

Increasing Your Mental Awareness

Most of errors on the course are caused by doubt, tension and lapses in concentration and not mechanical flaws, as many players believe.

The majority of swing errors result from doubt and/or tension.

Thoughts like "Don't hit into the woods" and "Don't hit it into the water" all signify doubt and produce tension. Then shoulder tension leads to a restricted backswing and often quickness in the downswing. Hip tension causes a lack of rotation and weight shift and consequently a loss in power. Wrist tension results in scooping or casting. Over-tightness causes slices, hooks, tops, chunks, and yips. In which situations these occur varies.

The average player does not pay conscious attention to his/her thoughts and emotions as they are occurring and more importantly has no idea of how they impact play or how to control them.

Therefore, it is crucial that you gain this understanding if you would like to bring your game to the next level. Mental errors generally occur when a player gets nervous, angry, tired, or lackadaisical.

Below is a list of the most common mental errors that players make.

Mental Errors:

- Not considering all the variables before taking your shot (e.g. yardage, wind, lie, hazards, next shot)
- Hitting a shot to a general location instead of a specific target
- Attempting a risky shot that you have a low probability of executing well or have not practiced
- Attempting to make up for a bad shot or lost strokes.
- Getting angry, losing emotional control and allowing one bad shot to turn into two or more.
- Choosing to carry on and hit the shot with the wrong club rather than returning to the cart or bag to get the correct one
- Attempting to hit the lesser club harder when in between clubs
- Hitting anyway when something does not feel right or you have a negative thought or image over the ball.

(A player may not feel right over the ball for several reasons: too close or far from the ball; ball may be too far forward or back in the stance; grip may not feel right; the ball may be teed too high or low; their stance may feel too open or closed; they feel like they are aimed too far right or left; they question whether they have too much or not enough club; the wind kicks up or dies down; they feel uncomfortable about the effects of the lie; they feel rushed because they don't want to make others wait.)

How to improve:

- When you are playing or practicing, notice any thoughts and feelings of anxiety, anger, and confidence, particularly after hitting a bad shot and previous to the next one.
- Note the reactions that you have before different types of shots (ex. drives, approaches, chips, putts, etc) and in different situations (ex. practice, competition, when playing well versus poorly).
- For every hole on your scorecard record each instance that you make a mental error just like you keep track of your score, fairways, greens, putts, up and downs and sand saves.
- Add mental errors to the scorecard directly below putts and place a tick mark every time that you make one.
- As you begin to track and become aware of all the times that you make a costly decision you will then naturally make an attempt to reduce them.