

By Dr. Patrick J. Cohn

Lessons from the Pros: Working the process is what brings results

In today's world, most of us learn that success in life, and in golf, comes from the results of our hard work.

It's true that results are what bring success.

To be a good player, you must hit good shots, make putts, and shoot low scores. But what most people forget is that results come from working the process.

For example, you successfully hit your tee shot in the fairway when you know how to plan a shot, align your body, aim the club, and make a good swing.

This is one of the key lessons I teach players. Hitting good shots comes from paying attention to the process of execution. It's easy to lose sight of this simple idea when players worry too much about results and what the results mean.

"Don't lip out," "I don't want to three-putt again," "Are you going to miss another one?" These are examples of what a results-focused player says to himself as he stands over a putt.

A results-focused player, who worries about missing a putt or hitting a shot out-of-bounds, does not lead to good execution. It only creates tension and leads to self-doubt.

Pro golfer Larry Mize is considered one of the best putters on the PGA Tour. Yet even the best struggle with their putting on occasion.

How does he deal with less than ideal putting? He emphasizes the importance of focusing on the process of executing.

"If you haven't made many putts all day, that's when you have to really focus on the process of executing and not worry about the outcome," Mize says.

To improve your game, you want to see a positive shot in your mind as you plan your shot, but you don't want to become fixated on making or missing. When you focus on execution, the results take care of themselves.

What does it mean to focus on execution? You hit your best shot by immersing yourself in your preparation. After your club makes contact with the ball, it's out of your control.

Plan your shot, rehearse it in your mind, prepare your body, and execute the shot. These are the ingredients of working the process.

The tendency when you are missing

putts is to start thinking about "missing" or trying to "make it." We all know the goal is to make the putt, but thinking about making it often leads to tension or causes you to try too hard to make it.

Instead your objective should be to pick a line, aim your putter, and launch your ball on that line with the right speed. What happens next is out of your control.

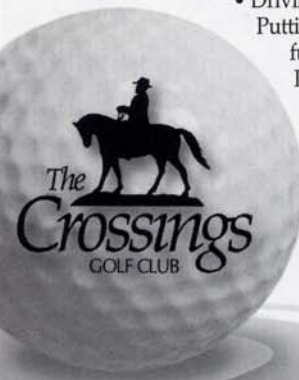
Thus to improve your game, you need to work not just on the execution of a shot, but the process of executing as well. ●

This article was based on the new book, The Mental Art of Putting: Using Your Mind to Putt Your Best by Dr. Patrick J. Cohn and Robert Winters.

Dr. Cohn consults with Tour pros and is the author of The Mental Game of Golf: A Guide to Peak Performance and co-author of The Mental Art of Putting: Using Your Mind to Putt Your Best. He can be reached at Peak Performance Sports, 7380 Sand Lake Rd, Ste 500, Orlando, FL, 32819 or at (407)-248-9830.

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