

Improve Your Game Categorically

Work on three specific categories to shoot drastically better scores

BY BILL CHOUNG

When I review the statistical data with my PGA and LPGA Tour clients to set goals for the upcoming season, I focus on three crucial stats – total driving, greens in regulation (GIR) from under 125 yards and putts made from 4-8 feet. If you focus on these categories, you will dramatically improve your scoring in 2014. The following data is from the 2013 PGA Tour season:

TOTAL DRIVING - DISTANCE & ACCURACY STATS

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| 1st | Graham DeLaet |
| 90th | Jerry Kelly |
| 180th | Mike Weir |

If you are short and crooked off the tee, what should you focus on? Getting longer or straighter? I strongly suggest you get longer first. Why? Swinging slower to gain accuracy is one of the biggest myths in golf. If you swing slower, it only ensures that you will hit the ball shorter without any guarantee of hitting more fairways.

Club Solution: Make sure your driver launch angle and backspin are optimized. What is optimal? It depends on your clubhead speed, but the launch angle should be 12 to 15 degrees and the spin should be 2000 to 2800 RPMs.

Swing Solution: Get a biomechanical, strength and flexibility analysis done. Once you get the evaluation done, find a teacher who will customize your swing to fit your strength, flexibility and athletic ability. Your golf game may not improve without lessons, but you will feel much better working out.

GREENS IN REGULATION FROM 125 YARDS AND IN

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 1st | Tiger Woods89% |
| 90th | Brendan Steele82% |
| 180th | Shawn Stefani73% |

Are you more surprised that Tiger leads this category or that the best GIR was only 89 percent from less than 125 yards? Or that

SCORECARD

- In order to win or lower your score, all you have to do is drive the ball straight and long, hit greens in regulation with short irons and make short putts.
- Swinging slower to gain accuracy is one of the biggest myths in golf. If you swing slower, it only ensures that you will hit the ball shorter without any guarantee of hitting more fairways.
- Percentage of putts made from within 8 feet is the most ignored category by an average player, yet is the most achievable category for immediate improvement.

the worst players on the Tour hit less than three out of four greens with the wedges? This is an opportunity area for all players.

Club Solution: Add a third wedge. Why? Most pitching wedges are so strong that you need a gap wedge. These range from 49 to 53 degrees. Your goal is to have a 10-yard gap between each wedge when you make a full swing.

Swing Solution: Practice! Practice! Practice! Sixty percent of your range session should be focused on wedges. Create targets from 40-120 yards at 10-yard increments and then find out which wedges will give you what yardage with full swings and half swings.

PERCENTAGE OF PUTTS MADE FROM 4 TO 8 FEET

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| 1st | Greg Chalmers76.43% |
| 90th | Ryan Moore66.93% |
| 180th | Lucas Glover56.46% |

These putting stats usually shock most of us more than any other stats on the PGA Tour. Are you shocked that the best on Tour from two steps away only made them 76 percent of the time? I strongly believe that this is the most ignored category by an average player, yet is the most achievable category for immediate improvement.

Club Solution: Putter fitting! Putter fitting! For every 10 driver fittings I do, I do one putter fitting. I don't want to diminish the importance of driver fitting, but I think that putter fitting is just as important. When the length and lie angle of a putter is fitted well, it should allow your arms to hang in front of you with very little tension, promoting an efficient pendulum motion.

Selecting a putter head depends on your stroke path and how your dominant eye functions during the putting process. A profession fitter can help you with this process.

Swing Solution: Take a lesson. Short putts, more than anything, are all about confidence and fundamentally sound mechanics. Short putts require less feel than long putts; therefore, it is easier to teach and learn.

As you could see by the stats, golf is a simple game. In order to win or lower your score, all you have to do is drive the ball straight and long, hit greens in regulation with short irons and make short putts. This is the winning formula for players of all skill level.



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