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**Whether you're a Ryder Cup member and six time majors winner like Nick Faldo...**

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# Pros prepare to meet year's goals

By [Patrick Cohn](#)  
GolfWeb Columnist

All players want to start the season well and play their best, but not all have the same expectations. While each golfer trains differently for the upcoming season, many gear up to mentally prepare for the long and rigorous haul. One thing most players do is set new goals for the year before the season starts, since expectations can change from year to year.

I attended the [Nike Lakeland Classic](#) last week and talked to many players about their aspirations for the year and the first tournament of the season. Golf season started officially last week in Lakeland, Florida with a full field. This week the PGA Tour is playing its first full-field event at the [Bob Hope Chrysler Classic](#). The LPGA Tour season begins at the [Health South Inaugural](#) in Orlando. And the senior tour begins the year at the [MasterCard Championship](#).

The first tournament of the year is a testing ground for many players. Not everyone practices during off-season. Some don't pick up a club during the holidays. A little rusty, they're trying to shake off the dust from the clubs and get back into the groove of their games. They don't have any expectations for the first event. Work hard on one's game and see what happens.

You also see players who are testing out new equipment from deals they made with manufacturers during off-season. From their perspective, they're just trying to build confidence and familiarity with new clubs, putters or drivers.



**...you don't have to let the season take you off-guard if you set goals and prepare.**

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The first Nike Tour event was interesting for its diverse playing field. Exempt Nike Tour players, rookies, PGA Tour pros starting their season early, pros who lost their card and now play the Nike Tour, they're all battling for the same pot of cash. Not all have the same mindset. Some are just happy to be playing the Nike Tour and make a 36-hole cut. On the other hand, I also know there are players who want to win the first event of the season. Like [Tiger Woods](#), these players believe they have what it takes to win and they are not going to let anything stop them from focusing on winning a golf tournament.



**or a first-year Nike Tour rookie like Jeff Fujimoto...**

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Just like the Nike Tour, players from the PGA, Senior, and LPGA Tours have different personal goals. A lot depends on how a player finishes the previous year, how much he or she trained during off- season, and feels to compete in the first event. The first tournament is a chance to get an early win under the belt.

What are some of the goals that professional golfers set for the year? Again, that depends on the player. [Woody Austin](#), for example, is trying to get back to the PGA Tour after losing his card in 1997. His goal is to finish in the top five on the Nike Tour at the end of the season or better yet, win three times on the Nike Tour and get the "battlefield promotion" and go straight back to the PGA Tour.

The rookies on the major tours are trying to establish themselves as good players. They may dream of winning a tournament, but in reality are happy to retain their playing status for next year. The statistics show that only one- third of all [PGA Tour Qualifying School grads](#) retain their playing card. It's also common for players to set performance goals like the number of top-10's, top-25's, cuts made, and times in contention during the year. Also, I think it's natural for rookies to want to feel accepted or think they fit in with their fellow players.

A player's goals often are determined by past success they have achieved. Tour veterans have a different frame of mind than rookies. Veterans who have not won on tour want to establish themselves as winners. Those who have won already, put pressure on themselves to win again and prove they are not one-time only winners. And then there are players who have won majors, and set their sights to win the majors they have yet to win. I am sure Tiger Woods will gear his year towards winning the U.S. Open and other majors during the year.

Not all players have the same goals for their game in 1998, and that's okay. To play a successful year in 1998, tour rookies and tour winners alike want to meet their personal goals. Even if you don't reach your goals by the end of the year, you must remember that it's the process of striving for your goals that is most fulfilling.

Got a question about sports psychology? [Email Dr. Cohn.](#)

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