on the green

Practice
How You Play

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Welcome to the premiere edition of On the Green. I’m excited to introduce you to the monthly newsletter dedicated to women golfers of all ages. Whether you’re an experienced golfer or a newcomer to the game, I invite you to subscribe and learn more about the exciting opportunities that exist for women golfers in the mid-Atlantic region. Each month, you’ll discover a variety of news, advice, and products all related to the female perspective of golf. You can read about the latest equipment made exclusively for women, or discover new fashions to hit the market. You’ll also learn how to improve your game with monthly tips and strategies—all in an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand format.

Although we may play the same game the guys do, it doesn’t mean we learn the same way or appreciate golf for the same reasons. Case in point: My husband loves to joke that I have more pairs of golf shoes than he does. And he’s probably right, even if he has been playing 15 years longer than I have.

My golf game began four years ago when I met my husband-to-be. I was interested in playing golf, but lacked the incentive to get out there on my own. I took some lessons at a public range two years earlier and admitted defeat by the third lesson. But here in front of me was a scratch golfer with a 4 handicap. How lucky could I be?

Four years and many quaffs later, I’ve learned the band way that “golf is not a game of perfect,” as sports psychologist Dr. Bob Rotella says. At first I was more concerned with having the right “look”—everything from the bag to the shoes (seven pairs and counting!) to the picture-perfect swing—that I couldn’t relax and let the club do the work. I was thinking too much. And I was showing.

During the past four years, my husband has been a saint. He was my coach and taught me the basic fundamentals until I became, in his words, “uncoachable.” He encouraged me when I became angry; he was calm when I blamed him for bad shots. When the pro at the David Leadbetter Academy of Golf switched me from a left-hand- ed to a right-handed player, my husband went out and bought me a new set of clubs.

This brings me back to how women learn, think, and act (thank goodness!) differently than men. This realization, coupled with the few resources available to women golfers, inspired me to create On the Green. I wanted to establish a forum where women can share stories, perspectives, and shopping tips with one another. I hope you’ll find this publication informative, enlightening, and entertaining. Happy reading!

—Deidra Darsa
How You Play

A STRONG PRACTICE ROUTINE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF A SOLID GAME

BY JONATHAN LARSEN

In most competitive sports, the athlete who trains better, performs better.

Sure, there are golfers who can get out of bed 30 minutes before tee time, arrive at the course just before the starter is about to drop their name from the four-some, take one practice swing, and then play a flawless game of golf. I hate to beat your ego, but we are not all Tiger Woods or Annika Sorenstam. These athletes are at the top of their game and have put in countless hours of practice to get to the point where they can turn their game on and off by demand. These players have mastered the skill of practicing like they play. With a little discipline and commitment, you can learn how to practice more consistently, lower your handicap, and become a better player.

Golf requires consistent and focused practice time in order to have solid rounds on the course. I have played competitive golf for more than 15 years. You would think I would have figured out this game by now. Well, guess again.

If I want to play solid golf on the course in competition, I have to practice as a solid golfer off the course. Solid practice includes both mental and physical preparation.

It’s How Far to the Green?

Mental preparation is learning how to focus on the shot you are about to hit and to stay committed to that shot. Some experts say golf is a 50 percent mental, 10 percent physical game. I agree with this theory. For example, let’s pretend you have a 125-yard shot over water to a green that is protected by bunkers, which are both short and long of the green. In order to clear the water, you have to carry the ball 100 yards. The typical golfer thinks about the water, the bunkers, and all of the things that could cause them to hit the ball into the hazard or the bunkers. In golf, negative thinking will produce negative results.

The next time you are in this situation, try thinking about the green. Focus on where the pin is located, and keep your thoughts in line: “This is a simple 7-iron shot that I have hit a thousand times.” Stay committed to your positive thought process. Stay committed that the club you have in your hand is the right one. If it’s not, then there’s no harm in switching to a 6-iron or, for the longer hitters, to an 8-iron. The key is to stay committed to hitting a shot you know you can hit—because you have done so a thousand times on the range, or on approach shots where there is no water or bunkers guarding the green.

There is no doubt mental preparation is more difficult to practice than physical preparation. Why? Because most golfers refuse to believe golf is just as much of a mental game as it is a physical game.

Driving the Range

When I go to the driving range, I see a majority of the golfers doing one thing—trying to hit the ball as far as possible. Again, we are not all Tiger or Annika. Distance in golf is a huge advantage, but distance means nothing without accuracy. There are very few pars (4’s and 5’s) where a golfer can only hit a driver and then put for an eagle, birdie, or par. The average golfer should have mastered 75 percent to 100 percent accuracy at each target, pick a new set of targets. Each time you practice, try to improve just a bit from the last session. Recording statistics is a great way to track your progress and gives you the sense that your practice is paying off.

Bring Out the Bring Guns

I know, I know...what about the driver and woods? When you have completed your iron-accuracy drills, take out the driver and 3-wood. Hit just a few shots, maybe five or 10, for each wood shot, try picturing a particular fairway you play regularly. Use the same drill as you used with your irons to hit the fairway. When you have achieved 100 percent accuracy, pick another fairway and increase the number of shots from four to eight until you hit to the fairway with each wood.

Over time, all of these tips and drills will do one very important thing for your golf game—they will engrain a routine to your practice. A routine in golf is one of the most important elements of a solid game, both mentally and physically.

The next time you watch a golf tournament, look closely at the players. Watch them on the tee box, the fairway, and especially the green. All top players have a pre-shot routine and they all stick to it—no matter what.

Whether you practice on the range, the putting green, or the short game area, always practice your routine. If you are having difficulty developing a routine, watch professional golfers or televised golf tournaments to pick up some of their tips. You don’t have to just watch the men’s tournaments. In fact, I recommend that women and men watch the women’s tour. Observing women pros are pound for pound more solid golfers than the best men players. And they all have solid pre-shot routines.

Remember, all solid golfers have solid practice habits. Golf is a game of repetition, and a game of nerves. Combine the two into your practice time and watch out—before long you will be the one giving strokes to your friends, not receiving them.

Next Month: Learn in-depth, pre-shot routines and drills you can take with you to the practice range or your backyard.
Avoid the Water Hazard

by Amanda Larsen

Not drinking enough water is the biggest water hazard you’ll face on the golf course all year. It takes only two percent fluid loss to become dehydrated, according to Golf for Women magazine, which notes the most common injuries associated with dehydration are muscle cramps and pulled muscles.

And when happens when your muscles are less flexible? You guessed it—you’re less able to respond to the physical demands of the golf swing.

The key to staying hydrated is to drink water before you’re thirsty. If you want to drink when you’re thirsty, you’re already dehydrated.

Dehydration is worse in hot weather because your body expends energy and sweats differently than if you were running or doing aerobics. Fluid is essential for body expends energy and drink when you’re thirsty, demands of the golf swing.

Healthy Back

Amateurs also have a ten percent of golfers experience back pain. In fact, about 70 percent of all golfers experience back pain at some point says Dr. Richard Emerson, physician and founder of the Emerson Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Scottsdale, AZ.

It’s very rare that I come across a golfer who has never experienced back pain, whether they are a weekend player or a pro who plays virtually every day,” Emerson explains.

With pro golfers, back injuries occur mainly from overuse. Amateurs tend to acquire injuries caused by poor swing mechanics and lack of conditioning.

Core conditioning is not just about abdominal muscles—it involves the lower back and hips, explains Emerson. "Core conditioning involves strength and flexibility, and one thing I am happy to see is that teaching pros have become much more aware of that and have incorporated it into teaching the proper swing," he says.

Amateurs also have a tendency to swing harder at the ball, which can increase the risk of injury. According to the study by the American Journal of Sports Medicine, amateurs generate 40 percent greater lateral bending and 50 percent more torque on the spine than pro golfers.

To help reduce back injuries, Emerson suggests four ways you can prevent injuries:

• Take lessons and learn the proper swing technique. The proper swing technique allows golfers to hit the ball farther with less effort, thus reducing torque and tension on the spine.

• Develop a fitness routine with an emphasis on core conditioning. Core exercises should include focus on the hips, abdomen, back, and thighs—all which work in unison during the proper swing and help take stress off the spine. Aerobics is also a good activity because it helps promote blood flow and reduces fatigue.

• Buy properly fitted equipment. If you want to buy golf clubs on the internet or on eBay, you may find cheaper equipment. But you’ll also discover you may increase the risk of injury when using equipment that is not fitted correctly.

• Take time to warm up before playing golf. You should spend a minimum of 10 minutes on a warm-up before golf, which includes stretching of the neck, shoulders, torso, hips, and hamstring. Then, follow up with easy swings on the practice range before hitting the first tee.

By implementing these four steps, you can help yourself avoid back injuries and have more time to enjoy your golf game.

—Amanda Larsen

How Low Can You Go?

All in a great time for golf, but don’t let the cool autumn temperature fool you. A crisp sunny day can quickly turn chilling in the mid-Atlantic region and you’ll want to be prepared for sudden temperature drops. Eighteen holes of golf can turn treacherous if you’re caught unprepared for proper gear. Thanks to the increasing number of manufacturers of women’s golf clothes, it’s easier than ever to add versatility, fashion, and comfort into your golf wardrobe.

Layer It On

One of the best ways to enjoy autumn golf is to dress in layers. Start with a fitted t-shirt or a mock turtleneck (long- or short-sleeve—it’s your choice) made of a combination of cotton, rayon, and spandex. This material will help keep sweat away from your body, an essential element in keeping you warm while golfing. We recommend the new Riverside Sleeveless Mock shirt ($48) from Cutter & Buck, which is soft and luxurious with the performance of spandex.

Next, add a fleece vest. Microfleece is popular in the chill, try a pair of Lady Classic Winter Gloves ($14.95). Made of advanced micro-fibre and an extra comfortable polar fleece, they are the perfect protection in wind and cold. The performance microfiber palm provides excellent grip in all weather, even rain.

Hats and scarfs are great complements to any wardrobe, but make certain they don’t interfere with your ability to swing a club or sink a putt. Cashmere and wool are great for warmth, but are not as easy to clean as fleece or cotton. This season’s popular patterns are angle and tweed, available in a multitude of colors and styles.

Think Pink: Support the Fight Against Breast Cancer

This season, make a fashion statement and tie on a cause of breast cancer. You’ll not only look great but you’ll show your support in the crusade against breast cancer with the 2004 Ford Breast Cancer Awareness Scarf. Created exclusively for Ford Motors by fashion designer Lilly Pulitzer, the scarf features the designer’s trademark green and pink patterns. Made of 100 percent silk, the scarf also features the symbolic breast cancer pink ribbon. All net proceeds (85 percent of each sale) benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Also available for $25 plus shipping, at www.Ford.com and at Bloomingdale’s and Lilly Pulitzer signature stores. Get tied to the cause today!

Curl up with a plush, pink, and irresistibly cute teddy. The Elizabeth Pink. All proceeds benefit breast cancer research. For the unconventional golfer, here’s a hint for cold weather: Try the IPC mid-calf equestrian sock ($7.95). Designed for cold-weather wear, it’s an exceptional sock with a lycra arch support and a reinforced heel that benefits equestrians and golfers alike.

With a little advance planning, you’ll be sure to enjoy your day on the course this fall no matter what the weather may bring.

—Amanda Larsen

in style
Looking for a New Accessory?

New to the Game?

For beginner golfers, Ruddo recommends a club with a lower flex point and a club that is either perimeter weighted or has a lower center of gravity. Ruddo suggests the Lady King Cobra or Women's Taylor Made products.

According to Lady King Cobra, its clubs are designed for women players who want the optimal balance of distance and accuracy. Shafts are lighter to reduce overall club weight while allowing for faster swings and higher ball speeds. Reduced grip sizes and an offset design help the club achieve a square face at impact for improved accuracy. Lady King Cobra offers the 3400 I/X irons that feature a transition design, which morphs from a hollow back (5–7 irons) to a cavity back design (8–14 irons). This transition gives optimal weight distribution for those with extra-large hands and a massive sweet spot, according to Lady King Cobra.

Their 355 S2 offset fairway woods help correct slicing for improved accuracy. The low and deep center of gravity, generated by the dual weighting system, promotes a higher trajectory.

Not to be outdone, Taylor Made developed the Mosaic club set that includes club-driver, 3-wood, 3 mid-woods or hybrids (4, 5, and 6), and five irons (7, 8, 9, pitching wedge, and sand wedge). All clubs are engineered with a low, deep center of gravity that makes them easy to get off the ground and deliver a higher-launch angle and higher spin rate. These features make it easier to get the ball in the air and then keep it there longer, according to Taylor Made.

“I have received good feedback. I’m very comfortable with these products,” says Ruddo. “The good thing about this business is you do have a lot of samples for people to try.”

For the Advanced Golfer

Ruddo says advanced golfers will have a higher flex point in their shaft and, in fact, may want a stiffer shaft. “For advanced golfers, the Callaway’s are such a good product,” explains Ruddo. “We’ve had great success with Callaway clubs, and because they have a great shaft.”

LPGA victor Annika Sorenstam plays Callaway clubs and balls. Her recent win in the Mizuno Classic in Shiga, Japan, moved her into a tie for fifth place with Beth Yarbrough on the LPGA’s all-time victory list with 55 official wins. The Mizuno Classic also was her 67th worldwide title.

After winning the Samsung World Championship Title, Sorenstam said, “Confidence was a big key, and I think I have all year. I had a lot of confidence in the Callaway Cushion Driver and HX Tour ball—which holds in line in wind conditions better than any other golf ball I have ever seen.”

Sorenstam’s array of Callaway equipment includes a Big Bertha Strong 4-wood, 3-wood, Steelhead X-14 Irons, 48- and 54-degree Callaway Golf Forged+ Wedges, and an Odyssey White Hot 2-Ball Blade Putter.

For the Slow Swinger

LPGA pro Carin Koch prefers Ping equipment. This equipment maker has sponsored LPGA events since the 1970s and founded The Solheim Cup. In its family of clubs was designed specifically for women and features a reduced overall weight that makes the clubs easy to swing and helps create faster swing speeds for increased distance.

Women with slower swing speeds can list longer drives with the 15.5-degree G2 driver, according to Ping.com. This club is designed with a higher loft and a lighter swing weight. The G2 Fairway Woods are available in 3, 5, 7, and 9. Also available is an L-wood, a club designed for long shots from the fairway that hold the green. The new G2HL (High-lofted) irons are designed for women who prefer to hit from the fairway.

New Arrivals

New to the LPGA Tour this year is the Nickent ARC wedge. At the Tour’s Open Fourt, ARC wedges were in play and after three months, 12 Arc wedges were at the Asian Ryukoku International Championships, cited to the Darrell Survey. The ARC technology works like a caged bird, according to nickent.com. There is an internal chamber designed to house an elastomer core. The elastomer weight remains lighter to a less than the surrounding material of the iron, creating an internal cavity that significantly expands the sweet spot to help off-center shots hold the line.

Also new this year is the hybrid club, and just about every club manufacturer has a version. Taylor Made’s version is the new G2HL which comes in 3, 5, and 7. It features a slightly lower flex point and a club head that is lighter weight. The G2HL is available in a 3-wood, 5-wood, 7-iron, 9-iron, and sand wedge. They are designed for women with an average swing speed and a lower swing weight. According to Taylor Made, the club is designed to help women get longer, according to Taylor Made.

In this first-part series, we take a look at the scenic and historic countryside of Hot Springs, VA. About a four-hour drive from Washington, DC, is a beautiful resort waiting to be discovered.

Located amidst the beauty of the Allegheny Mountains, the Homestead is host to 15,000 acres of relaxation and recreation for the entire family. Indoor and outdoor activities provide the ultimate experience for a weekend getaway from bowling, billiards, and movies to outdoor adventures of mountain biking, shooting and flyfishing to a full-service spa and salon, the Homestead is a treasure grave for all ages.

A Golfer’s Heaven

The Homestead is a golfer’s delight, featuring three courses and a variety of golf packages to choose from. The Old Course has the oldest tee in continuous use in the United States. In 1892, this tee was part of a six-hole layout. By 1913, the course was enlarged to accommodate 18 holes. Abundant fairway contours give most shots a downhill, uphill, or downhill lie to the greens, making for interesting (and, yes, challenging!) approach shots.

Amateur players may want to try the Lower Cascades with its wide-open fairways and trademark runway tee boxes designed by Robert Trent Jones in 1963. Advanced golfers will enjoy the challenges of the Cascades Course, consistently ranked among the top 50 courses by Golf Digest and Golf Magazine, where talented players can use the slope and roll to their advantage. Designed by William S. Flynn, the Cascades Course if trusted as the finest mountain course in America and is designed to use its mountain location to influence play, but not to dictate it. According to the Homestead, the Cascades Course opened in 1923 and has hosted seven USGA Championships and prestigious PGA events such as the 1995 and 1996 PGA Tour Shoot-Out Championships.

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What Women Want

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Package Perfect
If you plan to visit the Homestead, a golf package is the best value for your money. All golf packages include breakfast and dinner daily, traditional afternoon tea, use of 100 long and 100 short nails, use of the Fitness Center. Also included is use of the spring-fed indoor pool, historical programs, eight-night movie in the resort's turn-of-the-century theater, valet parking, local phone access fees, and shuttles to resort activities.

Golfers can choose from an array of packages. The Early Bird Golf Package offers unlimited green fees on the Old Course or the Lower Cascades with complimentary use of the driving range and a free sleeve of Titleist balls. The package is available March 26—April 29, with weekday rates starting at $191 per person and weekend rates starting at $227 per person. Carts and play on the Cascades course are additional.

For the avid golfer try the Homestead Golf Package. This package features unlimited play on all three courses and includes a cart, complimentary use of the driving range, range balls, and a free sleeve of Titleist golf balls. Rates range from $291 to $341 per person on weekdays, and from $331 to $411 per person on weekends.

Dee and I choose the World’s Best Golf Package, which is designed for the golfer who wants to play a daily round. This package includes one round of golf on the Old Course of the Lower Cascades, with cart, for each night of stay. Also included are use of the driving range and a free sleeve of Titleist balls. Fees range from $221 to $251 per person on weekdays and from $296 to $347 per person on weekends.

If you want to become a better golfer, check out the Ladies Only Golf Advantage School. This two- and one-half day program entails 15 hours of instruction with guest female instructors. All areas of the game are covered, including on-course instruction and a computerized analysis and review of your golf swing.

Ready for Relaxation?
After a day on the course, what could be better than a bit of good, old-fashioned rest and relaxation? Restore your mind, body, and spirit in the natural mineral spring waters of the Homestead Spa. After a long day on the course, you might want to try the Golfer’s Glow (165, 30 minutes). Designed to exfoliate dry skin, this cleansing salt scrub is perfect for the golfer who wants to eliminate a few “rough” spots. Or, indulge in Heaven at the Homestead ($185, 70 minutes), which features a hot stone massage followed by a lemon ginger crush bodyscrub designed to leave you feeling as though you are on a heavenly cloud. And don’t forget to visit the Spa Shop which features the exclusive Homestead line of body scrubs, lotions, salts, shampoos, conditioners, and exercise wear.

Not only does the Homestead cater to the golfer and spa spirit in all of us, it also features a variety of shops and restaurants sure to delight a variety of appetites. During the day, casual resort attire is preferred. Advance reservations and appointments are required for all evening dining and recreation to ensure preferred times. Whether you’re planning a girls’ weekend or a romantic rendezvous for two, the Homestead provides the ultimate getaway. This is one resort that has it all—in fact, it has what we women want and even more.

Looking for a New Accessory?
Continued from page 8

one. The hybrid—part iron, part wood—has technical features that help get the ball airborne and decrease the effects of miss-hits; these features include use of the spring-fed indoor pool, historical programs, eight-night movie in the resort’s turn-of-the-century theater, valet parking, local phone access fees, and shuttles to resort activities.

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Looking for a New Accessory?

Editor’s Note: For decades, possibly even centuries, linguists and psychologists have delved into the immense differences in the ways men and women communicate. And, as our Divot Dive (aka Deidra Darsa) shows, nowhere are these disparities more evident than on the golf course. Enjoy the show!

Matchplay: She Said, He Said

I happened while I was on vacation in North Carolina. I hadn’t expected it, but all of a sudden I wanted to learn the game of golf. Back home I signed up for lessons and learned how to swing a 7-iron like nobody’s business. I was proud of myself and even though I didn’t know what to do with the other clubs. I accepted a friend’s offer to play nine holes. I knew I was just a beginner and was very helpful and patient. I used each of my clubs—mostly creating divots. But I was emboldened by his encouragement.

Emboldened enough, that is, to tell my friend Rich that I was a golfer, and a good one at that, for a beginner. Rich, being an avid golfer, invited me to play and I excitedly agreed. This was going to be fun—even for the two guys the starter paired with us.

What was wrong with this woman? No one tells someone else how to play their game, even if they suck.

HOLE NO. 7
She: The tension was now unbearable. You’ve heard the expression “the air was so thick you could cut it with a knife”? Well… I sensed the two guys who were stuck playing with us to win screaming off the course. Actually, I can’t believe they didn’t.
He: What is wrong with this wish!

HOLE NO. 8
She: There comes a time when you reflect on your game and you know that you want to take your club and slam it on something. In this case, that something would be my friend’s head. And then, the absurdity of the situation struck me. Here I was on the verge of losing one of my closest friends over a game of golf and I laughed. Rich and I looked at each other and just cracked-up. The tension melted and we started to have fun. Even the two guys who were stuck with us began to laugh.
He: This is the woman I know! Not the creature from the Black Lagoon that I played golf with on the first seven holes.

HOLE NO. 9
He: Now I understand. In retrospect, this may have been the first time I told her I wasn’t a mind reader.

The Aftermath
It’s been 15 years since that awful experience. Rich and I have been married for 15 years and have continued to play golf. And, mostly it’s fun. We’ve learned the key to good golf is the same as good marriage: clear communication. Now, when I feel like hitting my husband over the head with my club, I give him fair warning.

Next Month: The Divot Dive explores the world of complex etiquette, including unusual rites and rituals, at old-time country clubs where women members are a new commodity. (Read more about the Divot Dive on page two in the Contributors section.)
1. What is the craziest thing a fan has requested of you?
   It is always strange to me when I am asked to sign someone’s body.

2. Tell us something that most people might not know about you?
   I played the flute for 10 years, both solo and in orchestras.

3. Is there anything you won’t eat?
   Raw beef.

4. What’s your favorite snack on the course?
   Trail mix.

5. What was the last book you read?
   Da Vinci Code.

6. What is your favorite thing to cook?
   Swedish pancakes for my kids.

7. Favorite childhood TV show?
   Growing up in Sweden, we all used to watch “Dallas.” It was very popular.

8. Are you superstitious? Any lucky charms?
   I’ll switch things up if they are not working, like my ball number or ball marker.

9. If you were a shoe, what kind would you be?
   Of course, I would be a pink and white Dexter golf shoe from the 2005 Carin Koch collection.

10. Is there anything you are addicted to? Or can’t live without?
    My kids.

11. What is one thing you have done you would never want to do again?
    Q-school.

12. What is your favorite cartoon character?
    Sponge Bob Square Pants and Scooby Doo.

13. What type of music do you enjoy listening to?
    Whatever my husband downloads. I mostly like easy listening music and 80’s music.

14. Most visited Web sites, other than LPGA.com of course?
    Shoeline.com and online Swedish newspapers.

15. Peanut Butter? Crunchy or Creamy?
    Creamy.

16. Are you a morning person or a night owl?
    I have always been a night owl.

17. What is the one thing you absolutely must do in order to get your day started right?
    I have to have breakfast in order to function. I also like to wash my face with cold water.

18. What is one of the best presents you have ever received?
    About four years ago, my husband gave me diamond earings after I had my first son. It was sort of a combination gift for Christmas and our fifth anniversary.
Day on the Green was a recurring concert in Oakland, California, presented by promoter Bill Graham and his company Bill Graham Presents. Held at the Oakland Coliseum, these events began in 1973 and continued into the early 1990s. The last Day on the Green overseen by Graham took place the same month as his death in a helicopter crash in 1991. There was a series of Day on the Green shows the following year in the wake of Graham's death and there were other shows in 1994-97 at the Oakland Coliseum.