

THE USE OF RELAXATION IN TOURNAMENT GOLF

By

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Tournament golf is a far more strenuous business than most people think it is. To be sharp, a player must pace himself.

To be sure, he needs plenty of rest while he's on the tour.

But, more important, he must be willing at times to "get away from it all."

It's not so easy to do this as one might suppose, because - - - and now I'm speaking from my own experience - - - tournament winners are expected to play. Sponsors are disappointed when they don't.

I have found that after I've played for six or seven weeks steadily I just have to take time off or I'll go stale. Consequently, I make it a point to take a two or three week breather about once every six or seven weeks.

Usually, following a layoff, I'm refreshed. My morale is higher, my decisions quicker and more accurate, my timing better and my scores lower.

Some of my victories have come after lengthy layoffs. For instance, I played but one tournament in the six weeks preceding the 1959 National Open, which I was fortunate enough to win.

Consider my victories in 1958, for example. I won the Bing Crosby National following a long autumn and early winter layoff.

My next victory came in a playoff with Ken Venturi in the New Orleans Open. I hadn't played a tournament for more than a month.

Prior to my third 1958 victory in the Buick Open, I'd played only six competitive rounds in six weeks.

My final 1958 victory was in the Havana Invitational in November. I'd played only two tournaments in 10 weeks before I won this one.

I think the best way to get maximum mileage out of any period of relaxation is to have a diversion that will get my mind off golf.

My main diversion is fishing. However,

I fish not just for diversion's sake but because I love to fish. When I'm at home in Chula Vista, Calif., I go fishing more than twice as often as I play golf.

I practice golf very little and until the week before I rejoin the tour, I don't play more than twice a week. But I'll go fishing about four times a week.

I like both salt and fresh water fishing. When I go salt water fishing, I get up at 2:30 A.M.—that's right, 2:30 A.M.

Sometimes I go by myself and join about 15 others aboard a fishing boat that goes about 26 miles south, five miles off the Mexican coast.

Sometimes I'll go fishing with a party of friends. We usually return about 1 P.M.

When I go fresh water fishing, I don't arise until about 6 A.M.

I've loved to fish ever since I was a kid. Why, last spring while walking down the fairway in a tournament, I jammed my hand into a pocket and caught a finger on a fishhook.

While fishing is my favorite diversion, I have others.

I'd like to add here that a man's family is in itself a diversion.

I like to spend a lot of time with my wife, Shirley, and our two children, Billy, 2, and Linda Maree, 4. We watch television together for a couple of hours in the evenings.

I suppose by nature I'm a fairly easy-going fellow, but don't think I don't get as mad when I miss-hit a shot or my putter sputters.

What helps me on this point, though, is that I shrug my misfortunes and disappointments off quickly. I don't brood over them. This is very important.

Another thing that I think helps me to relax is the fact that I practice very little.

My feeling on practice can best be summed up with the words, "If you don't have it when you come to the course, you won't discover it on the practice tee."

About the only time you should practice is when you're hitting some type of shot badly.

For the most part, I use practice strictly as a warm-up. I hit perhaps 60 shots before I play a competitive round, starting with the wedge and going through the No. 4 wood on the practice tee.

Once in a while, if a course calls for extremely good driving, I'll hit a few tee shots in practice.

I don't believe in practicing with any particular type of club or on any special type shot a week or several weeks prior to a tournament because it's usually impossible to determine the conditions that will prevail during a tournament that far in advance.

My view is that on the tour there is too much practicing. Too many players are practicing so long and hard that they are leaving their games on the practice tee.

One of the hardest things to do in tournament golf is to develop a proper balance between trying hard and relaxing so you won't try so hard you defeat your own purpose.

Too many once-or twice-a-week golfers try too hard and expect too much of their abilities.

If more 90 to 100 shooters regarded golf as a diversion, as a means toward relaxation and exercise as well as friendly competition, I think more people would be getting more out of a great game.

For the better players, the ones who try too hard to do well, the best advice I can offer is to get more and more experience playing golf so you'll be better able to handle situations that come up.

Much tension and worry stem from nothing more than lack of knowledge.

If you combat lack of knowledge by acquiring greater experience, it follows that tension and worry should be reduced.

Answers To "Quiz Golf." Questions On Page 7.

1. Fred Haas, Jr. He was a member of the 1938 Walker Cup Team and the 1953 Ryder Cup Team.

2. Norman Drew, of Northern Ireland. He played on the 1953 Walker Cup Team and the 1959 Ryder Cup Team.

3. Tommy Armour, a native Scot who later became an American. Mr. Armour played for Britain in the 1921 matches which set the stage for the inauguration of Walker Cup play in 1922. Then in 1926 he played on the American team in matches which set the stage for the inauguration of Ryder Cup play in 1927.

4. Yes, if he does not borrow from any other person playing on the course and does not unduly delay play. Under the same limitations he may also replace a club which becomes unfit for play in the normal course of play. (Rule 3)

5. The Old Course, St. Andrews, Scotland, 1938.

6. He shall be disqualified. (Rule 37-9)

7. Walker Cup, Curtis Cup, Eisenhower Cup, Americas Cup, Ryder Cup and Canada Cup.

8. "Equipment" is anything used, worn or carried by or for the player except his ball in play. (Definition 7)

9. Ben Hogan's victory in the 1950 Open Championship, at Merion Golf Club, Ardmore, Pa. The victory came 16 months

after the automobile-bus collision which almost took Mr. Hogan's life. He won the Open Championship despite difficulty in walking and other discomfiture.

10. Jack Nicklaus' second place finish last June at Cherry Hills.

11. 10 and 8.

12. The player shall drop the ball himself. He shall face the hole, stand erect and drop the ball behind him over his shoulder. If the ball comes to rest against the player and moves when he moves there is no penalty, and the ball is played as it lies. (Rule 22-1)

13. No. The moved ball must be replaced. (Rule 40-1c)

14. No. He must replace his ball. (Rule 40-1c)

15. No. The player may either replace it or not, as he chooses. (Rules 27-2b and 35-2c)

16. Approximately 6,000.

17. The National Amateur Championship. The first Amateur was played at the Newport Golf Club, Newport, R. I., October 1, 2, 3, 1895, while the first Open Championship was played at the same club October 4, 1895.

18. No. The penalty in match play is loss of the hole and in stroke play two strokes. (Rule 8-1)