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**GUIDE TO BREAKING 90**

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***INTRODUCTION***

Breaking 90… This is arguably the most common aspiration of golfers everywhere. The average golfer never crosses this barrier. According to *The National Golf Foundation*, the average score amongst all golfers is right at 100. So, if we want to break this important barrier, how do we do it???

Shooting in the 80’s is a careful balance between limiting mistakes and hitting good shots. Most players trying to accomplish this goal do not have a realistic vision of what breaking 90 actually looks like. ***To break 90, it is more about LIMITING MAJOR ERRORS, than hitting great shots.***

Let’s walk through how we can break 90…

**LIMITING MAJOR ERRORS**

You need to leave your pride and ego behind when trying to cross this barrier. You do not have to play more aggressively when trying to break 90, as opposed to 100. While your ability is better than the person trying to break 100, your skill set is still not at a level in which big risks equal big rewards.

Your first round breaking 90 will probably look a lot like this:

1) Realistic expectations were set ahead of time to avoid the temptation to take on risk

2) You kept the ball in play off the tee

3) Your approach shots were safe

4) You may have hit a green or two more in regulation than usual

5) Your shots around the green gave you chances to 2-putt

6) You did a good job of avoiding 3-putts

What is arguably the biggest barrier to breaking 90? When we broke 100, we most likely avoided triple-bogeys. ***Now, we want to LIMIT DOUBLE BOGEYS (or worse)!******What is the easiest way to avoid double bogey outside of having a great skill set? COURSE MANAGEMENT.***

Key factors to manage to avoid double bogeys or worse:

1) Get the ball IN PLAY off the tee

2) Play smarter and better recovery shots

3) Limit 3-putts

***MANAGING TEE SHOTS***

No different than breaking 100, we HAVE TO KEEP THE BALL IN PLAY to break 90. How? Be smart about club selection and pick wise targets. While a 300 yard tee shot straight down the middle is obviously attractive, it is still less likely you pull this off and more likely you end up out of play trying to do it.

While your ability has improved to hit some better shots than when we were trying to crack 100, you should still be VERY RISK-ADVERSE off the tee! If your ball curves to the right often, do not fight against it and try to make it curve to the left. Or even worse, not pay attention to where you are aiming and line up too far to the right when there is trouble on that side.

Let’s use an example on club selection and picking a wise target:

- Driver goes 200 yards on average, but has a big slice to the right with a dispersion rate of 70 yards from center

- 6-iron off the tee goes 140 and fades to the right, but less than a driver with a dispersion rate of 30 yards from center

You are playing a hole that is a 300 yard Par 4 with the following layout:

- Narrow fairway (30 yards wide)

- Creek runs through the center of the fairway 180 yard from the tee (120 yards from the green)

- There are trees lining the right side of the fairway and thick rough on the left

We have a couple options with the 2 clubs in our example (driver and 6-iron)…

1) Aim our driver down the left with the hopes of

A) the ball being struck well enough to carry the creek 180 yards out (remember, driver goes 200 on average, not every time)

B) the ball not slicing too much to the right and ending up in the trees (our driver has a 70 yard dispersion from intended target)

2) Aim our 6-iron down the left with the hopes of

A) The ball being struck well for enough distance (140 is average, so we will not get it to the creek)

B) The ball not curving too much to the left (fairway is 30 yards wide and our dispersion from intended target is 30 yards)

So, if we want to break 90, what are we going to do? The answer is simple: Hitting driver to get rewarded by being closer to the green is not worth the risk when taking into account the other factors (creek, trouble right, etc.).

We aim down the left side of the fairway with our 6-iron and play our fade to the right. Our dispersion from target is 30 yards on average, so aiming down the left side keeps us out of the trees on the right. We also stay short enough to not bring the creek into play off the tee.

Now we have 160 yards in from the fairway (140 yard tee shot on 300 yard hole). We can hit 6-iron again and get up close to the green. A one-putt would be a par, 2-putt is bogey.

Hitting driver off the tee brings the likelihood of double bogey (or worse) into play astronomically more than hitting the 6-iron.

REMEMBER THIS WHEN ON YOUR QUEST TO BREAK 90:

***Breaking 90 is not about birdies and pars, it is about limiting double bogeys (or worse)!***

***SMARTER AND BETTER RECOVERY SHOTS***

In my opinion, the biggest mistake players make when trying to break a scoring barrier like 90 is, taking high-risk recovery shots when in trouble.

When we get in a metaphorical “jail,” our number one goal should be to GET OUT OF JAIL! Not, take a higher-risk shot to try and make a par (or birdie). When we are on our break 90 quest, bogey is your friend. Double bogey or worse is the enemy.

Example:

Par 4

We hit our tee shot into the trees on the right. We have 100 yards to the green. There is a tree in between the ball and the green. It is a tree we can get over, but we have to hit the shot perfectly. Instead of playing the shot over the tree, you can chip the ball out left of the tree and into the fairway leaving 50 yards in. When trying to break 90, you should be choosing this route EVERY time.

If you were to catch the shot thin trying to go over the tree and it hits it and kicks it backwards. Now, not only are you furious, but you are still in “jail.”

NEVER FORGET THIS…

***The quickest way to have a blowup hole is by compounding mistakes. The quickest way to compound mistakes is by getting frustrated. The quickest way to frustration is taking unnecessary risks. Frustration will cause logic, focus and game plan to go out the proverbial window!***

***LIMITING 3-PUTTS***

The number of 3-putts in a round can be the ultimate, determining factor on breaking 90.There is a critical error in thinking when trying to break 90 and that is, “I need to be more aggressive on putts I can make in order to have more 1-putts.” In reality, speed control on putts outside of 5 or 10 feet is more crucial than trying to make more 5 to 10 footers. Most players do not realize that PGA Tour players do NOT MAKE every putt inside 20 feet. Not even 10 feet. Not even 5 feet. Recognizing some important statistics will help…

PGA Tour average make % from certain distances:

*\*\*\*Source:* [*www.pgatour.com*](http://www.pgatour.com)

3 Feet: 99%

5 Feet: 81%

10 Feet: 41%

20 Feet: 7%

25+ Feet: 4%

These are THE BEST PLAYERS IN THE WORLD, remember that. You can see that the putts everyone envisions as ones that should be made, the best players in the world are not even close to making them all.

In order to avoid 3-putts, our speed control once we get outside of 5 feet is way more important than making the putt!

***CONCLUSION***

Breaking 90, much like breaking 100, is still largely about our mental approach and limiting big mistakes. Playing smart enough to limit double bogeys and 3-putts could be the only difference between a 99 and an 89. Smart tee shots, high-percentage recovery shots and 3-putt avoidance will help you break that 90 barrier!