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Riding a wave of momentum

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What do all players dream of? Shooting a career low round.



Maybe the shorts kept Ernie Els off balance in the Johnnie Walker Super Tour. (Allsport)

I am fascinated when I talk to players who have shot their best scores. It gives me an insight into how players achieve peak performance.

I've recently interviewed several players who shot their career best rounds including [Ernie Els](#), [Chip Beck](#), [Billy Mayfair](#), [Meg Mallon](#), and [Laura Davies](#).

What's interesting is that all these world-class golfers mention how important momentum is in shooting a great round.

What is momentum? Webster's dictionary defines it as the impetus of a physical object in motion.

A more relevant definition to golf is the impetus of a nonphysical process, such as an idea or a course of events.

In all sports, momentum may be the single most important phenomenon to winning. In golf, momentum is a feeling, attitude or belief that you are

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It's the feeling you get when the bounces are going your way. When you have momentum, you think it's impossible to hit a bad shot.

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When momentum is on your side, golf seems easy. You're making birdies, saving par at will and riding a wave of confidence.

But golf is not easy when you are tugged under by negative momentum.

There are three momentum states in golf: positive, negative and a state of neutrality.

It's negative momentum that can ruin your round. In this article, I'll discuss ways to build momentum and reverse the effects of negative momentum.

Where are the good breaks?

If you're good, you're lucky. If you look for good breaks, such as when a tee shot hits a tree and bounces back into the fairway, you'll find them.



It's imperative to work through tough situations like Laura Davies found herself in here. (Allsport file)

It's easier to see them when playing well. You're more apt to ignore bad breaks when things are going well too. But when you're not playing well, it's easier to see bad breaks.

"I'm just not lucky today," you say after your ball hits a hard spot and bounces over the green. Be careful not to think yourself into playing even worse by looking for or expecting bad breaks.

You just can't control bad luck. But you can control how you respond to bad breaks.

Look at the bright side

Momentum is an emotional phenomenon. Negative momentum can be created by negative emotions during play.



It's not easy for Chip Beck to see the bright side after a year like this one.
(Allsport file)

When you haven't made any birdies and feel a lack of momentum, do you become a doubter and get down?

Pessimism and feelings of despair only accelerate negative momentum. The more you focus on misfortune and mistakes, the greater your despair.

Pick out one thing you did well on each shot. Did you make a good decision? Did you pick a smart

target? Did you execute well?

Every shot is a new opportunity

How can you create momentum when you don't have it? To turn it around and get on a wave you must start somewhere.

You must view each hole and every shot as a new opportunity to turn your game around. When's a better time to start than right now?

If you maintain a fatalistic attitude, you may never make that first birdie.

Don't wait for that birdie to come by chance. Start with an attitude that views each shot as a new opportunity to get back on track and create momentum.



Mayfair kept momentum in his favor en route to finishing 16th on the money list. (Allsport file)

Say to yourself, this shot is going to get me back on track and spark my round.

Riding a good wave

When momentum is your friend, you can ride it all the way to the clubhouse. But if you think it's too good to be true when you are 5 under after nine holes, you can

crash that perfect wave.

Making too many birdies too fast can be frightening for some players. They start to protect their score or look for the next big mistake to bring them back to reality.

Now is the time to take advantage of momentum and ride it as long as you can. Believe that you can continue to make birdies and go for it.

Performance tip

Next time you find yourself on a good wave, force yourself to stay aggressive.

Now is the time to look for more birdies instead of protecting your score.

Play each hole with the goal of giving yourself a birdie chance and forget about your current score.

Challenge yourself to make one or two more birdies coming down the stretch.

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