



DR. PATRICK J. COHN

Local knowledge improves putting

You probably have a lot of local course knowledge with your home club greens. But what happens when you have to go to another course for a tournament and you have never played the course? This is when you have to study the greens in a practice round to gain some local knowledge.

A priority of a practice round should be to get to know the subtle breaks on the greens. A well-prepared golfer devotes time to studying the greens before the tournament starts. Course knowledge and experience on the greens is a key to reading the greens correctly. Does your local course knowledge help you to putt better? Yes, for sure! If you're playing a new course, it's even more important to get to know the greens.

Tour pros hit several putts on each green during practice rounds to become familiar with the greens or confirm what they already know. Many will diagram the subtle breaks

on each green for use during the tournament. If you have the time, hit several putts from different locations on the green — uphill, downhill, and across the green. Watch the ball as it rolls and takes the subtle breaks in the green. Log this information.

Understanding the slopes on the greens is key. This is vital on greens with two or three tiers. It's often hard to judge how a tier will effect your ball until you have hit a few putts on the green. Make sure you hit some putts from the top to the bottom tier and vice versa. These are often the hardest putts to hit in order to judge speed. You have to factor in the uphill and flat hill effect of the green or downhill or flat parts of the green.

Get to know the speed, slope, grain, and trouble areas of each green. Usually the grain of the green grows downhill or towards the setting sun. Putting down grain the putt will be much faster. Carefully watch each putt you hit and notice the

direction of the slope and the speed of each putt. See how long it takes for each putt to slowdown. Lock into your memory the image of each putt you hit so you have something to draw on in the tournament.

In addition, note the best place to leave your shot so you can have the best putt given possible pin positions. Putts from above the pin on greens that are sloped from back to front are usually fast and tricky. Also note where the trouble areas or sucker pins may be located. You can also ask the local head pro to relate his experience with the greens to give you more information. Ask him what greens you need to stay below the hole on. Also, ask if there are any greens in which a putt may be read to break one way, but breaks the opposite way. Find out where not to short side yourself if you miss the green.

*Dr. Cohn is a mental game coach who consults with Tour Pros and amateurs. He is the author of *Going Low, Peak Performance Golf, The Mental Game of Golf and The Mental Art of Putting*. For more information call (888) 742-7225, visit www.peaksports.com.*