

GROHMAN GOLF GAZETTE

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HOWTOGOLF.com **IS BACK ONLINE**

As you may already know, the headline of this story also happens to be my website address. If you get a chance to surf the web, check it out. You'll see pictures of me and my old friend Tiger, just like the ones you see at Heartwell. And if you are ever in need of the perfect gift, you'll find it there! Also you will soon be able to order your "Personal Golf Center" on that website. It includes an easily mounted net, no frame necessary, a hitting matt, a putting center and a chipping ring. All personal golf centers are custom designed to meet your personal needs. Installation is free! Call me for more info.- Coach Joe

PUTTERS CORNER

The other day, I heard an announcer covering a golf event on ESPN say, "All things considered equal on the PGA Tour, he who putts the best, wins." He then went on to elaborate how well the winner had putted. I thought to myself what a profound statement coming from a non-

golfer. When Tiger won at Augusta, he didn't have a single 3-putt in 72 holes. When Arnie won there in 1964, he only had one 3-putt. Mark O'Meara birdied the last 2 holes to win this years Masters with some fine putting. What sets tour pro's apart from other good players? Putting. Period. Think back to a great round you've played and I'll bet the second memory you have of it is how you missed a couple of easy putts or it would have been even better. Just today I missed a 4-foot birdie putt on 18 at Navy G.C. in Cypress for 68 and I can think of several more that should have gone in. I remember playing with an amateur who was a 25 handicap. He was much worse than his handicap because he was a phenomenal putter. After his fourth one putt triple bogey I could take it no longer. I asked him how someone who putts so well could play so poorly. He replied that he wanted to be a good putter so he practiced every night on his kitchen floor for an hour. After doing this for only 8 months he had one of the smoothest strokes I'd ever seen and 23 putts that day. So the next time you smack that driver on the range, make sure you also practice putting. Count your putts during your rounds. Anything over 36 is unacceptable. If necessary get a lesson. Don't just try to shoot your lowest score, shoot your lowest putts too! Remember fewest putts collects!

INSIDE TEAM TIGER

I first met Tiger Woods back in 1989 when he was 13 years old. I had just gotten a job at the Navy Golf Course in Cypress, California as an Assistant Golf Professional. I was born on an Air Force Base (MacDill in Tampa Florida) and learned to play golf on military golf courses so to me it was a perfect fit. Lucky for me it was where Tiger played and practiced everyday. I still remembered how kind and supportive everyone had been to me as a youngster. And the promise I had made to help young people when I was in a position to as part of the deal I accepted as a youth for all the support shown me. I felt working at a golf course would finally put me in a position to give back some of the encouragement I had once received and I was really looking forward to it. The Navy G.C. at that time was 26 miles from Naval Station Long Beach. It wasn't open to the public and we catered mainly to the huge retired military population in Southern California. I remember telling the Head Pro at that time about my excitement in finally being able to give back to young people and the deal I had once made. And my disappointment in being told that other than 2 weeks during the summer we didn't have any junior golfers at the course on a regular basis. I must have looked pretty disappointed because he quickly added, "Except for one." I replied

GROHMAN GOLF GAZETTE

meekly, "One is better than none." And dropped the subject as customers entered the pro shop. Earl Woods had befriended me the day we met. He was the first patron to introduce himself and welcome me to the golf course. I had been put in the position of teaching golf lessons and had never had a golf lesson in my life. I quickly found in Earl a 1 handicap that not only would answer all my ignorant questions about the golf swing and problems I was encountering with my students swings but a golf instructor that was happy to give me golf lessons as well. His understanding of the golf swing, his patience and his willingness to help me made a tremendous impact on my life. I had been spending a lot of time learning from Earl for a few weeks prior to meeting Tiger. I had seen Tiger at the course a few times yet never with Earl. I still didn't know that Tiger was the one junior golfer we had at the course. One day when I got to the range for my lesson with Earl, he was sitting behind some youngster watching him hit. I walked over and was amazed at the swing on the kid. Earl would say something and without any response the kid would keep on hitting. This went on for awhile until finally I couldn't take what I thought was disrespect for Earl's advice. So I pointedly said to the kid, "You want to listen to this guy, he really knows what he is talking about!" The kid looked up

at me with the strangest look on his face I'd ever seen. At the same time Earl burst out laughing and almost fell over from it. I knew I had missed something and could feel my face getting red with embarrassment. Finally Earl settled down enough to say, "You haven't met my son Tiger yet Joe?" The joke was on me. After stumbling over apologies and complimenting his swing and his name and how much I appreciated his dad, Earl and I went back to Earl's bucket of range balls at the other end of the range. I couldn't help but ask why he was hitting way down here and not next to Tiger. Earl replied in his usual thought-provoking manner, "I don't want him thinking about what I am thinking about. Besides he knows where to find me if he needs me." Boy could some of the parents I've seen at Heartwell do well by following that example. At that time Earl was a 1 handicap. The only person that practiced harder than Earl was Tiger. Tiger definitely got his work ethic from his father's example. That weekend was the first time I ever played with Tiger. I remembered walking by his ball marks to see what kind of a repair job the kid did on the first few holes and not being able to tell where they even had been. On the fifth hole I decided to keep a close eye on the kid and watched as he pulled out a dinner fork and made his ball mark disappear. I learned a lot about Tiger and Earl that day.

It was only after his relentless, unwavering, calm, focused assassination of me that day that I learned all about Tiger Woods. I walked off 18 having been beaten by a 13-year-old by 2 shots. But it wasn't even that close. A late triple-bogey by the kid still couldn't help the beating I had taken. I had to briefly compose myself before shaking hands with everyone. I was mad and embarrassed yet felt that I had just played golf with the best player I had ever seen at any age. Walking off the green I said to Earl, "You've got to get this kid into junior golf, he's the greatest I've seen at any age." Earl replied, "You've never heard of my son Tiger?" I shook my head no. "Come in the lounge, I've got a story to tell." That was when I learned of Tiger's achievements. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. From that day on to this very day I still call Tiger "Champ". It was really a thrill to play and practice and be a part of Team Tiger and feel like part of the family those 7 years. I accomplished many goals and hope to accomplish many more from what I learned from that family. Earl would always look for the positive in every situation. I learned the meaning of giving back from them. I've declined many interviews hoping to one-day show what can be accomplished by anyone using the Team Tiger blueprint. Til then keep your eye on Tiger!

GROHMAN GOLF GAZETTE

BEAT THE PRO

Last year when I did my second "Beat the Pro" segment with channels 2's Jim Hill at Heartwell, we talked on air about Tiger Woods. Heartwell is where Tiger learned to golf at so I called it "the Bethlehem of Golf." I also mentioned how if you miss a green at Heartwell you will find out why Tiger's short game is so good! An easy way to chip that Tiger showed me is to choke down, elbows out, club almost straight up and down and using a pendulum stroke with no wrist, putt the chip. It's simple and effective! The putt-chip!

One of the biggest problems amateur golfers have at Heartwell is missing greens in regulation. At Heartwell this means missing the green on the first shot since all 18 holes are par 3's. The biggest culprit is alignment. Many people don't know how to aim. Simply stand directly behind your ball and visualize an imaginary line from your target to your ball. This is called a target line. Pick a spot directly in front of your ball on your target line. Keeping your eye on this spot as you walk up to your ball (so you don't lose it) place clubhead behind the ball and aim clubface at the spot. Your clubface is now aimed at your target because it is aimed at your spot on your target line! Finish your set up using your spot as your reference point and upon completion you will be properly aimed at your target!

FUTURE TOUR STARS

GONZALES ON FIRE

Former Lakewood High School phenom and last years Moore League Champion, Brian Gonzales continues his torrid play. Playing for Long Beach City College, the States #1 ranked J.C. in golf, Gonzales has been on fire. He led the team in scoring with a 69.8 scoring average in 8 conference matches. He was medallist in 4 of those matches and won conference medallist of the year. Overall he was medallist in 7 out of 13 matches. He was named on the all-conference team as well. Gonzales hones his skills at Heartwell G.C. and at the new Long Beach Golf Learning Center where team members of LBCC enjoy free-range balls. Look for Brian in the upcoming state Championships as well as this summers Long Beach City Championships, Match Play and the Long Beach Open. He will also be playing in the Cal Sate Amateur and in the qualifiers for the Us Amateur and US Open. Brian works part time at Heartwell Golf Course where I met him when he was 14 when I became an instructor there. Even Tiger didn't hit it as close to the pin as Brian did at that age. That's how good Brian Gonzales is. This issues future tour star. Good Luck Brian!

WHY DID I DO THAT?

We all do it. Dumb mental errors that lead to big problems and bigger scores. Here are a few smart moves that will put out those dumb-dumb fires before they burn out of control and ruin your round. Of course staying patient and in your routine would be a recurring theme, but there are particulars to each mistake we are going to discuss. Try to use accept these pointers as useful tools that may turn stupid play into stellar play.

Hitting out of trouble into more trouble. How many times have we all done that? When we are in trouble we need to think recovery. Not heroics. The problem is we're usually a little upset already at the bad shot and not thinking clearly. Try to stay calm and hit the sensible shot that will get you back in play. Don't be afraid to play for bogey and you'll be surprised at how many pars you make. That successful recovery shot not only got you a look at a par putt but also turned your temperament around 180 because you know you played smart.

Not going back for the right club. This is one of the biggest mistakes I see amateurs make. Especially in the age of electric golf carts. If the cart is parked 100 yards away and you have the wrong club, what are you going to do? The answer is to not be in that situation. Take a few clubs and never hit a shot if you are

GROHMAN GOLF GAZETTE

unconvinced you have the right club.

Last thought before swinging is negative or not about golf at all. "I knew I was going to do that" is a confession heard on every golf course, every day. If you miss a few short putts early in the round it's easy to think about them while over another short putt. Or if you have something on your mind it's easy to be distracted by it even as you go through your entire routine. And not realize it until you've hit a horrible shot. What was I thinking about! When negative or distracting thoughts creep into your mind, step back and regroup. Notice the word creep. We all start off positive and ready to play our best. Hit a few bad shots and that creeping negativity will start assuming control until no confidence is left and we're afraid of every shot. Negative thoughts must be recognized quickly and destroyed with positive thoughts. Have a host of positive thoughts about all kinds of great shots you've hit at the ready. And when those negative thoughts start creeping in you will be able to laugh them away.

Hitting anyway. Why am I rushing or why did I hit that? Perhaps a car horn goes off or you catch movement out of the corner of your eye. Or you are still steaming over that last missed putt. If you are distracted, stop your set up routine. If you get distracted, the distraction will

usually become your new swing thought. Especially if you think it's not bothering you, during your swing! Anticipate distractions like an approaching golf cart or a talkative player and take appropriate action. Give yourself every chance to hit your shot properly.

Leaving an impossible shot. Bobby Jones said, "Like pool, golf is a game of position. The key is to get a good leave for the next shot." This would be great advice for anyone that hits a great drive only to go for a sucker pin and dump the ball into an impossible bunker or a greenside lake. Or to the guy whose a career 3 wood away and leaves himself an uncertain 50 yards away from an impossible angle when he doesn't pull off the career shot. Do the math. If you are sticking it from 100-150 yards, hit the tee shot that's going to give you that distance on your approach. Know where the trouble is and turn the other cheek.

Carelessly putting out. We have all done this one. Upset at missing a putt, we storm up to the next putt, producing yet another miss. Or we straddle another player's line on an otherwise routine putt and miss. When putting out, employ a few routine tactics. Always watch missed putts go by the hole to see how the putt coming back will break. This is free information and all you have to do is look. Create a routine for short putts, just like any other

shot. Spot your ball momentarily before putting out. This will give you a moment to calm down and regroup. And finally, if you are on somebody's line, mark your ball and take a breather. Hasty preparation and nonchalant strokes are the primary causes of missing short putts.

Rushing while playing through. For most golfers, a wave from the group ahead of us shifts our game into fast forward. Sometimes we get away with a hurried swing but playing through is often a tense and round wrecking ordeal for many amateurs. Remember that it was their decision to wave you through. As soon as you get the green light it now becomes your hole. Go through your routine as always and knock it stiff!

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