



If You Want to Perform with Focus, Practice with Focus

By Todd M. Kays, Ph.D.

Sport Psychologist

Focus, or lack thereof, is a challenging mental issue faced by all golfers. In fact, next to performing under pressure, it is the second most frequent concern brought to me by golfers. Focus is actually directly related to your ability or inability to perform under pressure, but for today, I will stay *focused* strictly on focus, specifically how to *practice* focus.

When golfers discuss difficulties with focus on the golf course, I ask them how much they practice their focus. They look at me somewhat bewildered because they do not know how to *practice* focus. I explain to them something they already know – if they do not practice something, such as putting and chipping, they cannot expect success to occur with consistency. Thus, golfers must learn to *practice* focus. Here are a few steps to get moving:

Score Focus

When playing practice rounds, keep a “focus score.” After each hole, count each stroke that you had “optimal focus” and record it. Thus, if on a par 4, you made 3 shots with optimal focus, your focus score would be 3. Keeping track for 18 holes will definitely improve focus.

Five Ball Focus

Hit five balls with each club in your bag, being very consistent and conscious of focusing on target. This is a great exercise to do in the off-season. The purpose is to train your brain to automatically focus on target, not allowing it to be distracted by other things.

9/9 Focus

After warming up, hit 9 balls with 3 different clubs. With each shot, go through your pre-shot routine and make certain to focus on the target. The purpose is to train the brain to automatically focus on target, not allowing it to be distracted by other things. Choose nine holes you will be playing in an upcoming tournament. End practice by doing the same drill, again playing nine shots you may possibly hit in an upcoming tournament.

18/18 Focus

This is the same drill as the 9/9 Focus, but with 18 shots instead of 9. This is great to do in the off-season because of more time available, but also very important for golfers who

have difficulty with focus, managing pressure, or eliminating “non-golf” matters in their minds.

Leave It in the Locker Room

Journal about any non-golf matters before going to practice. You may not “feel” anxious or worried about them, but the mind carries many things with it all of the time. It is important to write all of these things down in the journal and “leave it in the locker room.” They will be there when you get done.