



Are You Practicing the Right Things?

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“A tense mind breeds tense muscles, and tense muscles make you feel clumsy, out of gear”- Jack Nicklaus

Practice is a vital part of being good in golf just like any other sport. Furthermore, if you want to be great, such as play in college, compete for club championships, or make the tour, then practice becomes even more critical. The problem, however, for most golfers is not their practice time, but rather what they are practicing. For low handicappers, the quantity of practice is not nearly as important as the quality. Yet many players still feel the need to hit balls on the range for hours upon hours even though this is not the right solution for lower scores.

When golfers make numerous mistakes or a multitude of bad shots, they have a high tendency to head directly to the range right after completing the 18th hole. There they sometimes spend hours working on the clubs or shots they did not execute properly during the round. This may seem admirable, and it is, but many times it is not the right thing to be doing to lower scores, especially at this level of play. Unfortunately they have been trained to think that *hitting more balls* is the answer. They falsely believe that a technical flaw in their swing caused the problem and the key to correcting it is found by beating balls. The cause of the bad swings, however, is many times mental or emotional, and a technical solution is not accurate.

Golfers will always make bad swings on the course. That is a fact. The cause of these bad swings, however, is not technical, but rather mental or emotional. Instead of heading to the range, golfers need to assess and understand the mental causes of the bad swings – Not committed to the shot? Distracted? Not in the present moment? Thinking about outcome or score? Lack trust? The answers to these questions will give you the solution. When a golfer's mind is doing any of these things, such as not being committed to the shot or worried about the result, pressure and body tension is the result. This tension in the body causes the bad swing, not a technical flaw. The problem is not knowing *how* to hit a hybrid or 6-iron, but rather being more focused, relaxed and present to allow this skill to take place. Golfers need to spend more time correcting emotional and mental errors than they do technical ones. Thus, going to a quiet place to journal, review or visualize after a round might be the solution, not going to the range.

Dr. K's Mental Tips

- Breakdowns in the mind are usually the cause of bad swings.
- Dissect the problem first; hitting balls may not be the solution.
- Technical *and* mental practice are keys to lower scores
- Practice to fix problems and score lower, not just for habit's sake.
- The mind is the largest dictator of success, not the swing.