

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

*Newsletter August 2003
Vol. IV, Edition 8*

*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*

CONSISTENCY

by Joan King

Last month's newsletter began a series about the mental parts of the game that golfers most want to improve. The four C's are: confidence, consistency, control, and concentration. The July newsletter gave suggestions for improving your confidence. This month I will give you suggestions for becoming more consistent.

The last two major tournaments, the USGA Women's Open and the British Open were won by players who were the most consistent. And they both were the most unexpected golfers to win these major championships. Hilary Lunke showed an outstanding consistent short game where she got the ball up and down 10 out of the first 11 holes. Ben Curtis, an unknown golfer ranked 396 in the world, won the British Open by keeping the ball in play by having a good short game and averaging 30 putts per round.

How do you produce this kind of steady play making fewer mistakes under pressure in tournaments? According to Andrew Sutton, who caddied for Curtis, "His mentality was the biggest factor in the victory". For both Lunke and Curtis, it was the confidence they had in their putters. They were rolling the ball well and believed they could make the putts.

There is a saying in golf that you are only as good as your worst shots. A couple of examples in the British Open were Tiger Woods lost ball off the number one tee for a 7, and Thomas Bjorn's triple-bogey 8 on 17, including a 2-shot penalty for disgustingly swiping the sand after leaving his first shot in the bunker. These uncharacteristic errors kept them from winning.

There are many factors that make up a consistent round of golf, such as desire, realistic expectations, and confidence in your ability to perform. Consistency comes from practicing your skill until you are confident that you can execute the shot or putt. But physical practice is not enough. You must believe that you can do it time after time under all kinds of conditions. Mental conditioning is what separates the great players from the field.

Tension creates inconsistency. Feelings of anxiety are caused by what you are thinking. Change all self-doubts and fears to positive affirming thoughts and visualizations.

***“I’m about five inches from being an outstanding golfer.
That’s about the distance my left ear is from my right”.***
---Ben Crenshaw

1. **The short game.**

To win you need to score lower than anyone else. It is necessary to practice the parts of your game that will lead to lower scores. Most golfers think that long drives will bring low scores by giving them birdie and eagle opportunities. This kind of thinking does not produce steadiness. In fact, most of the shots you hit are the ones that require less than a full swing. To score consistently, spend your practice time in this ratio:

63% short game: (chipping, pitching, sand shots, putting)
37% full swings from the driver through the wedge.

2. **The preshot routine.**

To be consistent you need to have a consistent preshot routine. Having the same routine on every shot enables you to play automatically letting your habits and beliefs take over. The routine keeps your mind focused on the present moment. It sets you up for the automatic conditioned response. If you vary your routine from shot to shot you can expect inconsistent results. Program your mind so it is conditioned to do the same thing the same way.

If you drove to work a different way each day, you would have to think about every turn. If you take the same route every day, your mind and body are in sync and you don't have to consciously think about how to get there. It is the same with the golf swing. Let go of thinking about how to swing the golf club. Your job is to become relaxed enough so that your preshot routine will set you up to swing automatically. When interviewed by ABC Sports, Ben Curtis' father said that his son was relaxed and confident.

3. **Your Personality.**

Players who are consistent in the way they live their lives off the golf course will usually hit more fairways and greens than players who like to “grip it and rip it.” If you are a person who likes action rather than routine, you need to change your thoughts, attitudes and actions to program consistency rather

than excitement. Instead of trying to hit the longest drive of your life on each hole, set a goal for yourself such as hitting 8 or 10 fairways. Instead of trying to get the most out of the club each time, take more club and swing smoothly to ensure hitting the greens. Keep track of the number of putts you take per round and plan to make more one-putts.

4. **Putting**

Putting is a game within a game and can be up to 40% of your score. Develop a feel on the greens for consistency. When you have a putt over 30 feet, be more concerned with the distance than the direction. Visualize stroking the ball within a 3-foot circle around the hole so your second putt is easily makeable. Give every size putt the same amount of time and attention. Use the same preputt routine every time. Use the same tempo on every size putt. Believe in your ability to relax, roll the ball well and feel the distance.

“The key is to get the ball in play and give yourself opportunities at birdie. Then, when you make a couple of putts, stay out of your own way.”

–John Huston

5. **Percentage Golf.**

Do not try to hit shots that you are indecisive about. For example, if you are having trouble hitting your driver in the fairway, drive with your 3-metal. Hit your 9-wood instead of a long iron if you have more confidence in it. If you aren't hitting your irons well, take one more club hitting into the greens to avoid the bunkers in front of the green. If you aren't confident about your bunker play, focus on just getting the ball on the green instead of trying to get it close. Don't hit any shots that you don't own. Around the green hit shots with less air time instead of going for the flop shot that requires delicate accuracy.

6. **Remain Positive.**

Change any limiting beliefs you have about yourself and your game. Enhance your self-image by seeing yourself as the player you know you can be even though you miss a shot. Talk to yourself on the golf course positively seeing only the solution to each situation instead of thinking negatively about the “what ifs” that could happen.

AFFIRMATIONS

- **I AM able to relax and focus my mind on every shot.**
- **I AM in tune with my own swing tempo.**
- **I AM thinking positively about creating each shot.**
- **I AM playing more consistently every day.**
- **I AM consistently hitting more fairways and greens.**

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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Joan will be giving a workshop, "*Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance---Use Hypnosis to Play in the Zone State*" at the world's largest hypnosis convention on August 7th in New Hampshire. Here's your chance to learn about hypnosis and much more. Log on to www.ngh.net

Improve your golf game today by listening to PMI self-hypnosis CDs and tapes. Order now at www.pmi4.com/cart

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If you have a question or need help with your mental game, email Joan at POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY, info@mastermindgolf.com Also, please share with us how this website information has helped you improve your performance.

