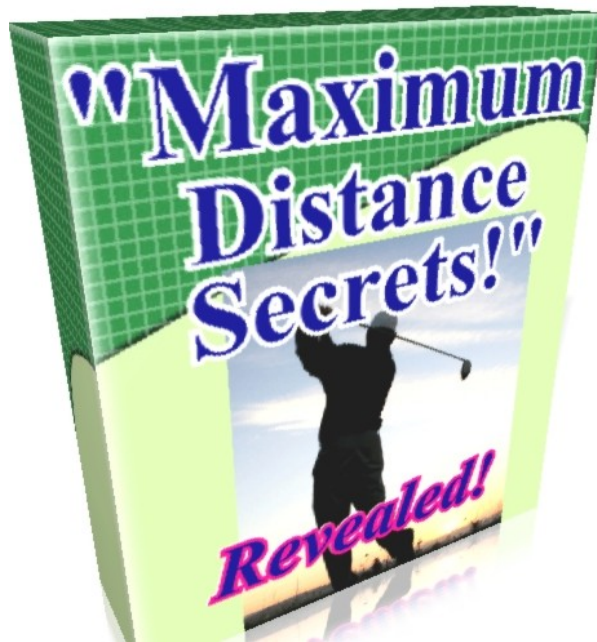


Strictly Off The Record
"Putting In 'The Zone!'"
Mini-Report



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I. Putting Strategies

Long putts can turn into rewarding & anticipated challenges for those who are well practiced. If there is one thing that many great putters have in common, it's that they have a natural sense of *feel* for the speed & distance needed to make their shots.

This *feel* isn't something that you can easily discern from a “how to” booklet.

It must be learned by instinct & then practiced repeatedly.

A. The Proper Speed

As a beginner, you may be tempted to try to putt from 8 feet out or even farther. However, this shouldn't be the first goal.

Great golfers realize that it's best to lag the ball a little. They'll try to get it as close to the hole as possible & leave themselves a very easy final shot using only 2 - 3 feet of distance.

Of course, knocking the ball into the hole from a distance can hyper-charge your self confidence.... But, you want to still avoid the

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dreaded "3-putt shot" which can arise more often than you'd like it to....

Therefore, pick your shots *carefully*....

Many beginner golfers have trouble with this concept.... Their ball may be situated 15 to 20 feet away from the hole, so they put too much speed & distance into their shots. The next thing they realize, 5-6 shots have consumed a par-3 hole.

B. Mastering Long Putting

What you want to strive for is the "perfect lag" on your ball when trying a long-distance putt. You want your ball to always land safely near the hole, regardless of whether it breaks too early or too soon.

You want your ball to end up so that an easy putt will finish the hole on your next swing.

C. A Simple Practice Exercise

As with any maneuver, practice makes perfect when learning the feel for speed & distance on the green.

Try this simple exercise to become a better putter:

1. Place four to five balls in a line approximately 10 feet apart from each other, evenly distributed toward the hole. Now, you should have a line of balls evenly spaced out between each other. All

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leading toward the hole, starting at about 40 to 50 feet out.

2. Now start the exercise. Try putting the ball closest to the hole first & slowly work your way back. Putt down the line until you reach the farthest ball. Try to imagine yourself playing in a real game. (Because you know it's not a real game, you should be more loosened up & not stressed about making a perfect lag shot.)

3. Guess what will happen? You'll play well! That is the ironic part about golf. When you are in the middle of a good game, worry & doubt can tense you up, causing poor shots.

*You should strive to take this relaxed mindset with you during a real game.

II. The Yips

According to one definition, the "yips" are a: "nervous twitching in the putting stroke resulting in poor accuracy & a lack of touch."

So, what exactly causes the yips? (A pill that would make the yips disappear would sell like crazy I bet.)

A. Anxiety

The yips are often caused by the anxiety of putting. If you look up too quickly to see if your ball falls into the hole, your stroke might not come out correctly. Furthermore, pulling or pushing your hands

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might cause a similar outcome. And it should go without saying, shaking & wobbling hands don't do wonders for your score.

B. Wrist Breakdown

A "breakdown" (a bending or twisting of your wrist) in your right hand can result in the yips. Often, this flick of the wrist happens just before impact. This slight error can send your putt way out of line.

C. Alignment

If you line up improperly before putting & misalign your putterhead, your body may subconsciously alter the swing path mid stroke in an attempt to make a correction. Attempting to correct the path of a putt mid-stroke is very difficult & likely to result in a push or pull. (Or, the putterhead may cut across the ball, causing it to spin in an unfavorable direction.)

III. Yip Cures

The yips may be easier to fix than you think. Take a look at these 3 common culprits. Are they affecting your putting?

A. Over-analysis

Over-analysis is getting so caught up in the mechanics of your stroke, that your natural movement is impeded. When you over-analyze a shot, you can become so self-conscious of your body

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position that it may hurt your score. It becomes difficult to move the putter back in a simple, straight, targeted line. Furthermore, you may find yourself concentrating on the putterhead itself as it goes back & through the ball. None of these will be beneficial to a score. Avoid over-analysis & let the shot flow naturally.

B. Steering

Instead of swinging the putterhead through the ball toward the hole, you may find yourself trying to steer the ball INTO the hole. This "steering" is typically a tension filled attempt to guide the ball into the hole caused by a lack of putting confidence.

This tension can cause you to over push the putterhead toward the hole & it will mistakenly get your wrists or legs overly involved. As stated above, just take it naturally as it comes....

C. Insecurity

Getting nervous & insecure over a putt, especially a short one, is a sure way to mess up. Without confidence, negative thoughts will enter your head & they can really affect your play.

"What will I do to make the putt? Will it go in? Can I lose the hole or the match I miss? Will I feel embarrassed in front of the other players if I miss?"

Block these out. Learn to laugh them off.

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IV. The Belly Putter

The belly putter is golf's latest & greatest idea – a compromise incorporating the advantages of a long putter with the practicality of a traditional putter. The belly putter is longer than a traditional putter, but shorter than a long putter.

You grip the belly putter just as you might imagine. Anchor the top, "butt end" of your club into your belly. The anchoring of the putter into your belly will create a stroke motion that is simpler & more reliable. This result is a kind of a pendulum effect....bong!

Vijay Singh, the golfer who unseated Tiger Woods in 2004, popularized the belly putter.

Ironically, when Singh took the top ranking from Tiger Woods, he'd recently switched back to a traditional putter after a long period with using the belly putter!

Regardless, if you are having trouble, try to search around the net for a belly putter.

Here's an example search:

<http://www.google.com/search?q=belly+putter&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a>

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V. Avoiding Disasters

Ken Venturi is a long-time golf analyst who worked for CBS & won the 1964 U.S. Open. He would often discuss the excitement of the thrill of the last hole during a competition. His heart would be beating out of his shirt knowing it was his last chance to win.

Talk about a guy that loved the game!

You too might feel like this on occasion. It seems to me that moments like this always arise at some important *numerical marker* in my life or game.

What if it looks like you are on your way to your best score ever?

Perhaps it's your first opportunity to break 90.

Or, you might be golfing with your boss. A good impression on the course could get you closer to an important raise. You've got to keep your cool when under pressure.

Stress & nervousness are things that pros know how to keep a lid on. But, they also realize, some factors are outside of their "sphere of influence."

A. "Outside" Variables

When it comes to putting, nothing creates more stress than worrying about missing a shot. But, you have to realize that many factors are

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completely out of your control. There are outside variables around the green that may have a great deal of influence on your shot. Keep this in mind whenever you miss a break & start becoming frustrated.

1. First and foremost, the green that you are walking on is literally a living organism. Grass is constantly growing & terrain changes all the time. The green can change whenever a group plays through ahead of you. In fact, just one group of four players can take as many as 200 steps on a green before finishing a hole.

Those are a lot of terrain variables!

So, if you're playing on a busy Saturday or Sunday, 10 or 11 foursomes may have gone through the course ahead of you. We are talking about over 2000 steps!

Golfers drag their feet can scruff up the grass. Pitch marks can be found all over the place. This everyday wear and tear can ruin a shot.

2. Furthermore, small rocks & pebbles, sand, fertilizer, grass clippings, mower lines, uneven grass, moisture, & (of course) divot marks can also increase your odds of making mistakes on the green. All of these can contribute to your ball being knocked off-course & missing the hole.

C. Final Word

Due to it's precision, there is a very small margin for error when putting.

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Unfortunately, you usually cannot lose your cool & get frustrated without it affecting your score.

All you can do is assess the shot as carefully as possible. Focus on a controlled & smooth stroke & give it your best roll.

If you miss, don't worry. Sometimes it's just not your fault.....:)

But wait!

There's A LOT MORE than was presented here!

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