

Golf Insider

By T.J. TOMASI

BIRDIES AND BOGIES

Trouble? What trouble?

I hear it all the time from golfers describing why they shot a high score: "I couldn't concentrate out there," they say, or, "I couldn't stop thinking about the trouble."

Of course, there is something you can do about the trouble because people ignore trouble all the time in their everyday lives simply by being focused on the task at hand.

A case in point: A fire that filled a Mentor, Ohio, department store with thick smoke last December didn't break the focus of Christmas shoppers. Firefighters had to block the doors to keep even more customers from coming in while the place was burning.

"It was amazing," said Mentor Fire Battalion Chief Joe Busher. "Even though there was heavy smoke in there, they all wanted to stay and shop."

The point: If shoppers can maintain their focus in the middle of smoke and flames, surely golfers can focus on a golf shot with water on the right and the wind blowing, wouldn't you think?

SCHEDULE

All Times EST

PGA TOUR

- **Site:** Pebble Beach, Calif.
- **Schedule:** Thursday-Sunday
- **Courses:** Pebble Beach Golf Links (6,816 yards, par 72), Spyglass Hill Golf Course (6,862 yards, par 72) and Poppy Hills Golf Course (6,833 yards, par 72).
- **Purse:** \$5.5 million. Winner's share: \$990,000.
- **TV:** Golf Channel (Thursday-Friday, 3-6 p.m., 8:30-11:30 p.m.) and CBS (Saturday, 3-6 p.m.; Sunday, 3-6:30 p.m.).
- **Last week:** Australia's Aaron Baddeley won the FBR Open for his second PGA Tour title.
- **Note:** Phil Mickelson, the 1998 and 2005 winner tops the field along with second-ranked Jim Furyk, 2004 champion Vijay Singh, Luke Donald and Padraig Harrington.

CHAMPIONS TOUR Allianz Championship

- **Site:** Boca Raton, Fla.
- **Schedule:** Friday-Sunday
- **Courses:** The Old Course at Broken Sound (6,749 yards, par 71).
- **Purse:** \$1.6 million. Winner's share: \$240,000.
- **TV:** Golf Channel (Friday, 1-3 p.m., 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Saturday, 1-4 p.m., 6:30-9 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m., 7-9 p.m.).

PGA EUROPEAN TOUR/ASIAN TOUR Malaysian Open

- **Site:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- **Schedule:** Thursday-Sunday
- **Courses:** Saujana Golf and Country Club, The Palm Course (6,979 yards, par 72).
- **Purse:** \$1.29 million. Winner's share: \$214,500.
- **TV:** Golf Channel (Thursday-Sunday, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.).

ALPG TOUR/LADIES EUROPEAN TOUR Australian Ladies Masters

- **Site:** Gold Coast, Australia.
- **Schedule:** Thursday-Sunday
- **Courses:** Royal Pines Resort (6,443 yards, par 72).
- **Purse:** \$620,000. Winner's share: \$93,000.
- **TV:** None.

LPGA TOUR

- **Next event:** SBS Open at Turtle Bay, Feb. 15-17, Turtle Bay Resort, Palmer Course, Kahuku, Hawaii.
- **Last event:** Julieta Granada and Celeste Troche gave Paraguay its first Women's World Cup title, combining for a 7-under 65 in best-ball play for a seven-stroke victory over the United States on Jan. 21 in Sun City, South Africa.

NATIONWIDE TOUR

- **Next event:** Jacob's Creek Open, Feb. 15-18, Kooyonga Golf Club, Adelaide, Australia.
- **Last event:** Argentina's Miguel Carballo won the season-opening Panama Championship on Jan. 28, closing with a 5-under 65 for a two-stroke victory.

DRILL FOR SKILL

Get in sync

If you're having trouble syncing your arms and your body, here's a great drill that will help.

At address, hold a 7-iron in one hand and an 8-iron in the other. Swing slowly back and through, noting that if you slow down or speed up one side independent of the other, the two clubs will collide. If you keep everything moving correctly the shafts never touch.

Note: When you want to swing faster, simply speed up your core (midsection) rotation.

DON'T MISS IT

A state-of-the-art putting system

Need some definitive information on your putting stroke? Then Don't Miss Tomi, an easy-to-use training system designed for professional instructors working on a practice green.

A transmitter is clipped to the putter's shaft, and a motion sensor set on the green captures its movement.

The stroke-capturing unit is connected to a Windows-based computer loaded with Tomi stroke analysis software. In real time, Tomi records every motion and angle of the putter in three-dimensional space. Then, in seconds, the system generates easy-to-understand graphics of what Tomi has "seen."

It's about \$900, which is a bit more than most will pay but it shouldn't be that hard to find a teaching pro who uses this advanced technology. The folks at Tomi (www.tomi.com) will help.



IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME



Tommy Armour allows his arms to hang straight down from his shoulders with a 5-iron. The butt of his club is over his toe line and under the top of his spine.

Watch your STANCE

Distance to the ball a significant factor in maximizing power

When you swing a golf club, force is exerted on your body that can cause you to lose your balance. To withstand these forces at high speeds (long hitters swing the clubhead at over 120 mph), you must be in perfect balance, and part of the balance equation is how far you stand from the ball.

It should be oh so simple—there's the ball and here you are, so just step up to it, put your clubhead behind the ball and you should be perfect. Only that isn't what usually happens because feel and rear are different. What "feels" powerful is not necessarily so.

Most golfers stand too far away from the ball because it feels like a strong position. But it forces them to hunch their shoulders and bend too much from the waist, so much so that during the swing, they lose their balance. And if there is one thing you need to make a good swing, it's balance.

Some golfers do just the opposite, i.e. they stand too close to the ball with the stomach tucked up and in toward the ball, leaving them no room to swing the club. Thus they suffer power loss and balance issues, most of which can be mollified by adhering to a few basic numbers.

A computer model developed by Dr. Ralph Mann and Fred Griffin was generated from a bio-mechanical study using 54 PGA Tour pros. With their drivers, the pros addressed the ball with their left toe approximately 32 inches

from the ball. For a 5-iron, the pros stood 23 to 25 inches away; with a 9-iron, 19 to 21 inches.

To establish proper balance at address, it's important to stick your fanny up and out behind you, but not so much that you curve your back like a sway-backed plow horse. Both the PGA Tour golfers in these photos show a very relaxed protrusion of the fanny, something the average player would do well to copy.

Correct posture is important because, as the swing reaches maximum speed, the posterior acts as an anchor that allows the arms to swing at full force and on a constant arc without disruption.

As you assume the address position, imagine that you are about to sit on a high bar stool, so that your rump is behind your heels. In addition to better balance, you will gain the added

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benefit of a straight spine, which gives you a stable axis to swing around.

When you are in the proper position, you are in the same position that all great athletes assume for action—a quarterback waiting for a snap, a basketball player preparing for a free throw, a shortstop ready for a grounder. The muscles of your thighs are taut, but not tense. The feeling is that if you wanted to hop toward the ball without repositioning your weight, you could.



Darren Clarke is hitting a driver, so his hands are farther away from his toe line than they would be with an iron.

STATISTICS

Drive for dough?

You hear a lot about the long ball and how it pays off, but in 2006, a lot of long-ball hitters were at the back of the pack when it came to winning money.

For example, Alex Aragon averaged 302 yards and won just \$94,500. David Duval (\$318,276) and Jimmy Walker (\$153,950) averaged 297 yards, Ryan Hietala (\$87,772) averaged 304 yards and James Driscoll (\$219,904) averaged 296 yards, showing that there is more to this game than just hitting it far.

In 2006, Tiger Woods led the tour in greens-in-regulation with 74.1 percent, while Todd Hamilton, a former British Open champion who struggled last

year, averaged 56.9 percent.

This means that per 18 holes, Tiger hit 13.3 greens while Hamilton hit 10.2, or three fewer greens, which doesn't seem like a big deal until you analyze it.

Over four rounds, that's 12 greens where Tiger was putting for birdie and Todd was off the green chipping or worse. Over 20 tournaments, that's 240 more birdie chances for Tiger if Tiger made just 25 percent of those chances, that would be 60 more birdies.

Adam Scott's 2006 overall stats are very close to Tiger's, except that Scott hit 69 percent greens in regulation, or about one green less per round. Tiger won \$9,941,663, while Scott won about half that: \$4,978,857.

To wit: If you hit the green, you get the "green."

TEERING OFF

Keeping your mind focused during play is essential in golf

Our brains are awash in a sea of thoughts that, if left uncontrolled, can swamp the ship. Being in command of these thoughts is essential to playing your best golf because there is no end to the creative ways your wandering thoughts can undermine your performance.

One strategy for maintaining control of your mental landscape comes from Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz in his book "Brain Lock," which outlines a method for taking back control of the brains of patients debilitated by obsessive-compulsive disorder. If it can work in a clinical setting, it can work for golfers.

I have found that using a similar procedure with students who are having trouble running their brain while they play golf is very effective. There are four steps.

Step 1: Relabel

Identify an unwanted thought as one you are not going to act on. Let's say you've been working on cocking your wrists earlier during your backswing, and it works fine on the range. But as soon as you get on the course, you receive warning signals—bad thoughts—when you try to implement the new move.

Identify the disruptive thoughts (the warning that "you're setting the club too late"), and label them as out-of-date. Explain to yourself that this warning is bogus and, as such, has no validity.

Step 2: Reattribute

Until you actually do something about the unwanted thought, it will reoccur even though it been relabeled. Why won't these bothersome thoughts go away on their own? What should you attribute them to? This is the crux of the reattribution step.

Reattribution is a take-off on the idea that "if you can explain it, you own it." The explanation of the warning thought you receive in our example is that this signal is a part of the "No/Go" system every brain has.

Your body sends you a steady stream of messages. Some messages are reminders (it's time to eat), some are warnings (that's hot!), some are encouraging (go ahead, you can do it) and some are caveats (be careful with this one). Your brain is in constant communication with your body and the No/Go system is the fabric of that dialogue.

Next week we'll complete the procedure that places you in control of your thoughts by outlining the remaining steps: refocus and repeat.

GOLF SPOKEN HERE

Redan

A type of green design where the green slopes front to back and right to left.

Here's the definition from Wikipedia: "A redan hole or redan is an aspect of golf course architecture commonly associated with golf architect Charles MacDonal. The term alludes to the redan 'type of fortification. Specifically, a redan hole should have a green where the front angle is a 'V' shape and which slopes downward and away from the point of the 'V,' and consequently from the gofer playing to the green from the tee or fairway."

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I haven't had a lot of stress, but I did when my first wife, Louise, had a stroke on Good Friday 1983. They said she wouldn't live another two weeks. Well, she lived another two years. She was completely paralyzed and never spoke again, except to say, 'Home, home, home.' Golf isn't stress. When the woman you've loved your whole life can only say 'home,' that's stress."



Byron Nelson (1912-2006), golfing legend

ASK THE PRO

Q: I'm not sure what I should think about while I swing. Any suggestions? —B.W. from Atlanta

A: Stay away from swing keys that tell you to "do something" or force something to happen. You want to let your swing happen, not make it happen. The closer the key is to address, the easier it is to execute correctly, and conversely, the closer the key is to impact, the more difficult it is to do correctly.

Remember that the downswing takes only about half a second, so it's hard to fit any conscious thought in at exactly the right place. Besides, the downswing is not time to be shouting instructions to yourself.

(To Ask the Pro a question about golf, e-mail him at: TJInsider@aol.com.)