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Improve Your Game Not Just Your Swing!

For many golfers having a good “swing” is what golf is all about. If you can hit the ball relatively far and in the vicinity of where you are aiming, then by many, you might be considered a “good” golfer. While being able to hit the ball long and reasonably straight is a positive element, it is certainly not what qualifies a golfer as a good player. Golf is a multi-faceted game involving a wide variety of skills and techniques. Having a good short game is just as important as being able to hit the ball a long way. Does it really matter that you can drive the ball 300 yards if you can't get it on the green from close range, or consistently take three or more putts per green?

What I suggest for all golfers who are looking to improve their “game” is to first identify what your strengths and weakness are and then develop an improvement plan that specifically addresses your weak areas. If your ball striking is acceptable but you can't hit the green from 20 yards out, then that's what you should spend time practicing. If you're consistently taking 3-4 putts per hole, then forget the range and spend time gaining the necessary touch and feel required to become a better putter.



One of the best ways to determine your weak areas is to track various aspects of your game:

How many fairways you hit with your tee shot. (FH)

How many greens you hit in regulation (GIR) - (GIR = par minus two plus any strokes you receive on that particular hole). If you're a 9 handicap then you get one stroke on the nine hardest ranked holes, an 18 handicap gets a stroke on each hole, and a 24 handicap gets two strokes on the six hardest holes and one stroke on the other twelve.

How many shots you take from within 20 yards of the green. (BPC) Greenside bunkers, pitches & chip shots.

How many putts you take each round. (Putts)

Touch is an area of the game that cannot be taught. It is only acquired through practice the short game areas are like the plague.

Once you have those numbers, you have some real data as to your strengths and weaknesses when you are actually playing. If you're missing a lot of fairways, work on your tee shot. Greens in regulation pretty low, then spend time with your iron game. Not getting it on the green from close range, then hit the short game area. And finally, if your putt numbers are high then it's the practice green for you.

Having the proper technique will make improvement in all areas much quicker and easier. So if you're struggling do yourself a favor, save the frustration, and seek out your local PGA Professional for help. You'll be glad you did!

The feeling of a well struck drive is nice, but practicing where you need it most and beating your best score ever...well that, as they say... is priceless.



Kent Tarkleson is a PGA Professional “Specialty Certified” in Instruction, a Titleist Performance Institute Certified Golf Fitness Instructor, Certified Master Club Fitter and PCS Certified Clubmaker. He is the owner of Peak Performance Golf and the Director of the Peak Performance Golf Academy at Saratoga National Golf Club. For more information visit www.peakperformancegolf.net, or call (518) 301-0791.