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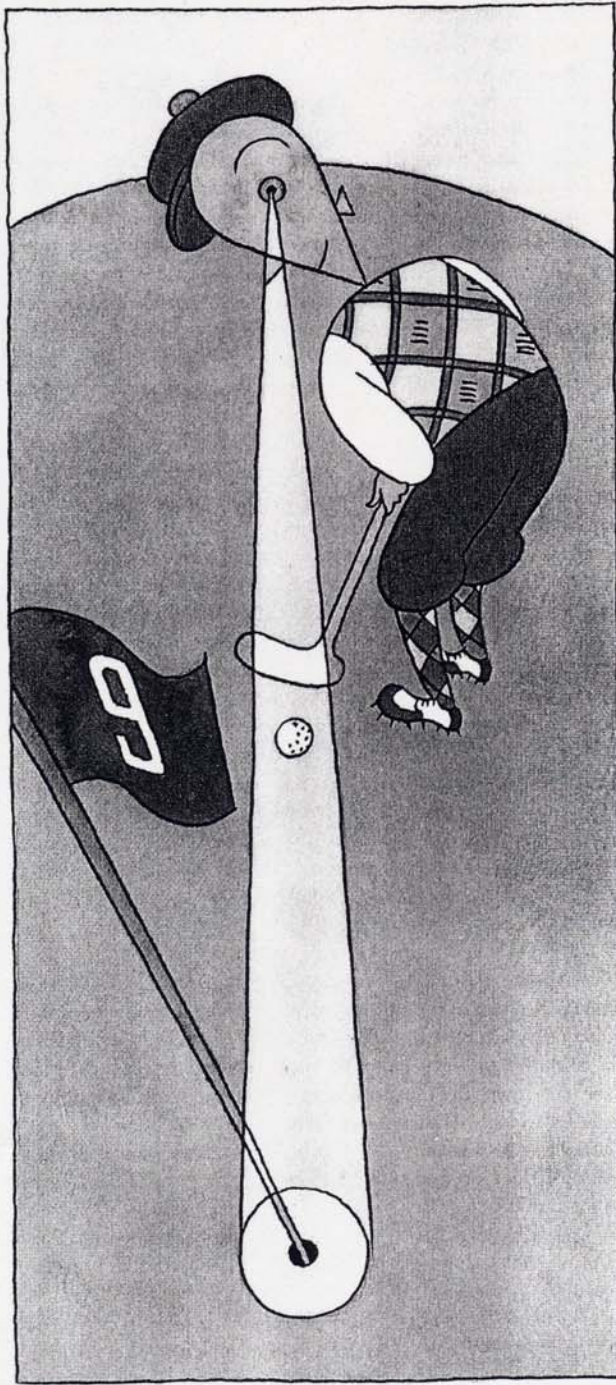
HOLE

THE GOLF COURSE

THE MENTAL SIDE

Boosting
your
confidence
will help
sink more
putts

Mental Art of Putting



IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to be a great putter without a very high degree of self-confidence. You might have a technically sound stroke on the practice green, but it's worthless without the confidence to trust it on the course.

Developing and maintaining confidence is an unending project that means focusing on what you can control and not wasting energy worrying about what is out of your hands. Fortunately you are able to control your attitude, practice habits, and reactions. Choosing your attitude and reacting to events with optimism and purpose are truly the keys to the mental art of putting.

Let's face facts: There will be times when the strength of your confidence is tested. Missing short putts or three-putting can pull you down, but only as much as you let it. Dwelling on negatives weakens confidence. Criticizing yourself also erodes confidence. Make every effort to remain positive by taking responsibility to think, act, and feel as if you are the best putter in the world.

Good putters inherently build their confidence at every possible opportunity. Here are practical ways to boost your confidence on the greens.

BUILD CONFIDENCE FROM PRACTICE

EVERY PUTT FACED on the golf course is essentially a new putt with a new distance, speed, break, and visual appearance. But most golfers practice with

continued

What to do When the Putts Aren't Falling

EVERYONE HAS DAYS when the putts don't fall. Even the best putters in the world struggle on the greens and find it a challenge to maintain and, at times, regain their confidence. Here are some ideas for regaining lost confidence:

DON'T BLAME YOURSELF. Several extraneous factors, over which you have no control, influence the outcome of a putt. Spike marks, footprints, imperfections in the green, or an unexpected gust of wind are all factors beyond your control. It's much easier to keep your confidence up when you can chalk up a missed putt to something that is beyond your control.

ONLY THE PRESENT PUTT MATTERS. Many golfers lose confidence when they miss one or two makeable putts early in the round. They talk themselves into thinking that they "can't buy a putt today." The images and results of the last few missed putts fill their minds. But in reality, only the present putt matters. Each putt is new, with a different distance, speed, and break. Believe the next putt is the one that will start you on a roll.

GO BACK TO BASICS. A simple physical adjustment may affect your comfort level over the ball. Examine your body position, alignment, and tempo. A small adjustment in any of these areas may be just the spark you need.

STROKE EVERY PUTT WITH DETERMINATION. Nobody makes every putt, but the best putters in the world think that the next putt will go in. Stroke every putt with the total determination that it is going in the hole.

DON'T LET PUTTING FRUSTRATION affect your ball striking. When putting confidence is low, it often negatively affects other parts of your game. You will create additional problems by trying to make up for missed putts by forcing something spectacular to happen with the rest of your game. Stick to the original game plan and don't let negative emotions on the greens filter into other shots.

three or four balls, hitting the same putt over and over. Instead, vary each putt so that you have to read and align each one separately, as you would on the course. Vary the distance and the break of each putt, too. For example, hit putts from one spot to each hole on the putting green or practice going around the putting clock using only one ball.

BUILD CONFIDENCE FROM A ROUTINE

DEVELOP A SYSTEMATIC PRE-PUTT ROUTINE. A routine provides reliable cues that allow you to focus on execution and nothing else. A good routine will focus you on the task and create a cocoon-like state that blocks outside distractions. A routine helps you treat every putt exactly the same, no matter what may be riding on the outcome. All of these factors help to preserve a smooth and rhythmic stroke regardless of the situation.

BUILD CONFIDENCE FROM A WARM-UP

A CONSISTENT PRACTICE routine before play will pump up your confidence on the course. Remember, it's not competition—you're not trying to "win" the warm-up. Good putters warm up for three reasons: To make sure they are striking the ball in the middle of the clubface, to hone their feel for the speed of the greens, and to create fresh images of success. Make sure your warm-up includes sinking at least a half-dozen short putts in a row. This provides a recent "video" of positive sights and sounds that you can mentally replay on the course.

BUILD CONFIDENCE FROM EXPERIENCE

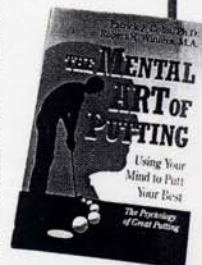
NOTHING PROVIDES a bigger boost of confidence than sinking an important putt during a club championship or on the final

hole to record your best-ever score. Many amateurs exaggerate their poor putting in past rounds and let it affect their confidence. This is an error in attitude. Past misses only hurt your performance when you carry them over to the present putt. Instead, keep your attention on what you want to happen. Draw on previous successes, no matter how small, to increase your confidence that the next putt will go in.

BUILD CONFIDENCE FROM COMMITMENT

CONFIDENCE COMES FROM TRUSTING what you know you can do. Confidence flows from being clear in your mind about what you want to do and committing to that plan. Great putters stay committed to their plan, and they believe that they have done everything necessary to ensure that their next putt will go into the hole.

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