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Tiger Woods epitomizes the proper approach to preparing for the majors.

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Prepare smartly to succeed at majors

By [Patrick Cohn](#)
GolfWeb Columnist

Professional golfers dream of winning a major. With the Players Championship and the Masters upon us this season, the pros are preparing for two of the biggest tournaments all year. Many of the players make it a goal to hone their games so they can peak in major tournaments. Several players ask me how to prepare their games so they can play their best golf in important events.

This includes players who want to know how to play their best at the year's end tour school to players who want to play well in the Players Championship. My first response is that you don't want to burn yourself out before the big race. Long distance runners know how to taper their training before an event so they can feel fresh when the meet comes. If a runner runs ten miles a day before the big race, he will be plagued by injuries and have nothing left in the tank to go the distance. So I suggest that players stay fresh before big events and not burn themselves out with too much practice, travel, and play.

[Tiger Woods](#), for example gears his game for playing well in the majors. He doesn't want to play too much before the big event and burn himself out. Being fresh also means doing the necessary training ahead of time. I don't want players to grind on their swing mechanics

right before a major tournament or practice too much. The mind needs to be calm and free of mental garbage so you can focus on the target. The bulk of practice should have been done in the early part of the season.

Now is the time to prepare the mind to do battle and be mentally tough. The player has to remind himself to be patient with himself. When you have rough as deep as your putter shaft at the US Open, greens as fast as a pool table at the Masters, and a course as challenging as the [TPC at Sawgrass](#) (site of the Players Championship), a player must be patient and not get frustrated.

This is the time for a player like [Greg Norman](#) to reflect on the tournaments in which he played when his patience paid off and he prevailed as the winner. Because scoring is usually not as low at the majors, par is the standard of excellence rather than birdie. Players have to remind themselves that par is a good score. I tell players to be aggressive when the situation permits, but pull in the reins and play smart when you have a long approach shot or a well-bunkered green. The idea is to give yourself more birdie opportunities, not more opportunities to convert up and downs.

You hear tour players talk about winning because they think they are capable of winning right from the start. Yes, you must have confidence to play with the best in the world. Tiger's goal is to win in every event he tees it up.

That sounds like a great goal, but how do you win? Winning comes from sticking to the process and your method that produces the best shot, shot after shot. Hitting fairways, hitting greens, making putts, and staying with the process should be your goal. Winning then takes care of itself. The players that can stick to their method and focus on doing their best on each shot will be playing for the trophy on Sunday.



Preparing for the TPC at Sawgrass requires practice on all aspects of the game.

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Every major championship is a different test of golf. To prevail each player has to prepare his game to match the challenges of the golf course and playing conditions. At The Masters the premium is on putting. Even the great putters have to tune up their touch for Augusta's greens in order to stop a 50-foot putt next to the cup.

At Sawgrass, all aspects of the course are demanding. The greens are fast and hard, the rough high, and the fairways are lined with trees and water. The TPC demands accuracy off the tee and well-placed approach shots. Thus, the pros need to have all phases of the game working. This requires a balanced practice routine that focuses on accurate driving, solid iron play, and superior putting. You can't scrap it around the TPC at Sawgrass.

Lastly, the \$720,000 first-place money at the Players Championship will make any golfer choke on Sunday afternoon. Thinking about 1st place money while you hit your approach shot to the island 17th green is not a good idea. To play well, money can not be in the front of a player's mind. My advise is to prepare your game for a championship course, but play like its just another tournament. It's too easy to get distracted by the hoopla of a major and by the money if you let your mind wander from the basics of striking your ball to the target each and every shot.

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