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Replace doubt with confidence

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Ask any great putter what's the most important ingredient, he or she will say without hesitation -- confidence. Confidence means making putts.

Too many players don't give themselves a chance to putt well because they let doubt interfere.



Duval sits atop the money list, in large part because of his putting success. (Allsport)

Granted, there are many opportunities to distrust your putting. You can question the line, stroke or the routine. You can doubt you have good touch, or doubt your ability to hit putts under pressure.

If you let doubt rule your thinking, it will take over your mind. Then there's no way you will putt well. If you are the type who looks for excuses to not putt well, it's just as bad.

Removing doubt starts with having a plan for every putt you hit and sticking to that plan.

To eliminate doubt you have to spend time getting a good read and believing in that read. The next step is to pick a line and trust what your eyes see. Not trusting the line is another source of putting woes.

Finally, you must believe you are going to make it.

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Proper preparation prior to striking a putt is what helps eliminate doubt and instill confidence when the moment of truth arrives.

A player's level of confidence and commitment can vary. Let's consider several factors. No. 1: Maybe I can make this putt. No. 2: I think I can make this putt. No. 3: I believe I can make this putt. Finally, No. 4: I know this putt is going in.

There is a definite progression in the desired level of confidence. Knowing you will make the putt pushes all doubt out of your mind. Although players I work with are not always at the desired level, I strive to help them get there.

Brian Tennyson, a former PGA Tour professional, and now a member of the Nike Tour, is a great putter. He says the best way to think about putting is to ask yourself if you want to make the putt.

If so, your mind has to support that notion. What would you think over every putt if there was no way you could miss? This is a great attitude to have on the greens.

The reality is that you can't make every putt, but you have to approach the green thinking that you can. Dave Stockton, one of the best putters on the Senior Tour, agrees with this philosophy. He has said, "I believe you must think you can make every putt you look at, no matter the distance."

Some have problems with this philosophy if they go in with the proper attitude and then don't make anything.

Consider the alternatives. One option is to have a little less confidence. That way you won't be so disappointed when the ball doesn't find the bottom of the cup. The other approach is to think the ball is going in and accept the results if it doesn't. I like this option better.

Commit to a philosophy that helps you believe the only option is hearing the ball fall into the cup. Throw all doubts away by committing to a plan



Irwin is the leading putter on the Senior Tour. (AP)

and sticking to it.

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