

The Mental Side of Golf

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Off-season preparation for playing great golf

Many golfers don't have the luxury of playing and practicing all year round. These players have to be creative with off-season practice and training and preparing themselves for the golfing season. The winter months are an excellent time to work on areas of your game that you may neglect or don't have time to work on during the golfing

season. The off-season is also an excellent time to prepare your mind and body to play great golf when the season comes. This is a good time to work on your mental game, physical fitness, and nutrition. Here are a few ideas to practice your game during the off-season.

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- **Practice mentally**

You may not be able to physically practice all winter long, but you can practice your game mentally. Mental practice is an excellent way to visualize your swing, familiarize yourself with a course you will play, and see yourself playing with confidence and control. Visualizing your swing during the off-season will help you "get the rust out" faster when the season starts. The best way to visualize your swing is to use all of your senses. As you mentally practice, see your swing, feel it, and hear the sound at impact. Try to make it as lifelike as possible when you practice your swing mentally.

- **Be creative with practice**

The combination of mental practice and physical practice is the best, but physical

practice during the off-season may be limited. This is when you want practice to count the most. You must be creative with finding alternative ways to keep your game in shape during the winter months. For example, if you can find a "fast" carpet that simulates your home course, you can practice your short putts indoors. Also, there are many areas in the country that now have indoor driving ranges that you can use to stay tuned up. If you don't have access to a driving range, make 100 swings in front of a mirror every day.

- **Improve physical fitness**

A regular exercise program has many advantages for your golf game.

Now is a great time to work on your physical fitness and get yourself in shape for the golfing season. Beyond benefits to your general health and well-being, a regular exercise program has many advantages for your golf game. One benefit is increased energy. Do you struggle with your energy level or

concentration during the last few holes of the round? This may be due to a lack of stamina. The second advantage is increased muscular strength and flexibility. Always consult a doctor before starting an exercise program.

- **Work on nutrition and diet**

Today, the role of good nutrition to one's health is more important than ever. Nutrition is very important to a golfer's concentration and performance. More golfers now understand the need to adhere to a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy eating. Your body needs food and water for energy and replenishment. A four-hour round of golf requires a substantial amount of energy. Keeping your eating in play is a key to maintaining high energy and good focus on the course. Now is the time to start a nutritional program.

- **Read books on the mental game**

Now is a great time to read up on the latest books on golf psychology to improve your mental game. Many sport psychologists, like myself, write books to help golfers improve their mental game. I have received many letters from players who have read my books and felt that their games were improved. If you are not a big reader, you can buy audiotapes and videos on the subject.

Don't wait until the snow melts and the weather improves. There are several areas that you can improve during the off-season that can improve your golf game. Mental

practice, proper nutrition, and reading books will give you the edge when the season starts. Keep the rust off by practicing indoors and get a jump on next season.

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