

A Golfer's Wish List for Christmas

Don't look at Santa to help improve your game. You can do it with the correct solutions. By Bill Choung

As we reflect on 2012 and set new goals for 2013, remember Albert Einstein's definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." If Einstein is right, then 90 percent of all golfers are nuts, and that includes lots of Tour players. Here is a wish list and guideline to get your sanity back in 2013.

1. Make more putts from 4 to 8 feet (PGA Tour 2012 stats from 4 to 8 feet: Best 77 percent, Worst 60 percent).

If the worst putter on the Tour made 60 percent of their putts from 4 to 8 feet, then an average player should be about 25 to 35 percent at best. Improving from this distance can save you three to four strokes per round.

Insane Solution: 1) Do nothing; 2) Buy a new putter without getting fitted; 3) Practice more with bad mechanics and hope for the best.

Correct Solution: 1) Take a putting lesson; 2) Try alternative methods of putting with an instructor; 3) Get fitted for a putter to reinforce the correct mechanics; 4) Read books or take courses on reading greens.

2. Drive the ball 20 yards longer (PGA Tour 2012 stats: Percent of yards covered by tee shot on par 5s: Best 58 percent, Worst 49 percent).

The biggest thrill in golf is to reach par 5s in two shots. It is golf's equivalent of hitting a home run. Bubba Watson was best in 2012 at covering most yards on par 5s with his tee shot at 58 percent. Conversely, an average golfer usually covers less than 40 percent of the total yards. We need to drive the ball 20 yards further to reach the green in two shots.

Insane Solution: 1) Do nothing and hope for the best; 2) Swing harder; 3) Buy a new driver without getting fitted.

Correct Solution: 1) Get in shape, stretch and become more flexible. If you do the right exercises for 20 minutes a day, you will see your clubhead speed increase; 2) Learn to swing faster by using your lower body efficiently. Also, find an instructor with good

knowledge of biomechanics; 3) There are lots of cool drivers coming out in 2013. Get fitted by a professional and make sure that the new driver specs help you reinforce the correct mechanics. Using a driver as a compensational tool doesn't work in the long run.

3. Hit two more greens in regulation (PGA Tour 2012 stats: Greens in regulation from 125 to 150 yards: Best 83 percent, Worst 58 percent).

Can you believe that the best player on the PGA Tour will hit the green eight out of 10 times and the worst player misses four out of 10 times from 125 to 150 yards? As an amateur, if your greens in regulation from this distance is 40 to 50 percent you are doing very well. For most of us, we use anything from a gap wedge to a 6-iron to hit greens from 125 to 150 yards out. You will be able to hit more greens if you use more lofted clubs to cover more yards. Therefore, you must increase the clubhead speed with your irons. Your goal should be to gain 10 more yards with each iron.

Insane Solution: 1) Do nothing and hope for the best; 2) Swing harder; 3) Buy new irons without getting fitted.

Correct Solution: 1) Make sure that your current or new iron set's lie, loft and shaft are fitted correctly for you; 2) Work with an instructor to improve your biomechanics; 3)

Use lighter steel or graphite shafts.

4. Find more time to play more golf.

This might be the easiest or hardest thing to achieve depending on your financial and family situations. But buying the right gifts for your spouse during the holidays might go a long way ... like a perfect Saturday afternoon in April when you want to play golf.

SCORECARD

► Improving your putting from 4 to 8 feet can save you three to four strokes per round.

► We need to drive the ball 20 yards further to reach the green in two shots.

► You will be able to hit more greens if you use more lofted clubs to cover more yards. Therefore, you must increase the clubhead speed with your irons.



Bill Choung is the founder of CompuGolfCenter in Carrollton. He is a PGA Tour instructor and Golf Digest Top 100 Fitter. He has done extensive swing and equipment research on the PGA Tour and currently works with K.J. Choi and Danny Lee. He has worked with more than 40 Tour players. www.compugolfcenter.com.