



Putting drills and games to help you with the flat stick.

In the game of golf putting is often considered the great equalizer. If you look at Luke Donald, currently #2 in the world, he is not known for his Monster drives, but rather his finesse ability with his wedge and putter. It would not surprise me if Donald contends in the upcoming Masters and regains his world #1 ranking. He has the goal of winning a major and I wouldn't put it past a Guy who had the goal to become World #1 and achieved it. If you are a player that doesn't hit it long, you might be well served to adopt a mindset like Luke Donald's, which is relying on a strong short game. Luke positions his layups to a yardage that helps him have an ideal yardage coming into a green; he also scrambles extremely well around the green, but the following are some tips for the putter that you might try to hopefully help you get the ball in the hole:

- **Spend some time hitting some 12-18 inch putts:** You may say to yourself that this is such a short length that there is no use practicing these because you are not going to miss, correct? Exactly. Take a couple of minutes and just hit 15-20 short "sure" makes. First of all, doing this will help you feel confident and relaxed with the putter; you will find that you don't think about too much, you just knock it in. Secondly, while doing this drill, notice what the sound of the ball going into the hole is like. Really listen to this sound and build a positive association. When you get to the next three or four footer, try and make the sound happen; this can be a new, very positive way to think about putting.
- **5-6 footers, look for something inside the hole to hit:** Willie "Toad" Williams from my college golf team gave me this tip. Willie referred to himself as the greatest putter in the world, and the entire golf team would vouch to the fact that he was. I once played 9 holes with Willie and he didn't hit a green and shot even par; he had a great wedge and putter like Luke Donald. I asked Willie if there was anything he thought about when he putted, and he quickly said to me, "I try and make the ball hit something inside the hole. I look for a fleck of paint, a blade of grass, or a smudge of dirt and just try and make the ball hit what I'm looking at." This is a great way to free up your stroke by easing the mind from thinking about the stroke. Give it a try and see if it helps.
- **Practice putting while looking at the hole.** This can help you if you have anxiety on short putts, but this is also a great way to get the feel for the correct lag or speed on longer putts. This drill really allows "instinct" to take over.
- **Play save me with two or more buddies.** Save me is a lagging game. You have 3 or more golfers, they all putt to the same hole. The ball that lags the closest to the hole wins all the points, the ball that ends up the farthest away loses all the points; balls in between the two don't win or lose any points. So if you have three people putting and you hit it the closest, and Coach Ron hits it the farthest away, and Coach Tommy is in the middle, You are +2, Tommy 0, Coach Ron -2. If the closest player sinks the putt, it doubles the points; if someone sinks on top of him it doubles again and the second sink steals all the points. You can make the points worth a nickel, dime or quarter each, or just play for the points and have the loser clean everyone else's clubs. Play with 5 or more and you will have great time guaranteed.
- **Play "draw back":** Drawback is where you and your one or two putting partners put to any given hole, and you always draw the ball back away from the hole the length of your

putter; because of this, you never have any rake-ins and you work on every putt. With this game you will have some 3-putts, but this game alone, called the greatest putting game by putting Guru Dave Pelz, will make you a good, if not great putter.

I see so much mechanical work being practiced on the putting green by golfers trying to make their stroke perfect, and that has its place. The putter face needs to be square, you need to hit the ball in the sweet spot of the putter, and putter "path" is important. But I do believe practicing like we play gets neglected. Try the above drills and games, I think they're worthwhile and will help bring back some "instinct" into your putting. See if you free up your mind, create positive thoughts, and improve your putting. Let me know.

Also, one of the reasons I chose putting this month for an article, is that at Lone Tree, the guys in the Golf Shop are getting ready to launch our Lone Tree Putting Championship in April. Stop by the golf shop or go online to www.lonetreegolfcourse.com to find out more about this exciting event for all golfers---young and old, male and female. Who knows, you may be our "2012 Lone Tree Putting Champion".