



As you develop as a GOLFER, while working on your "shot-making" skills, it is important to recognize and apply sound **COURSE MANAGEMENT TIPS** which will result in lower scores. These tips have been developed over many years of playing competitive golf on a personal basis. Unfortunately, I have learned some tips the hard way, as it seems we all have to go through various difficulties in order to really understand the value of sound course management. Aside from understanding such course management, you must learn how to play with your strengths in mind too, which is of equal importance.

*Roger Van Dyke*

**With this in mind, to start each segment with IRGF**, all golfers, parent coaches and IRGF instructors will meet in one group, as the Lead Instructor will present **General Course Management Tips** to every golfer. Golfers will then be divided into small groups, each of which will play the golf course. During the course of play, each group will experience a variety of lessons for the day, as determined in the **Course Management Tips**. Each of these tips will be presented in three separate sessions (Sessions #4 and #5 are dedicated to walking the course, while reviewing the Rules of Golf).

## Course Management Tips

## On-Course or Situational Session #1

### General

- 1) Play to your strengths
- 2) Do you hit the ball better with a driver, fairway metals, hybrids or irons? Put your ball in play consistently
- 3) Play a hole backwards in your mind. Given this scenario, which club would you want to use, in order to hit your ball onto the green ?
- 4) Do you have a favorite distance as you hit Approach Shots? If so, use this to your advantage by hitting your drives or lay-up shots to your favorite distances.
- 5) Adjust your club set-up (from hybrids to wedges), according to the course you are playing, along with your shot-making abilities.
- 6) You have 14 clubs to use, period. If you can't hit long irons high enough to stop your ball on the green, then you should use hybrids instead (such as #4, #5, #6 or #7 hybrids).
- 7) As you select the "right" club, you must trust your instincts, unless more data provides you a better choice instead.
- 8) Use a #3 fairway metal off the tee for accuracy, as you will be able to hit it farther down-wind than a driver, due to a higher launch.
- 9) Use the same tempo/fluid swing that you have on the driving range, as you are playing on the golf course. Slow down and take deep breaths. By slowing down your pace, you will be able to slow down your heartbeat, too. Always remain focused on the next shot as well.
- 10) For every shot, you should develop a consistent pre-shot routine. Ensure you follow this same routine every time, especially if you are nervous. A consistent pre-shot routine will likely guarantee that you are able to calm down enough to perform to the best of your abilities. Stick with your routine and maintain your balance at all times.
- 11) As you step up to the ball, tell yourself which shot you are going to make happen. From there, use a FLUID MOTION, eliminate tightness and simply let it happen as you complete your swing --- from takeaway to follow through.
- 12) Listen to the **POSITIVE** voice on your shoulder and tell the **NEGATIVE** voice on your other shoulder to **GO AWAY!!!**
- 13) Always know where you want to mis-hit the ball to avoid trouble areas (and, consequently, high scores).

### Prior to the Start of Play

- 1) Study a Course Map - Draw arrows across a course map for prevailing winds and then refer it to when golfing.
- 2) Warm-up with distance control putts in order to better determine the speed and "feel" of the greens.
- 3) Ensure you have everything you may need including equipment, nutrition, hydration, an umbrella, rain gear, a towel, etc.

### Tee Shots

- 1) Use the tee box to your advantage based on your shot "shape" and distance to the target especially if it is not level. If the ball is above your feet – allow for a draw. If it is below your feet – allow for a fade.
- 2) Right-handed golfers that draw the ball should set up on the lefthand side of the tee box in order to "increase" the fairway's size. If golfers fade the ball, they should set up on the righthand side of tee box.
- 3) You can use two club lengths on the tee, in order to be further from hole, especially if you feel you may have a little too much club on par three holes with a cross-hazard. This is the easiest way to reduce the shot's distance by a couple yards.
- 4) Tee up your ball on the same side as a lateral water hazard, a bunker or the out of bounds. If a hazard is on the righthand side off the tee, place your ball on the righthand side of the tee box, while hitting it left into the fairway or rough.
- 5) Adopt a simple and consistent pre-shot routine for ALL shots. Slow down your heart beat. Use the **Breathing Template**: inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of five, exhale for a count of eight – and then repeat this process.

**Shots to the Green** (always use enough club to reach your target COMFORTABLY and without force)

- 1) Be aware of the flagstick’s location. Try not to short side yourself (aim for the center of the green ).
- 2) Check any upcoming greens for the flagstick’s positions, while also watching flags to determine if there are any prevailing winds
- 3) Adjust your club selection if you are hitting into the wind or down wind. You should also adjust your aim for cross winds.
- 4) Adjust your landing spot if greens are firm. Visualize the “run out distance” from the desired landing spot to the hole. .
- 5) Wedges at full swing speeds tend to spin balls off the front of the green unless they land past a hole.
- 6) Experiment with **varied lofts of clubs** to "chip" or "pitch" onto the green. You may also use a fairway metal for difficult lies. "A bad putt is usually better than a good chip".
- 7) If you are hitting from long grass around greens, consider a "belly wedge" while hitting the middle of the ball. You should also make a decision when you are using a wedge - ***Either adjust the speed and length of the shot or change the angle of descent.***
- 8) Adopt a simple & consistent pre-shot routine. Slow down your pace. Have a positive attitude prior to every shot. Implement two mind-sets: #1 - My next shot will be my best shot. #2 – Visualize the ball going into the hole.

Course Management Tips

On-Course or Situational Session #2

**General**

- 1) Play to your strengths
- 2) Do you hit the ball better with a driver, fairway metals, hybrids or irons? Put your ball in play consistently
- 3) Play a hole backwards in your mind. Given this scenario, which club would you want to use, in order to hit your ball onto the green ?
- 4) Do you have a favorite distance as you hit Approach Shots? If so, use this to your advantage by hitting your drives or lay-up shots to your favorite distances.
- 5) Adjust your club set-up (from hybrids to wedges), according to the course you are playing, along with your shot-making abilities.
- 6) You have 14 clubs to use, period. If you can’t hit long irons high enough to stop your ball on the green, then you should use hybrids instead (such as #4, #5, #6 or #7 hybrids).
- 7) As you select the "right" club, you must trust your instincts, unless more data provides you a better choice instead.
- 8) Use a #3 fairway metal off the tee for accuracy, as you will be able to hit it farther down-wind than a driver, due to a higher launch.
- 9) Use the same tempo/fluid swing that you have on the driving range, as you are playing on the golf course. Slow down and take deep breaths. By slowing down your pace, you will be able to slow down your heartbeat, too. Always remain focused on the next shot as well.
- 10) For every shot, you should .develop a consistent pre-shot routine. Ensure you follow this same routine every time, especially if you are nervous. A consistent pre-shot routine will likely guarantee that you are able to calm down enough to perform to the best of your abilities. Stick with your routine and maintain your balance at all times.
- 11) As you step up to the ball, tell yourself which shot you are going to make happen. From there, use a FLUID MOTION, eliminate tightness and simply let it happen as you complete your swing --- from takeaway to follow through.
- 12) Listen to the **POSITIVE** voice on your shoulder and tell the NEGATIVE voice on your other shoulder to **GO AWAY!!!**
- 13) Always know where you want to mis-hit the ball to avoid trouble areas (and, consequently, high scores).

**Shaping Shots**

- 1) Manage your trajectory when necessary, particularly:
  - Into the wind (which usually requires lower ball flights
  - Note: The #1 error against the wind is to under-club thus too much loft.
  - As you hit the ball downwind off the tee, ensure you hit it high
  - If you are encountering a right to left wind off the tee and you are a right handed golfer, you will likely hit the ball farther if you hit a draw.
  - If you are facing a left to right wind and you are a right-handed golfer, a fade will likely travel farther.
  - Spin the ball (shape the shot) against the direction of the wind for accuracy rather than distance.
- 2) Learn how to shape your shots.....right to left and left to right.
- 3) Picture the shot in your mind and then execute the shot, again with a FLUID MOTION.
- 4) Visualize where you want to hit your next shot in a way that requires minimal risks.

Course Conditions – Concerning Fairways

- 1) Note the condition of fairways, whether their surfaces are soft and slow or hard and fast.
- 2) Is the ball “running out” or stopping? Adjust your layup shots accordingly, in order to be in a good position for your next shot.
- 3) **Do not be “suckered”** into a front, back or side cup placement, which may lead to a difficult up-and-down.

Getting Your Ball Back in Play

- 1) Analyze which club is the safest and, in turn, most ideal to use, in order to ensure your ball is back in play, whether you are hitting a shot from the trees, heavy brush or difficult lies.
- 2) As you advance your ball, you will need to implement as many analytical skills related to your personal logic and past experiences, as you can.
  - Objective #1: Advance the ball as if nothing has hindered your next shot.
  - Objective #2: Advance the ball to where you wanted the previous shot to come to rest or beyond.
  - Objective #3: Take an unplayable lie or stroke and distance penalty and then carry on.

Course Conditions – Regarding Bunkers

- 1) Hard and firm bunkers require less bounce. As a result, you will have to apply a steeper angle of attack
- 2) Soft bunkers - use more bounce, leading to a shallower attack angle
- 3) Know which technique is the most proper as you hit your ball from a buried lie, while using the sharp edge of the blade.
- 4) Know and use the “unplayable lie” option to your advantage.

Hazards

- 1) Maintain a proper distance from hazards, as you bear in mind the direction and shape of your next shot.  
**Critical Note:** For SAFETY purposes, DO NOT try to retrieve your ball from a water penalty area. Keep your distance.
- 2) While determining your club selection, do not aim the ball at any trouble areas, especially where a straight shot could end up in a hazard
- 3) Consider taking an unplayable lie if you encounter trouble areas, such as nasty buried lies. Also, bear in mind the following:
  - Are “unplayable lies” possible in a bunker? YES Know your options!
  - Are “unplayable lies” possible in a penalty area? NO Know your options!
  - Can you remove a leaf in a bunker? YES Can you remove a stone in a bunker? YES

Three Unplayable Lie Options - (Leading to a One-stroke Penalty)

- 1) Go back to the point in which you played the shot (stroke & distance)
- 2) Take a drop within two club lengths. Use tees to mark the limits of where to drop your ball.
- 3) Move straight back along an extension of a line between the flagstick and where your ball came to rest.  
Is there a penalty for hitting a ball from a hazard? NO – not for hitting it there or playing from there, as you can always play from a hazard (based upon lie) instead.

Course Management Tips On-Course or Situational Session #3

General

- 1) Play to your strengths
- 2) Do you hit the ball better with a driver, fairway metals, hybrids or irons? Put your ball in play consistently
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- 10) For every shot, you should develop a consistent pre-shot routine. Ensure you follow this same routine every time, especially if you are nervous. A consistent pre-shot routine will likely guarantee that you are able to calm down enough to perform to the best of your abilities. Stick with your routine and maintain your balance at all times.

- 11) As you step up to the ball, tell yourself which shot you are going to make happen. From there, use a FLUID MOTION, eliminate tightness and simply let it happen as you complete your swing --- from takeaway to follow through.
- 12) Listen to the **POSITIVE** voice on your shoulder and tell the **NEGATIVE** voice on your other shoulder to **GO AWAY!!!**
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#### **Dropping Ball from a Hazard**

- 1) Carefully look at the ground to best determine where to drop your ball in accordance with the rules. Avoid downhill lies, long grass and areas without grass.
- 2) Consider dropping your ball on the opposite side (equal distance) of a Lateral Penalty Area (red stakes)
- 3) Remember – if you drop your ball inside a bunker, it **MUST** remain in the bunker. Exception: For Unplayable Lies, you may go back to the location of the last shot, even though it may be outside the bunker.

#### **Playing an Unfamiliar Course**

- 1) Practice on a putting green more than any other warm-up area, in order to acquire a feel for green speeds.
- 2) Only hit your ball to areas you can see. For example, do not hit a full-swing, long shot to an unknown area over a hill.

#### **Trouble Shots**

- 1) When you are hitting shots from difficult lies near bushes and/or lots of trees, consider getting the ball back in play, primarily in the fairway. If you are trying to recover from an errant tee shot, pitch out into the fairway, preferably close to where an excellent drive may have come to rest. If there is an opening and you can take a non-obstructed swing, consider the risks that are involved.  
If risks are low, then **GO FOR IT**.
- 2) Always consider the advantage of declaring the ball “unplayable”. Take a penalty stroke and move on.

#### **On the Greens**

- 1) Note the greens’ conditions, whether they are soft and slow or hard and fast. You can use a softer ball if the greens are hard, for instance.
- 2) Repair ball marks **ONLY** in your line. Note: You **MAY** repair/tap down scuff marks or other blemishes.
- 3) Clean your ball
- 4) Position your ball for the flattest or most uphill putt, as you prepare to hit your approach shot.
- 5) **Read the grain** (dark and light) on each green for putts and chips (this will affect the speed which your ball will roll on the green)
- 6) **Read your putts.** While reading your putts, look from every side, especially around those that are breaking. In addition, you should look up and around the slope, enabling you to read how much break there is in a particular green.
- 7) Without slowing down your pace of play, read putts **(1)** from the ball to the hole....**(2)** from the hole back to the ball, **(3)** from the side. **ALWAYS** approach your putt from behind the ball while visualizing the line. Furthermore, evaluate putts as you approach each green, for example, when you repair your ball mark, as you mark your ball, etc.
- 8) Adopt a simple and consistent pre-shot putting routine. Stroke the putt so that the ball is **ONLINE for the first 12 inches**.
- 9) Try to make your next putt easier than your last. (For example, don’t ram a downhill putt). Instead, let the putt “die” at the hole.

**Note: Sessions #4 & #5 features "Walk-the-Course"**  
..... a hands-on experience of commonly used **Rules of Golf**.

For more information, see the separate hand-outs entitled  
**"Golf Rules that Many Golfers Don't Fully Understand")** and  
**"Course Management Tips"**

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