessarily mean standing on the range hitting balls hour after hour. The proper use of range time is an important part of improving in your golf game. Make sure you are making the correct practice moves that you and your instructor are working on. Here are a few tips that will ensure good practice skills on the range:

- Change your target from time to time when you are at the range;
- Lay a club down to help in your alignment to the target;
- Do not practice longer than you can stay focused. If you can't concentrate, take a break or quit.
- Split your practice time in half – short game and long game;
- Always start out with a wedge and work your way up to the longer clubs.

First Tee Jitters

Standing on your first tee of the round can be nerve racking. Tiger Woods was asked if he gets nervous on his first tee shot of a tournament round. His response: "The day I quit being nervous is the day I don't care any more." Even the number one player in the world has butterflies in his stomach! Here are a few tips on fighting those first tee jitters:

- On the driving range before the round, imagine the shot you will be faced with on the first tee, then aim at a particular area to simulate the fairway or green.
- Make sure the last club you hit on the range is the club you will be using to tee off with. For example, if you are starting in a shotgun and on a Par 3, make sure you hit whatever club you will use on that hole. You will have more confidence when you stand on the tee to hit the shot.
- Select the club in which you have the most confidence. Don't be afraid to hit the 3 wood.
- At address, depend on one swing thought that you know works.
- Do not freeze over the ball. Running through a long check list in your head is not helpful.
- Concentrate on pre-shot routine rather than on who is watching you.

Best wishes for a great season!