

Practical Golf Presents

**THE COMPLETE GUIDE
TO
COURSE MANAGEMENT**

Find the path to lower scores

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS COURSE MANAGEMENT?

Golfers are always looking for the magical secret to lower scores. To me there are a couple of foolproof ways that can help all golfers shoot lower scores, and sometimes they are not the answers they want to hear.

I consider course management to be one of these guaranteed secrets to success. It is something that is almost never talked about in the golf industry, mainly because it is a skill that cannot be monetized.

You would never see a commercial during a PGA Tournament talking about how taking a 3-iron off the tee is the answer to shooting in the 80s. I am here to tell you that developing a sound course-management strategy will help you lower your scores without fixing your swing, or figuring out how to hit your driver farther.

Course management is about thinking your way around the course. It's about having a plan before every shot, and staying in the moment. Being a great course manager is one of the hardest things to do in golf, but if

you begin to work on this necessary skill you will start to enjoy golf more, and shoot lower scores.

Your strategy on your tee shots, approach shots, and all other facets of golf is one of the key elements in determining how well you will play on any given day. It requires a great deal of discipline to stick with the proper course-management strategy during the trials and tribulations of a round.

Tiger & Phil

Let me talk to you about a couple golfers that you probably know, and how their course-management skills affected their careers.

Tiger Woods is going to go down as one of the two greatest golfers in history, despite his recent woes. When most people look back on his greatness they think about all of the amazing shots he hit, and the clutch putts he sank in the biggest moments. What they don't realize is that Tiger was probably one of the smartest course managers to ever play the game. It is a large part of why he won so many majors, and contended in even more.

Tiger's dominant stretch of golf will probably never be replicated. It was an amazing display of power, shot making, and touch around the greens. When we look back, we can't help but think about all of the 330-yard drives he had, and often hear about how he overpowered every golf course he played. That certainly was a big element to his success, but it wasn't the only part.

What people don't usually discuss is Tiger's course management. He was often hitting less than driver on many tee shots, and had developed go-to safety shots that he could perform under pressure, like his amazing stinger 3-wood.

Tiger wasn't firing at every pin either. He had a calculated approach to every hole that managed his risk. He knew when he could pull out the driver, and when he had the green light to aim his approach shot at the pin. More importantly, he had the discipline to know when to use an iron off the tee, and aim at the safe part of the green.

To put it simply, Tiger outmaneuvered everyone mentally before the tournament even began. He understood that the key to winning was to keep himself in the hunt in every tournament. That is why he often rang up a ton of 68s and 69s, rather than having those blistering rounds where he shot a 64.

Hank Haney summed it up in his book *The Big Miss*. Tiger was always trying to avoid the one mistake that could cost him the tournament. The key to his success was not shooting himself in the foot through overly aggressive play.

If he could just keep the ball in play, he knew that his amazing iron play would lead to birdies and eliminate bogeys and double bogeys.

Tiger's greatest feat of course management was when he won the 2006 British Open by taking his driver out of the bag ONE TIME. This performance highlighted the merits of having a plan on a golf course, and the discipline to stick with it.

Let's talk about another player who had the talent to win as many majors as Tiger, but played a different style of golf. I am referring to Phil Mickelson.

We all love Phil, and the way he plays the game. It's a swash-buckling style of golf that endeared him to millions, and made them even more millions in marketing dollars.

Who could forget Phil threading the ball through the trees on 15 at Augusta? It was one of the greatest shots ever because it was so risky. We also remember all of his heartbreaks at the US Open too. I was actually standing next to the tent on the 18th hole when he decided to pull out his driver with a one shot lead at Winged Foot. I couldn't believe what was happening when I saw the ball sail over my head!

Phil's aggressive play is what won him many tournaments, but it is also why he was never able to rack up as many majors as Tiger. He was willing to take the gamble most of the time, and Tiger had a plan that relied on a more conservative approach that was meant to keep him in the tournament at all costs.

I don't want to draw any direct comparisons from these two legendary players to John Q Golfer at the municipal course. What I wanted to illustrate with this comparison is how a different strategy on the course can separate golfers who have similar skill levels.

Most golfers have not really sat down to consider a course-management strategy when they play. I see players all of the time pulling out their drivers, aiming at difficult pins, and trying to thread the ball through three sets of trees when they shouldn't. It often leads to terrible mistakes that result in double and triple bogeys, and sends them into a mental tailspin that destroys the rest of their rounds.

If implemented properly, a course-management strategy will cut down on these mistakes, and prevent you from having the blow up holes that plague most golfers.

In the coming chapters I am going to give you a plan for each part of the game. Just remember that all great golfers know that the key to low scores is as much about mental decisions as the quality of their ball striking.

TEE SHOTS

The tee shot is arguably the most important shot in golf because it carries so much mental significance. If you can hit a great tee shot it will start your hole off on a positive note, and generally lead to better scoring. Conversely, a terrible tee shot can suck the life out of your round, and can result in some really big scores.

Poor tee shots were the Achilles heel of my game for so long, and were one of the reasons I never saw any real improvement in my scores for years.

**Golfers have more to lose
from an errant tee shot than
they stand to gain from a
safe tee shot.**

The mental impact of watching your ball sail out of bounds, or into a cluster of trees, can be hard to recover from.

There are so many golfers who are making the wrong club selection on the tee box, and it's setting them up for failure.

The strategy is quite simple. A 200-yard tee shot in the fairway is a much bigger advantage than a 250-yard drive that puts you in deep trouble. What I would like to do in this chapter is teach you what you should be looking for when choosing your club on the tee, and how you go about coming up with a strategy.

Choosing the right tees to play from

Before I get into how to develop a plan to play smarter tee shots, I want to make sure you are playing from the right tees. Some courses offer you a wide variety of distances to play from, and some golfers are selecting tees that are way too long for their games.

If you are playing from tees that are too long, then you will be forced into making aggressive decisions in order to feel like you are keeping up with the course. It leads to more mistakes, and it's just not as fun.

The USGA came out with a Tee it Forward initiative a few years ago, and released the following chart as a guide for golfers:

<u>Driver Distance</u>	<u>Recommended 18-Hole Yardages</u>
PGA Tour	7,600-7,900
300	7,150-7,400
275	6,700-6,900
250	6,200-6,400
225	5,800 -6,000

I think this is a reasonable recommendation, and if your course will allow you to play these yardages then I would suggest adopting it. Playing from the back tees if you are not ready for the challenge will do more harm to your game than good.

Keeping the ball in play

Tennis was a sport that I always loved as a child. My father had some simple advice for me: “just keep the rally going”. It was a basic tip, but it spoke to my weakness, which was always going for the aggressive shot to win a point, and it ultimately lead to unforced errors. I soon realized that if I toned down my aggression, and just kept the ball in play, I would win more matches.

This is perfect advice for any golfer. Squeaking out an extra 30 yards with a more aggressive club might sound great, but you are bringing parts of the course into play that you want to avoid.

When you are evaluating your club selection on tee shots your overall goal should be to keep the ball in play, that's it.

A longer club, with a lower loft will widen your potential landing area. If that landing area includes bunkers, trees, and hazards, then it might be a good idea to take out the shorter club.

Every golf hole has a unique design, and course architects love to try and get you to gamble with your club selection. You should take these risks into consideration, and choose a club that will keep the ball in play at all costs.

It's not all about distance

It is very difficult to swallow our pride on the tee, and subdue our collective lust for power. I know this is hard to do because every commercial on TV talks about adding distance to your drives. Taking driver out on every hole is not the answer, even if it costs you \$500!

Most golfers have a subliminal desire to hit their driver as far as possible, and it is one of the main reasons why their games are suffering. Hitting great drives can be an enormous advantage for any player, but the fact is you need to have control first before you can get distance.

You have to be honest with yourself, and really think about your abilities as a player.

If you lack consistency with the driver, then it might be best to leave it in the bag for most of the round. There is no shame in taking out an iron or fairway wood off of the tee. If you watch the pros they are doing it all of the time. It is because they're smart enough to understand when the risk is worth it.

As I said earlier, your number one goal is to keep the ball in play. If you can achieve that with a club less than driver, use that one. It's much easier to make par from the fairway than it is stuck behind a tree.

Jack Nicklaus believed that when faced with a decision between distance and control, that you should choose the club that gives you a better chance of landing in the fairway. If that approach was good enough for the Golden Bear, then it should be good enough for you!

Develop a safety club

So much of golf is about confidence. Our minds have the power to convince our bodies of some incredible things. If you step up to the tee without belief in the shot you are about to hit, then it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

That is why it is so crucial to develop confidence with a club other than your driver on your tee shots.

For me it's my 3-iron hybrid. When I step up to the tee with that club I just know I am going to hit a good shot that will be in play. No matter how bad my round is

going, I can always rely on the 3-iron to steady the ship. That's a powerful tool to have.

There is a story from Bob Rotella's book *Golf is Not a Game of Perfect* that talks about the time Tom Kite was playing a round with Jack Nicklaus in the PGA Championship. On the 4th hole Nicklaus hooked a driver, and it was the worst shot that Kite ever saw him play. That was the last time Jack used his driver the whole round, and it was a grueling 7,200 yard setup in the days before titanium and graphite. Jack used his safety clubs off of the tee for the rest of the round even though it put him at a huge disadvantage. I'm sure it took a lot of discipline, but that was the kind of player he was.

Having confidence with a club other than the driver is one of the keys to improving as a golfer. Approaching the tee with positive thoughts can save rounds that are starting to spiral out of control. I encourage you to stop practicing on the range with your driver so much, and start thinking about working on these other clubs to develop confidence that you can bring out to the course.

Pick a spot

If you are stepping up to your tee shot aiming at a general area, and not a specific target, then you are not focusing your mind properly.

Choosing a target is an important mental cue. It will help sharpen your focus as you go through your pre-shot routine (check out my website if you don't have a pre-shot routine!). Most golfers never take the time to

do this, and it is a large part of why they are so inconsistent off of the tee.

There is a long list of natural targets you can find on a golf course. It could be a tree in the background, a yardage marker, an undulation in the fairway, or a bunker in the distance. Get creative with it.

Pick the target, commit to it, and focus on it during your pre-shot routine. If you lack this specific target, it will partially prevent you from committing to the shot.

How do you decide on your club and target?

As you plan out your club selection off of the tee there are two things to consider, and they are quite simple. Where is the trouble, and how far? Where is safety, and how far?

Knowing your distances to safety and trouble are very important, and I encourage you to take advantage of GPS and laser technology that will allow you to know these exact yardages. If you know with certainty that it's 180 yards to carry the water then you will not go through the second-guessing that can lead to less confidence in the club you are choosing.

Just so I am clear, I am not suggesting spending 2 minutes before each shot staring at your GPS, or shooting each distance with your range finder. Please use judgment in this process, and try to learn these distances if you are playing a course regularly.

I mentioned before that golf course architects love to entice players into making mistakes off of the tee. Through the use of bunkers, doglegs, water hazards, trees, and fairway contours they can entice you with all kind of risks and rewards. Don't fall for their tricks!

There is often a safer part of most fairways, which is usually wider. It might not be the distance from the hole that you are looking for though. Many courses will narrow the fairway in areas that golfers can reach with their drivers.

For example, on a par 4 you might have a wide landing area about 170-210 yards from the tee, but as you approach 220-260 yards you might see bunkers, a dogleg, or more rough.

They want you to take out the driver and go for broke. In your mind you are thinking that you want to have 100 yards in with your second shot, and you pull out the driver. Now that you have brought all of this trouble into play you have already decreased your chances of finding safety.

The overall point I am trying to get across is that you need to be able to evaluate all of these factors that are built in to a golf course, and make the smart decision. Adding 20-40 yards of extra length on your tee shot will not gain you much of an advantage on the hole if you can't reach your desired target with regularity.

If you can keep the ball in play consistently off the tee, then you have won a major part of the battle on the golf course. It should be your number one priority above everything else.

Chapter Recap:

- Choose the right tee box to play from, don't make the challenge too hard for your game
- Above all, your focus is to keep the ball in play off the tee
- Swallow your pride, and stop focusing on hitting the ball as far as you can!
- Develop confidence with a club less than driver as a way to steady yourself if your round is slipping away.
- Pick a specific spot to aim at every time off the tee.
- Evaluate the trouble on each hole, and choose a club that will allow you to reach safety.

APPROACH SHOTS

The approach shot is another critical shot in golf. Be smart, and you can leave yourself with an easy two-putt par. If you are too aggressive, you can miss greens, and put yourself in some terrible spots on the course that will lead to your blowup holes.

This is another area of the game where course architects and golf superintendents can trick you into making mistakes. When you're done with this chapter you will know what to look for, and how to plan your shot properly.

The first thing to help you evaluate your strategy with your approach shot is to take into consideration the area surrounding a green.

You are not going to hit 18 greens in one round, so every golfer needs a contingency plan on where to miss. None of us will ever have complete control of the golf ball, so we have to accept the fact that we still might hit the ball towards the trouble, and that's OK.

What I am hoping to teach you is how to avoid

big mistakes with your club selection and targets.

Golf course designers have a wide variety of tools to make your approach shots difficult. They include bunkers, water hazards, false fronts, slope drop-offs, green undulations, and trees. This list is long, and their goal is to confuse you into making a mistake.

Course superintendents will then use pin placements to try and get you to gamble by aiming towards these problem areas.

Most holes you are going to play will have an area around the green that will offer you an easier spot to pitch or chip from. On extremely difficult holes, it's hit the green or bust. You just have to accept the fact that missing the green won't be pretty sometimes.

A sample hole

There is an endless combination of hazards to use around the green, and I couldn't possibly list all of these at once. Let me give a sample hole to illustrate my point.

Let's say you are on a par 3 that is 150 yards to the center of the green. There are two large bunkers guarding the front of the green, and a significant hill off to the right.

The area to the left of the green, and behind it is relatively flat. The green itself is quite deep, and you know it's about 170 yards to the back (use a GPS device!). Let's say you can hit your 6-iron 150 yards with a relatively good strike. However, you know that if

you don't catch all of the 6-iron, then you will likely come up short in the bunkers.

My suggestion would be to pull out the 5-iron. If you don't catch all of it, then you probably will still land on the green safely, or at worst have an easy chip shot from behind the green.

I would also tell you to favor the left side of the green since you know there is trouble to the right, regardless of where the pin placement is.

This is the type of thinking I am trying to advocate when you plan your approach shot. Let's say the pin was on the right-hand portion of the green situated closer to the front. If you chose a club for the distance to the pin, and aimed to the right side of the green, you will have brought both trouble areas into play.

This leads me to my next point...

Stop aiming at the pin!

I can't think of one good reason why most golfers should be aiming at the pin with their approach shots. The one cardinal sin of the average player is that they view the flag as their target on the green. I personally think golfers just let their minds gravitate to the one thing that is telling them, "aim here!"

You need to be playing at an extremely high level to be aiming at the pin.

The funny thing is that low-handicap players, and professionals know better than to take on the flag every

time. They evaluate the risk and reward of each pin placement, and then decide whether or not to play the shot aggressively.

As I stated earlier, Tiger Woods won 14 majors by not aiming at pins all of the time. So why should you?

I see so many players who step up to a shot and aim at a pin that is situated on the side of the green that has bunkers, steep hills, and even water. They lose their temper when they end up with an impossible bunker shot that leads to a triple bogey.

What they don't realize is that it was their club selection and target choice that lead to the triple bogey, not their actual swing.

Another reason why you should not be aiming at the pin is because the payoff that you believe exists by landing the ball 10-15 feet away from the hole isn't actually there. I will get into that point in my putting chapter, but you will see that your odds of making putts that length will not justify taking such an aggressive strategy with your approach shots.

Learn to avoid trouble, but don't focus on it

All of this information might be a bit daunting. At first you might be looking at all of the different hazards and problem areas on the course, and focusing on them too much.

I don't want this to happen because there is a fine line between aiming away from trouble, and thinking about

not hitting it there. Sometimes your fear of missing to the danger areas can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

How many times have you said to yourself, "don't hit it in the water, don't hit it in the water" only to hit the ball in the water?

Let me make a poker analogy here. Great poker players can calculate the odds of their hands without thinking about it. Three cards come out, and they instantly know that they have a 15% chance of completing their straight or flush possibility. They will adjust their betting strategy accordingly.

Because this process takes place immediately, they are not wasting valuable time calculating these odds when they could be evaluating the betting strategy of their opponents as a way to hypothesize what hands they have. Had they been slow with this thought process, they might have missed some key indicators that will have helped them win the hand, and avoid losing a ton of money.

Processing trouble on a golf course, and planning your strategy takes experience. If you have not really made it a part of your game up until this point it might throw you for a mental loop.

When I walk up to a hole on a course I have played several times, I already know my club selection without thinking it through too much. I have already made notes about where I don't want to miss, so it doesn't require much mental energy on my part to choose a longer club because I don't want to miss the green on the short side.

The trick is to keep the trouble in the background of your thoughts, and don't let it dominate your pre-shot routine. Choose your target, and focus solely on that specific spot. The trouble is a distant memory at this point, and it does not enter your thoughts. Trust me, this is much easier said than done!

Mastering your strategy on your approach shots is another way to eliminate tons of strokes from your rounds. The key is to be smart with your targets, and give yourself the best chance of making a par or bogey, and eliminate those big mistakes that destroy your momentum.

Chapter Summary:

- Golf course architects have an arsenal of tools to fool you into playing aggressive approach shots. Don't let them!
- Start to think about where the "safe" misses are around every green when choosing your target and club selection.
- Do not aim at the pin. The payoff is not there, and it will ultimately lead to costly mistakes that are not worth it.
- Becoming a great course manager takes time and effort, be patient with your learning process. Aiming away from trouble and focusing on it are two different things. Try not to do the latter.

GETTING OUT OF TROUBLE

Golfers envision that the path to improving their game will be through hitting fairways and greens. That might be the case in some rounds, but shooting lower scores consistently will take more than that. It will get messy sometimes out on the course, and you will need to know how to deal with those situations.

There are many rounds where you will not be able to control your ball, and you find yourself in some real trouble spots around the course. It happens to golfers at all levels.

How you react in these situations could change your score by as much as 10 strokes. This might sound dramatic, but I'll paint you a picture to demonstrate my point:

John Q Golfer is an 18 handicap, and has a decent round going. He's on the 6th hole at two over par, and believes he is on his way to shooting in the low 80s today. The 6th hole is difficult, and features a tight fairway with trees on both sides. At 390 yards, John feels that he must pull out driver in order to have a reasonable

approach shot, and continue his great round.

John knows he doesn't have much room for error, and is having difficulty committing to his driver as he sets up for his shot. His last thought is "don't hit it right", and after he hits the ball it immediately takes off towards the trees on the right-hand side.

All of a sudden John isn't feeling so great about his round anymore. As he approaches his ball deep in the trees he is feeling a bit flustered. John has 170 yards left to the green, and sees a small opening that he thinks he can get his ball through. He briefly thinks about punching his ball safely back onto the fairway, but decides that today is his day, and he can't risk losing any more strokes to par.

John pulls out his hybrid, steps up to the ball hastily, and takes an aggressive swing hoping that the ball will magically part the trees. He rationalizes to himself, "they're 90% air."

Shortly after the club makes impact the terrible noise of a golf ball striking the center of a tree cracks out. John's ball has ricocheted out of bounds. He tosses his club in anger, and goes on to score an 8 on the hole.

John is never able to mentally recover from that hole, and shoots a 104.

I feel like the Ghost of Christmas Past, but let me tell you what could have happened if John made the prudent play, and tried to get his ball back in play.

If John had punched his ball back in play, and managed

to make a bogey, he would have felt like he dodged a huge bullet on that hole, and it would have actually given him a mental boost. He would have only been 3 over par, and still well on his way to shooting in the low to mid 80s.

John was in jail, but was not willing to accept his sentence.

On a side note, if John had read my chapter on tee shots he would have pulled out a club less than driver, and probably wouldn't have ended up in the trees in the first place!

Accept your jail sentence

One of the hardest things for a golfer to do is accept their jail sentence when they find themselves in trouble. When things are going wrong, we have a tendency to play "on tilt." This is a poker term (yes, my second poker reference in the book) that is defined as the following:

"Playing on tilt is a state of mental or emotional confusion or frustration in which a player adopts a less than optimal strategy, usually resulting in the player becoming over-aggressive."

Does this sound familiar? It should. We all act like this on the golf course when things are not going according to plan sometimes.

When we find ourselves in the trees, or having to take a drop from a hazard, our minds start to speed up. We can't think clearly, and our first instinct is to play

aggressively, which only compounds the initial mistake.

After we have had a chance to calm down 4-5 holes later, we can't help but regret our decision.

Having the discipline to know when you are in jail, and play the smarter shot to get out is one of the most important tools you can have.

Rejecting your desire to play an aggressive shot as a way to stage a dramatic jailbreak is much easier said than done. However, these are the moments that can make or break your entire round. If you can accept this truth, and play the ball back into safety in those situations, your scores will improve.

In other words, just take your medicine and move on.

Playing the low percentage shot through the trees is usually not going to work out, and the additional mental damage that it will inflict will be almost impossible to recover from.

Overall, most jailbreaks never succeed. If you can slow your mind down in these situations, and play the smart shot, it might be the difference of having a terrible round or a great one.

PUTTING

Putting might be the most misunderstood part of golf. To me it is an entirely different game within golf. It's also the hardest part of golf...by far. I believe that most golfers do not truly understand how difficult putting is, and have very unrealistic expectations of what kinds of putts they should be making.

What I am going to write might scare you a little bit, but I want you to come away from this chapter being very realistic about what you can expect from your putting. Not only will it change how you should practice, but it will affect your course-management strategy as well.

Just how hard is putting?

In order to make a putt, I believe you must do three things properly:

- Make the correct read
- Stroke the ball with the right speed
- Put a good stroke on the ball (not push or pull it)

Even if you *still* do all of these correctly the ball might not go in the hole due to green imperfections, wind, and grain growth (or if you just played the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay). Like I said, putting is hard! I think it's one of the cruelest parts of golf because you can do everything correctly, and still not be rewarded.

In his book *Every Shot Counts*, Mark Broadie takes an analytical approach to the game by using data he has compiled from the PGA Tour and amateurs. The part of his book that struck me the most was his section on putting. Please take a second to review these stats, which show the probability of making putts from various distances:

Distance	Tour Pro	Scratch Golfer	90 Shooter
2	99%	99%	95%
3	96%	93%	84%
4	88%	80%	65%
5	77%	66%	50%
8	50%	41%	27%
10	40%	33%	20%
20	15%	14%	6%

A few things should become blatantly clear here:

- The touring professional's probability of making a putt drops off a cliff after 10 feet
- Average golfers only make 50% of putts from 5 feet away
- You have a very, very slim chance of making longer putts in general

I see so many golfers who are discouraged when they miss 12-foot putts. They are expecting to make them,

which is great. A huge part of being a great putter is mental positivity. However, you need to be realistic, and I hope this data will show you that you are not alone in missing putts from that length. Pros and scratch golfers do it most of the time!

What do I do with this info?

Hopefully I have not completely scared you off the putting green at this point. I wanted to take this opportunity to make you realize that your putting strategy should shift with this knowledge.

In my chapter on approach shots, I alluded to the fact that the payoff is not there when you aim at a pin. I think this data clearly proves that point.

Even if you are able to stop the ball within 8-15 feet of the flag, you can see that your chances of making that putt for birdie are not that great. Meanwhile, you have sacrificed so much by aiming for the pin, and possibly given up your chance for hitting the green at all.

The pros are far better putters inside 10 feet, and aiming at the pin is a worthwhile risk for them because they will convert the birdie putt 40-50% of the time. Sadly that is not the case for the average golfer.

Three Putting

Three putting is a dirty word, and is one of the best ways to ruin your round. Here is a piece of advice that I don't think most golfers think about:

**Eliminating three-putts is the key
to shooting lower scores, not
making more putts from outside
10 feet.**

If you can accept this, and shift your strategy on the green, this is another way to pick up a ton of strokes without fixing your swing.

Now that we know we most likely will not be making putts outside of 10 feet, we need to stop putting like we are.

I mentioned that Tiger Woods was one of the best course managers of all time, and it was one of the reasons he won 14 majors. The other reason he won all of those majors is because he was probably the best putter in the world. How many putts did Tiger make during that incredible 10-year stretch? It was simply amazing.

When Tiger's dominance started to wane towards the end of his run, he let a few majors slip through his fingers. Of course he couldn't win ALL of them, but he contended in so many more than just his 14 wins.

In his book *The Big Miss*, Hank Haney gave an interesting insight as to why Tiger did not win some of

those tournaments. He believed that his three putting is what did him in, and it was because he was too aggressive on putts from over 18 feet.

Haney kept telling Tiger that his chances of making those putts were quite slim, but because Tiger often ran those putts by the hole in an attempt to make them, he missed a few key par putts that ultimately prevented him from winning.

These are the type of razor-thin scenarios that separate the best players of the world, but I thought this point could be applied to all players. If you step up to a 20-foot putt with the intentions of making it, then it's quite possible that you are going to be making a more aggressive stroke, and leaving yourself with a putt longer than 3 feet coming back.

To play the numbers out, you only have a 6% chance of making the 20-footer. If you leave yourself 5 feet coming back then your probability only is 50%. Those aren't great odds.

If you are looking to lower your scores, and accept the fact that limiting three putting will be a part of that, then you need to commit to keeping the ball within three feet of the hole on longer putts. Your chances dramatically improve from that distance.

One of the great putting tips out there is to stroke your putt with the goal of having it stop 18 inches past the cup, and there was a reason why this was always good advice. This data just proves it.

One-putts are great, and they will still happen based on

where you are situated on the green, and how skilled of a putter you are. The truth is that eliminating three putts is the golden ticket to better scoring. **40% of your strokes can occur on a putting green during a round.** It might be worth it to pay attention to these numbers!

Wrapping it up

I hope you have enjoyed reading the book. If you implement a few of these strategies into your game, I can promise you that your scores will drop.

It's not going to be easy though. Being a great course manager takes a lot of discipline and patience. It's not something that can happen overnight. If you can start seeing the golf course in a different way, and start to analyze the risks and rewards before each shot, you are heading in the right direction.

Golf is a difficult game, and sometimes all of the planning in the world can't prevent bad shots from happening. I encourage you to be patient with the process, and above all try to keep a level head on the course.

If you enjoyed what you read, there are plenty of other articles on my site that will help you lower your scores and enjoy golf more. I hope to see you there!

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