

Dealing with poor performance

When your round is over and you have played well, recall the good shots and positive outcomes and anchor* this will stack your positive anchors and aid your play next time around.

But what do you do if things didn't go according to plan?

Hopefully you will eventually have enough confidence and inner skill to combat poor holes when they happen and get your round back on track using the methods outlined in the Pre-shot routine* and Playing in the Zone* sections.

But in the meantime, if you have struggled throughout your round to get focussed on the process* of playing golf and have constantly wandered towards outcome* thoughts or even external thoughts (such as work related issues or problems at home) you have to accept that your mind was simply not there today - You were just too distracted for your focus and routines to work. And this happens, even to the best of players.

In this event, ***simply let it go***. There is no point having a Post Mortem on a round that was dead to begin with.

Your mind is a very powerful and subtle thing and since the Inner Golf Coach talks about playing golf at what could be called a subconscious level - when you focus on the process* of shot making and use imagery*, sounds*, feelings* etc - if your subconscious is preoccupied with other matters - you won't overcome it - it's too powerful. So you'll find yourself reverting back to mechanical, outcome oriented golf and will no doubt struggle around the course compared to recent rounds, when things may have been oh so different.

So if this scenario happens - accept it during the round and let it go afterwards. Do nothing to reinforce negative anchors*. Your disaster of a round was nothing to do with your ability to play golf. Let it go.

But what about situations where a good round tapered out?

A round where you lost focus and couldn't get it back?

Or perhaps where you blew a strong lead and ended up losing?

What about these types of rounds where you had it and lost it?

It's understandable when an unexpected loss leads to negative feelings. Players report emotions such as mild depression, frustration, or self doubts regarding their ability when things go wrong.

So what can golfers do when faced with such situations?

View the poor performance as a lesson learned.

After a poor performance or loss, golfers may initially feel disappointed. However, a poor performance or a loss can teach the golfer a valuable lesson. Wait until a sensible time span has passed (not in the bar after the round) and review, dispassionately where things went wrong.

Don't analyse, mechanically, why the ball went out of bounds on the 10th and let your opponent back into the match or why you then hit a poor drive again on the 11th to let him draw level. Look at your routines, your processes. What went wrong? Something did.

Did you begin the back 9 by having outcome* thoughts and drove off after a half hearted routine*? Were you still stewing over the 10th's debacle, when you teed off at the 11th? Be honest with yourself? The fault lies in a breakdown of the process* and your pre-shot routine. Identify it and work on making sure it doesn't happen again.

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If you flopped because of an obvious mechanical flaw in your game - then get it seen to. I know these processes can improve golfer's scores when they initially adopt them with their current level of technical skills but if you're bemoaning the fact the club champion beat you 4 & 3 in a scratch match after you were 2 up - when he's off plus 1 and you're a 12 HC - then you need a reality check.

So keep a sense of perspective when you review a poor performance. If the round was within your level of ability and you flopped - look for the answers as to why in your routines and processes.

Identify aspects of your performance that are controllable.

Effort and mental preparation are factors that are controllable by you, while factors such as skill level of your opponents; playing conditions or environment are things that golfers cannot control.

So when examining the reasons for a poor performance or an unexpected loss, attention should be focused on the factors that are controllable by you such as Pre-shot routines, focus on the process of shot making, not re-enforcing mistakes etc

So to summarise this article on dealing with Poor performances: What you need to do depends on the actual type of poor performance. Sometimes we just have to accept that it's not our day - you'll know this when your routines are not there because neither is your mind.

On other occasions, you may face a slump in form during a round and here you need to be honest in your analysis of the situation.

Did your routine breakdown?

Did you revert to outcome related goals and mechanical play?

The answer will be there somewhere. You just need to look.

* These phrases and concepts are fully explained in the Inner Golf Coach Audio Program.