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# Putting Augusta's greens takes extra focus

By Patrick Cohn  
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"Something you have to do is putt well to win this championship; and fortunately for me, that's what I did."  
-- Mark O'Meara, 1998 Masters Champion

Every year, a big challenge at the Masters even for the best putters, is to get that club going on the Augusta National greens. The combination of roller coaster-like terrain and the lightning-fast speed of Augusta's greens can intimidate even the most mentally sound player.

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handicapped before pulling the putter out of the bag. The player who loves the challenge of putting fast greens and who is ready to prepare his best to conquer them has the advantage.

Many in this week's field had a taste of hyper-fast greens at the Players championship two weeks ago. Some even complained about the speed and firmness, claiming them to be unfair.

I don't think [David Duval](#) was one of those players. Great putters, such as Duval, believe they can putt on any green no matter the speed or type of grass.

The Masters, unlike any other golf tournament, prepares its bent grass greens to test the touch, patience and composure of every golfer. This week, each player has to accept the tough greens as an inherent challenge of Augusta National golf. When a player starts to complain to himself or others about how fast and sloped the greens are, he is mentally

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When [Tiger Woods](#) won in 1997, he putted superbly all four days, never three-putting. That's great touch - no three-putts at Augusta! But he had a secret weapon for his practice the week prior. His home course in Orlando, Isleworth, shaved the greens to match the pace of Augusta's. What a great idea and a great way to practice for what followed.

What will it take for any player to putt well at Augusta? It will take a great attitude, patience and great touch. First, great putters such as Duval, Jim Furyk and Davis Love III will need to have a great attitude about putting Augusta's greens. This means loving the challenge of putting on super fast greens. It also means feeling like they have the advantage on fast greens because they love to putt on them.

Second, patience is important in any tournament, but when a three-foot putt lips out and rolls 10 feet away from the cup, patience is really tested.

For Duval, or any other player to win this week, they must make putts and, more importantly, have patience when they miss putts or three whack for the first time. Patience is the ability to wait for putts to drop and the confidence that the putts will start falling sooner or later.

Third, touch is the key to making putts at Augusta. When Mark O'Meara won last year, he controlled the pace of his putts superbly. If he missed, the putt was always near the hole. Every week on the PGA Tour, players are forced to adapt to different greens. For the players who have played the last two weeks, going from the lightning-fast greens at the TPC in Jacksonville to the slower greens at the Southern Open and back to the slick greens at Augusta is a challenge in itself. Each player must take the time to adapt and tune up his or her touch when playing on faster greens.

Touch is so important because it controls speed and having the right speed is critical to making putts at Augusta. Touch sets the line a player selects on breaking putts. And boy are their some breaking putts at Augusta. On big breaking putts, a putt must be hit with the right speed in order for it to take the correct amount of break. If hit too hard, a putt will roll off the green; if hit too soft, a putt won't hold its line.

Some players are born with good touch and can adapt quickly to the fast greens. Other will have to spend more time and work it out early in the week. You can bet that most of the players will put in the extra time to tune up their feel on the greens.

## **Mental Keys to Conquering the greens at Augusta:**



### **Woods' outstanding putting was the key to his 1997 victory.**

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1. This is no time to overhaul the stroke. If a player has a stroke problem and is focused more on stroke than on line and speed, he is doomed from the first putt of the tournament.
2. Players must tune up their touch on the greens by hitting a ton of longer putts. Touch is developed by hitting every possible putt the golfer may face in the tournament. He must practice putts left to right, right to left, uphill, downhill, sidehill, you name it. Specific drills for developing touch are paramount.
3. The player must love to use the putter on every hole and relish the challenge of the greens. A fearless attitude is critical to putting free. If a player worries about three-putting, he'll probably four-putt!
4. Finally, every one has to have a short memory for lip outs and missed birdie opportunities on the greens. A player must convince himself that par is a good score. Even a great putter on top of his game must accept par, interpret lip-outs as a sign of good putting to come and react to a three-putt with the composure of someone with amnesia. Attitude and patience will go a long way toward the goal of conquering the greens at Augusta.

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