

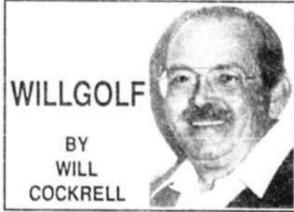
PSYCHOLOGY ON THE COURSE

Visualize Your Shots, Keep Images Positive

A reader called this week to inquire about the PGA Teaching Manual I frequently use as a reference. Rich Carrage wanted to know how he could get a copy of the book. A quick phone call to the Carolinas Section of the PGA at North Myrtle produced the telephone number of the PGA Book Store: (407) 624-8535.

That event prompted me to go to the manual, where there are several dog-eared place markers. The second or third one I turned to had a phrase underlined in the "Psychology of Golf" section which read, "...keep the positive images flowing."

It's good advice that applies to a wide variety of endeavors. Positive images are conducive to positive thinking and an open mind, no matter what task or project is at hand. You don't have to worry about having too many positive thoughts. You will find yourself suffering from an overdose. There are more than enough folks out there to balance the scales with negative images and thoughts.



WILLGOLF
BY
WILL
COCKRELL

Eliminate the Negative...

The world is full of nit-pickers, fault finders and problem identifiers. They are always equipped with a reserve tank full of notions about what is wrong in our culture: taxes, high prices, social issues, moral dilemmas and, occasionally, their golf games. These harbingers of disaster will sometimes have some recommended solutions. All too often, they are oversimplified and manifestly subjective solutions to complex problems: "Tax those wealthy suckers and leave us alone."

Anxieties which stem from the game of golf are largely embedded in prior failures and frustrations. Vivid and painful images of past experiences are the worst kind of negative thinking. We have all heard golfers who say, "I can't play this hole," or "That course kills me every time I play there." It is difficult, if not impossible, to be positive when your mind is filled with a fear of failure.

Create Your Own Mind Games

There some psychological tricks that you can play on yourself which lead to positive thoughts. In "Golf My Way," Jack Nicklaus relates the value of positive images through visualizing the shot he is about to hit. He begins by visualizing where he wants the ball to land and stop, the trajectory the ball must take to get there and, finally, the swing he will need to produce the desired results.

You do not often see Nicklaus taking a lot of practice swings except on short, delicate shots around the green. I would suggest, however, that you extend his practice to several practice swings. Actually take a number of practice swings and incorporate the image of the ball flying on the desired trajectory to the target.

Allow me to suggest that these practice swings not be rehearsed when it is your turn to play. Make them out of the way of a fellow competitor while he is playing his shot. If you cannot do so without distracting your buddies, make several mental swings and see the ball in the desired trajectory.

Visualize, Visualize, Visualize

Then when it becomes your turn to play, take at least one or possibly two practice swings, complete with visualizing the desired shot. The trick is to actually visualize your shot all the way to the target. This simple matter or focusing on the positive will, as a minimum, free your mind of negative thoughts and, at best, will rehearse the mind and body to perform in unison to produce the desired results.

It also helps to recall and visualize a similar shot you have hit with good results. "Keep the Positive Images Flowing." As for that hole from hell, try this: well before you play that devilish fiend, imagine the sequence of shots that will allow you to conquer that hole. Imagine yourself playing that hole with a pro's skill, but using your own yardages and flight trajectory.

Try This Trick

In my own experience, I had a long par three hole that used to eat my lunch. One day I realized that two holes before that par three was a par five hole with a second, or lay-up shot that was almost identical to the tee shot of the scary par three. The only difference was that the lay-up shot had no water hazard or bunkers to worry about. The lay-up shot was no big deal since the par five could not be reached in two shots. I used the lay-up shot to rehearse the tee shot to the tough par three.

The lay-up came off perfectly and left me just one extra club to the green of the par five. When I arrived at the par three, I told myself to hit that layup shot again to a large target area without nearby hazards. I took the smoothest swing in memory and watched the ball follow the exact trajectory I had visualized and stop in the middle of the green. Two putts later I had a routine par on a hole that had produced more fives and sixes than pars in the past.

As I left my long-time nemesis and proceeded to the next tee, I had a sneaky feeling that there were a lot more pars to be had on that old devil. And there were for certain. All I had needed were some positive thoughts and good visualization of the desired shot.

Next week, more mind tricks.



JOE STEELE stands near the eighth tee at Sandpiper Bay, one of two holes he aced during a round of golf June 1.

Colorado Drafts McCracken For Major League Baseball

Southport native Quinton McCracken was picked by the Colorado Rockies, a National League expansion team, in the Major League Baseball draft last week.

The former Duke University and South Brunswick baseball star was selected in the 25th round of the annual amateur draft last Tuesday.

At Duke, McCracken set school records in hits, games played, at-bats, runs and stolen bases.

The Blue Devil second-baseman hit .373, had 76 hits, scored 62 runs and stole 33 bases as a senior this spring.

McCracken was a first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference selection and third-team All-American nominee.

He also was one of eight ACC ball players named to the 1992 America Baseball Coaches Association Atlantic Region All-Star team.

McCracken attended Duke on a football scholarship and was a steady force in the defensive secondary for the Blue Devils.

He played shortstop for the South Brunswick Cougars when they won the state 2-A baseball championship in 1988.

Tennis Hopfuls Can Pick Up Info

Girls interested in playing tennis next fall at West Brunswick High School need to pick up information packets at the school this summer.

Packets can be picked up any weekday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. at the high school office.

Coach Marti Gillis said she plans to start practice Aug. 8. Incoming freshmen and other girls are invited to try out for the squad.

Steele Aces Two Holes In One Round

BY DOUG RUTTER

Like the sport fisherman who dreams of hooking a record sailfish, most golfers spend their lives hoping to hit an elusive hole in one.

Few links enthusiasts ever dream of making two aces, particularly in the same round.

But that's just what Joe Steele did during a recent tour at Sandpiper Bay Golf and Country Club near Calabash.

The Ocean Isle Beach resident aced the par-3 eighth and 15th holes at Sandpiper while playing in a men's league tournament June 1.

"The odds have to be something like 15 million to one," Steele said last week. "It was really something."

At the 160-yard eighth hole, Steele used a 6-iron to do the job. He chose an eight iron as his weapon at the 145-yard 15th hole.

"It's one of those things that doesn't happen too often," understated Sandpiper Bay's head golf pro, Tom Miles.

With 5 million golfers in the United States, it only happened 14 times in 1990, according to *Golf Digest* magazine.

Steele, who helps run a restaurant at Ocean Isle, has been playing golf for 30 years. The two recent aces brought his career total to four.

The local golfer said his good fortune last Monday started long before he made his first hole in one.

On the 152-yard third hole, his towering tee shot fell short of the green and splashed in a lake. Steele said it somehow popped out of the water onto the bank. From there, he chipped on a rolled in a 20-foot putt for par.

"It must have hit a turtle or alligator or something," he said. "It just popped right up on the bank. I knew it was going to be a good day."

At the eighth hole, Steele said his tee shot landed on the front of the green and rolled toward the cup.

He was riding to the green in a golf cart when the ball dropped in the hole. The group of golfers up ahead witnessed the ace.

On the 15th hole, Steele benefited from a good bounce. "It landed in the middle of the green, made two or three hops and made a left turn like it had radar," he said.

Steele, a 54-year-old member at

Sandpiper Bay, was playing with Phil Canterbury, Hal Foley and Owen Whitfield when he recorded the two aces.

"It was really fun, and it was fun for the guys playing with me," he said. "They had never seen a hole in one and got to see two in one day."

By the way, Steele missed the green on the course's final par three and ended up shooting an 80—a score he was somewhat embarrassed to reveal.

Steele, whose handicap usually hovers around 14, also made his two other career aces at Sandpiper Bay.

They occurred at the eighth and 11th holes and were hit within three weeks of each other during the summer of 1988.

Steele, a small, wiry man, said his two aces last Monday have been the source of a lot of good-natured ribbing at the golf course.

"I've got to give strokes to everybody or they won't play me," he said. "Everybody's afraid of me now."

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