

INSTANT GOLF IMPROVEMENT

The 6 Pillars to Golf Success



JOHN HUGHES

INSTANT GOLF IMPROVEMENT

The 6 Pillars to Golf Success



JOHN HUGHES



2025 © John Hughes Golf/Florida CMM Group Ventures

All rights reserved.

Cover and text design by Beth Farrell

Cover and text layout by Bella Villano

Photographs by Jean Perpillant

Sea Script Company

Seattle, Washington

contact@seascriptcompany.com

seascriptcompany.com

ISBN:

First Printing September 2025

No part of this book, text or images, may be reproduced or utilized
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopying and recording, or by any information storage
and retrieval system without permission in
writing from the author.

Printed in the United States



SEA SCRIPT COMPANY
Book Publishing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FORWARD

INTRODUCTION

PILLAR 1

What is Your Target? Are You Aimed to It?

Target Acquisition and Orientation, “Golf’s Holy Grail”

PILLAR 2

Short is Wrong, Right is Long

You Can Never Go Too Long

PILLAR 3

Putting Adds Up Quickly

Create and Control A Circle of Comfort

PILLAR 4

Tipping Your Hat to Chipping

Every Golfers’ Go-To Shot

PILLAR 5

Know Thyself

The Golf Course Doesn’t Have Feelings

CHAPTER 6

Making the Plan

Instant Anything Always Has a Recipe

INDEX OF TERMS

TESTS AND DRILLS

*John Hughes has done it again...
made an impact on the game of golf!
The difference now is that he will impact
and improve YOUR golf game.*

JOE HALLETT, PGA

PGA Master Professional

2024 PGA Teacher and Coach of the Year

Through the years, John has been a veritable sponge when it comes to gathering knowledge on the golf swing from his extensive experiences and his list of mentors, many of whose names line the walls of the Halls of Fame. Along the way, John has not only absorbed but has generously dispensed his wisdom and knowledge to his fellow professionals and thousands of students from around the world.

Standing in the background with that wry smile of his, John watches players and coaches get better and stronger. I know because I'm one of those people he has impacted!

You see, *John Hughes listens, John Hughes shares, and John Hughes has written it down!* So now, John is wherever you need him with the wisdom contained in this book, *Instant Golf Improvement*. Using simple “pillars” for better golf that have stood the test of time, you can access those golf methods that have made John such an inspired instructor. Without much practice, you, too, can benefit from some of golf's most innovative techniques.

Allow the pillars of success that comprise *Instant Golf Improvement* to positively affect *your* golf game as they have thousands of golfers John has taught throughout his career. Enjoy!

“Instant” means unlocking immediate and tangible improvements in your game, right now, using the skills you currently possess.

JOHN HUGHES

John Hughes Golf

Are you tired of leaving the golf course feeling frustrated, despite your best intentions? For many, the desire for “instant golf improvement” feels like an impossible dream, especially when life’s demands leave little time for practice.

Like most things in life, good things come with time and require at least a little effort to acquire and appreciate. Golf is no different. However, in today’s environment of instant gratification, golf tends to get a bad rap. Because instant gratification is hard to acquire from golf, and it is even harder to appreciate.

Most people measure their golf gratification in the form of results. Specifically, the ability to hit great golf shots. . .all the time. But most golfers don’t practice or play enough for that expectation to be labeled realistic. If this describes you, why are you demanding a world class result from every swing you make? If you’re comparing your expectations to world class touring professionals you watch on television, stop! Those golfers practice and play all day, every day. And if you consider yourself extraordinarily successful in life and business, you expect comparable results when playing golf even though we’ve already established you put little time into golf. The success you experience in life does not automatically transfer

to golf. By the way, the technology you take for granted and the cultural norms you are comfortable with exasperates your desire for instant golf improvement.

The genesis for this book is to redefine the word “instant” in golf. Forget the fantasy of world-class results without effort. “Instant” means unlocking immediate and tangible improvements in your game *right now*, using the skills you currently possess. It’s all about small achievable victories. Like hitting the golf ball closer to the hole or keeping all your shots in play or even learning to manage your emotions. “Instant gratification” might mean to you getting exactly what you want, when you want it. That definition is impossible in golf due to external factors like weather conditions. This book empowers you to control what *is* within your power, delivering “instant” results tempered with reality.

The word “instant” and its derivatives are terms you’ll read frequently throughout this book. No matter the reason for me using the word “instant,” or how you choose to use it on the golf course, “instant” brings powerful meaning to any endeavor we undertake.

What is “instant” in golf? You can argue it is the ability to experience exactly what you want when you want. Is that possible in golf? As a golfer you should already know there are things completely out of your control on the golf course, such as the course and weather conditions. Which brings the word “instant” into an entirely different dimension.

I’d like to share a story about instant, reality, and unrealistic expectations. It should put the word instant into context for you and give you a realistic expectation of the book you’re about to read.

A client of mine, “Joe,” attended a 3-day group golf school that I taught several years ago. Joe came to the school by himself,

so he was paired with three other golfers. Joe was no “Ordinary Joe.” He was a phenomenally successful businessperson. Joe was also high maintenance with grand expectations of himself and his golf skills. He claimed success at anything he attempted. Yet golf was the one thing in his life he felt the most unsuccessful about. His decision to attend a golf school would “instantly improve” his game.

Within the first five minutes of the first day of golf school, Joe’s cell phone rang. It was his business assistant, “Betty.” Joe’s phone was so loud we could all overhear the conversation. Within a minute or two, we became aware that Joe’s phone might be ringing a few times more that morning. But we weren’t ready for what would transpire over the next 3+ hours.

Joe’s cell phone rang constantly, most of the time for business. Joe and his phone were so annoying that the others in the class pulled me aside, one by one, to tell me I had to do something about it. They each explained that it was not so much the phone, as it was Joe’s demanding demeanor and loud voice that would make their experience miserable.

In addition to his phone, Joe was a whiner, vocally and consistently inviting us all to his pity parties. Yet, when I asked him to do a drill to remedy his woes, he’d ignore me and state he knew better. He was also unwilling to participate in any group discussions or presentations. It was all about Joe. I agreed with the group that Joe’s phone calls and bellyaching had to stop for our sake and for Joe’s benefit, too. Joe had to understand that golf was going to take some effort on his behalf. His expectations of instant gratification from the game were unrealistic.

The next morning before the class started, I informed the group I had a plan in place to help them deal with Joe. For the plan to work, I needed everyone’s full cooperation.

They had to trust and follow my lead, which they all agreed to. When Joe arrived at the range that morning, he purposely left his cell phone in the cart, stating he felt the phone was a “small distraction” to him. It was at that point I handed Joe an envelope. It contained a fake message that Betty resigned, effective immediately.

As Joe read the note, his face turned blue. Joe ran for his phone and immediately began to call Betty at the office. No answer. Joe called Betty at home, called her cell number, called her daughter, called her husband, called Betty’s mother, no answer.

Joe did not know Betty called my phone the evening before looking for Joe. Before Joe’s phone battery died the day before, he gave Betty my number to call if she needed him. When Betty called, I explained the situation we experienced the day earlier. Experiencing similar situations with Joe in her past, Betty suggested resigning and me informing Joe the next day. She had done this before and it worked for her to have Joe change his ways, temporarily, which is all we needed. Betty and I detailed the plan for the following day with Betty agreeing not to answer calls from Joe.

For an hour, Joe continued to call Betty. As he did, he kept muttering about how his business was in jeopardy and how valuable Betty was to him professionally and personally. Joe finally gave up calling Betty and came back to his spot on the range. By this time, the group knew what had happened. As best we could, we all consoled Joe, making statements such as “I guess she’ll be hard to replace,” “I hope you find another like her,” and “I hope it doesn’t take a long time for you to get along without her.”

As Joe contemplated what his next business move would be, he began to hit a few golf balls. Most of his shots were

the best shots he hit the entire program. Although he looked dejected, Joe lost his expectations of being a great golfer. His mind was totally consumed with losing Betty. Joe was neck deep trying to figure out how he could regain the instant gratification Betty provided him.

I pulled Joe aside and asked him how long it would take to replace Betty. His answer was exactly what I expected, “It’s going to take a while to replace Betty,” Joe stated. He’d have to dedicate time away from golf and other projects to ensure whoever replaced Betty could get up to speed quickly and efficiently. Taking Joe’s lead, I twisted the narrative to explain how Joe’s lack of time to practice and play golf, as well as his overwhelming expectations of who he was as a golfer, were constantly in his way.

Joe began to realize his perceived need to instantly improve his golf skills were unrealistic but consistent with the instant gratification lifestyle he led. From that moment on, Joe began to fully concentrate on improving his golf skills. He was a completely different person that day. He readily accepted the coaching and instruction I provided and concentrated on the drill I gave him the day before. As he experienced moderate success throughout the morning, Joe transformed into a pleasant person, a total opposite of who he was the day before. Joe eventually owned up to treating me and the group poorly and apologized for his actions. He also admitted he treated Betty poorly, too, and wished he had an opportunity to make amends.

It’s common at a golf school to share success stories of the morning during the lunch break. What Joe shared shocked us all. He explained what he learned was that it took him a while to succeed at business, with help from key individuals, and it was going to take a while for him to succeed at golf. As if on

cue, his cell phone rang. The caller ID showed the call was from his office. He answered, and his face lit up. It was Betty calling to give him a morning update. As he listened to Betty talk about the morning, Joe looked at us all with a face that was half relieved and half pissed off.

When the call was complete, Joe told us Betty informed him of our plan. “Even though this was the meanest trick ever played on me, it’s the most meaningful,” Joe stated. “It served a purpose I desperately needed.” I asked Joe the same question I asked him the day before, “How long would it take you to replace Betty and have that person perform at Betty’s level?” His answer today was detailed and direct, “A year or more.” I followed his answer with the obvious question, “Then why would you expect yourself to perform at the level of a tour pro all the time, when you don’t play often and never practice?” Joe conceded he recognized the correlation I was making the day before.

Joe’s desire for instant gratification from golf was forever put to bed. The lessons he learned that day about golf and himself have transformed him into a single digit handicap golfer for the past 20+ years.

Instant gratification from golf comes from knowing that you can’t just flip a switch and “instantly” become the best player in the world. There is no magic dust to sprinkle on you. You can’t hit career shots on demand. You can’t play sub-par golf at will. Instant gratification with golf doesn’t come from an expectation of being successful at other things in life.

“Instant” gratification from golf comes from the small victories you experience. “Instant” isn’t achieved through endless hours on the range but through understanding the fundamental principles of smart decision-making and optimal focus that the pros master. When applied to your own game, the results are

remarkable and immediate, like learning how to hit the ball closer to the hole; learning how to keep the ball in play; learning how to hit shots appropriate distances and making more putts. It's also about learning to manage yourself and your emotions while learning the techniques that will get you out of trouble.

Instant Golf Improvement will help you understand that instant gratification from golf can happen in many ways. This book provides a realistic action plan for instant success with minimal practice, allowing you to spend less time grinding and more time enjoying your improved success on the course now, not later. The advice contained within will provide some “instant” moments for you.

However, you'll need to take the small tidbits of information and put them together as if you would a jigsaw puzzle. One-piece fits into another and into another and so on until you have a great vision in front of you. This book represents the frame of your puzzle, which my mother and other great mentors of mine claim you must always build first when solving a puzzle. The frame provides the outline and vision you'll need to fill the middle. As you work the middle pieces, concentrate on like skills and techniques, as you do when connecting all the pieces of a color scheme in a puzzle. Let each of the similar color pieces mesh rather than forcing them to fit. Over time, your puzzle—your golf game—will begin to take shape. You'll then begin to understand that realizing instant improvement in your golf game can happen.

Your golf puzzle pieces will fit together faster if you read each chapter as a lesson within itself. Each chapter represents one of six core pillars. Adopting these pillars, you can realistically experience the instant improvement of your skills and your enjoyment with little to no effort. This simple six-step process can work for any skill level of golfer.

Understand that within each chapter, the word “instant” will manifest itself. Be patient. Good things come with time. Taking the time to read this book all the way through will provide you with a realistic action plan to achieve instant success with your golf game with little time invested in practicing. This could buy you time to play smarter with current skills and abilities, as well as buy time to allow you to find out if there is a return on your time investment to practice more.

Good things do come with time. Reading *Instant Golf Improvement* will prove to be an effective use of your time. You can experience instant gratification with golf by following the six simple yet overlooked pillars. As you read this book, try to find your “Betty,” and ask her to take an instant golf improvement vacation with you. And when you’re frustrated about not experiencing an instantaneous positive result from golf, remember Joe.

*To all the coaches, players, mentors, and influencers who
allowed me to be the fly on the wall to accumulate
what is inside this book, thank you!*

*And to my family for their patience and encouragement,
thank you! Without your support, this book would not exist.*

WHAT IS YOUR TARGET AND ARE YOU AIMED TO HIT IT?

Target Acquisition and Orientation, “Golf’s Holy Grail”

The first “Instant Lesson” we’ll cover is the importance of having a well-defined, clear target. This allows you to begin your journey of achieving better results with all your golf shots. You’ll have a process to acquire a clear target while staying focused on the target as you swing. This concept is one of the core fundamentals of *Instant Golf Improvement*, helping you to instantly experience positive results in your golf game.

To demonstrate the importance of Target Acquisition and Orientation, let’s have you play a game of darts. Rather than the traditional games of Cricket or 501, let’s play “Opposite Darts.”

You’ll be playing darts with the arm and hand that is your weakest (left hand for right-handers; right hand for left-handers). Standing at a legal distance from the dartboard, throw a series of ten darts, trying to hit the dartboard with all ten darts. It doesn’t matter where on the board each dart ends up. Chances are most of the darts hit the board with one to four missing the board completely. With the darts that hit the board, you had no idea where they were going to end up, and the results proved it.

This part of your dart game is comparable to you not possessing a specific golf skill or, for that matter, not being skilled at all. It’s what happens when you don’t have a plan

or a specific target for any of your golf shots. Without skill, coordination and a definite target, how can you accurately predict the result of any golf shot you attempt?

THE LESSON LEARNED FROM THROWING DARTS WITH YOUR WEAK HAND

Let's keep the skill level of our game the same but change the plan a bit, introducing the first lesson of *Instant Golf Improvement*, Target Acquisition and Orientation.

You'll still use your weak hand and arm to throw the next series of ten darts. However, each dart you throw will have a mission: to hit the bullseye. Focus your eyes solely upon the dart board bullseye. Don't attempt to throw a dart until you see the bullseye grow and become sharply focused. When this occurs, throw a dart while continuing to look at the bullseye. Repeat this process with all ten darts.

How many darts hit the dart board this time? Excuse me for being presumptuous, but I bet the answer is all ten darts hit the dart board. Why is that? Even though you may possess limited skill and coordination in your opposite hand, being visually fixed upon the bullseye, your eyes and brain take over. Your eyes were trained on a finite target, directing the brain's attention to the target which, in turn, directed your body to produce the desired result—hitting or coming close to the bullseye. Can you imagine if you applied the same methodology to your golf game? How much better could you be as a golfer without improving your skill level or your technique?

Now, let's put the darts into your stronger arm and hand. Throw another series of ten darts at the board, trying to have all the darts hit the board. What you probably produced with this round of throws was all ten darts hitting somewhere on the board, unlike when you threw with your opposite hand.

Some of the darts in this set were closer to the center. But I bet it's hard to identify a throwing pattern with this set of ten. It's the equivalent of improving your skills but not having a plan or a clearly defined target for each shot you hit.

With your last ten throws, use your strong hand. With each dart you throw, take time to visually focus and concentrate on the bullseye., then throw each dart. I'm willing to wager that most, if not all, of the ten darts landed within the "triple" (smaller) circle of the board. And possibly, one or two darts landed in the bullseye!

As you can see, with no improvement in skill and no actual goal or target to aim at, the process of hitting a golf shot for the sake of hitting a shot, without a clearly defined target, lends itself to misguided shots and undesirable results. As you introduce a definite target, skill level does not matter, you'll be able to increase your accuracy.

Some of the shots you attempt may not be the best, but you can still accomplish your mission. Taking dead aim at a target, you visually reduce the dispersion range in which your bad shots miss while increasing your chances of hitting better shots. And if you ever decide to make a conscious effort to improve your skill level while continuing to take dead aim at targets as you do, your ability to hit a desired target increases exponentially.

HOW TO APPLY TARGET ACQUISITION TO YOUR GOLF GAME

You can apply this lesson to any aspect of your golf game whether full swing or short game, lying in a great position, or needing to escape trouble.

To demonstrate this concept further, I'll share a story with you about Ben Hogan. It was shared with me by one of my playing partners, "Mike," who was a long-standing member

of the Country Club of Charleston in South Carolina. Mike experienced this story firsthand and shared the story often with golfers like me who are always looking to make improvements. Mike played in a Pro-Am with Hogan when the Tour stopped in Charleston in the 1950s. The day of the Pro-Am, Mike and his group got paired with Hogan. They began their round on the 12th hole, a slight dogleg right Par 4. As the dogleg curves to the right, so does the center of the fairway. Groups of pine trees shape the dogleg from the left side of the fairway. It was Hogan's first-time playing America's oldest golf club, and he asked his playing partners for a little help.

"Gentlemen, can you tell me where to hit my drive on this hole?" asked Hogan.

Mike answered, "Do you see the group of five pine trees straight ahead? That's where you should aim."

Hogan acknowledged the advice, thanked Mike graciously, and began to take a practice swing. As he did, Hogan stated, "Better players tend to aim at more precise targets. Can you tell me, please, which of those five trees I should aim at?"

The group of three friends was taken by Hogan wanting to know which tree. At a loss for an educated answer, Mike responded, "The tree in the center will do just fine."

Hogan again thanked the group for their local knowledge. He stepped behind his ball, which was patiently waiting to be struck off its tee. As Hogan made another practice stroke or two, he asked, "Where on that center tree should I aim?"

Tour pros and successful amateurs have taken this and comparable stories to heart, taking dead aim at a target with every stroke they attempt. This is one of the reasons why they are so accurate. Using Target Acquisition and Orientation, you, too, can achieve instant improvement in your game.

WHAT IS FOCUS?

There is another reason this concept is so critical to your ability to instantly becoming a better golfer. Think about this for a moment. . .when you initially threw the darts with your opposite hand, your mind was focused on how to hold and throw the darts. When you solely focused on the bullseye, did you ever think about how to throw the dart, or did you just concentrate on the target? Likely, you focused on the target and never thought about how to throw the dart.

Most golf lessons include teaching you to be aware of your body, the club, or both but rarely about keeping focused on your target. Keeping focused on a target as you swing the club takes your conscious mind off mechanics while placing your concertation solely on making a swing that accomplishes the desired result without the distrations of “how” to do that.

Golfer Aiming to Exact Point on Tree



Focus begins with your eyes. Being focused as a golfer requires you to train your eyes to hone in on smaller things. This is not natural for humans, as your eyes are constantly scanning a broader field of vision. Training your eyes to stay

focused upon a single object for an extended length of time takes practice and patience. But not a lot, just enough to keep your mind from drifting to other distractions like thinking about how you're going to swing a golf club.

BETTER MISSES WILL HAPPEN MORE OFTEN

There is a final reason Target Acquisition and Orientation is a quintessential factor in *Instant Golf Improvement* and your success as a golfer. Golf is a game about your misses, not about your perfect shots. It is almost impossible to hit a perfect shot every time, but you can always hit a "good miss." I use the phrase "good miss" with all my students, forcing them to understand this concept. A good miss is not measured by your expectation, it is measured by what you have made the ball do in relation to the target.

PRACTICAL DRILLS TO CREATE AND IMPROVE YOUR TARGET ACQUISITION SKILLS

To start producing instant improvement to your golf game with all the shots, you'll need to start training your eyes, brain, and body to adapt to new concepts. Along with the darts example, the exercises and drills below are provided to you as suggestions to help you with this skill. With *Instant Golf Improvement*, I'll provide suggested drills and exercises to help you with the skill discussed within each chapter.

Want to instantly improve your ability to acquire and aim at a target? Try these Target Acquisition and Orientation drills:

Acquire Your Target

Standing behind a ball, look down the fairway or practice range to a tree, flag, green, rake, sand trap, bush, or any other easily distinguishable object that is

in line with the ball on the ground in front of you. Stare at that object with both eyes, concentrating only on the target.

After looking at your object for at least 30 seconds, quickly shut both eyes. Do you see that object in “your mind’s eye”? Do you see the golf ball on the ground? If you can’t see at least the object you were focusing on, continue to practice this drill until you do. What you will find is, as your mind’s eye learns to be more focused with your eyes open, you will experience less distractions getting in the way of you finding a target to aim at when on the golf course. You will also be less distracted by objects that should have no direct effect on the outcome of your shot. As your mind’s eye learns to see the target and the golf ball when your eyes are closed, you will increase your chances of aiming better at your target, without having to change your pre-shot routine.

Improve upon the Set Drill

Take five balls and pick any club in your bag. Find a target that fits the distance you hit the club. Focusing on nothing but the target, find a comfortable circle around the target that represents a realistic bullseye to hit (approximately a 30’ diameter for a 100-yard shot; have the circle get smaller for short shots and bigger for longer shots, but not too big). Concentrating on nothing but the bullseye, hit all five balls at the target, using the same pre-shot routine you use on the course. Count the number of times you hit the bullseye. If three out of five or better hit the bullseye, you are doing well.

Now let’s take this to another level. Grab five more golf balls. Using the same club, the goal for this set

is to improve upon the first set. If you hit three out of five the first time, the goal is four out of five with the second set. To accomplish this, concentrate on the center of the bullseye, a flag, and never take your mind off the flag as you make every stroke.

Not only will this drill help you with target orientation, but it will also help you get adjusted to perceived stress levels you might be experiencing as you become more target fixated on the course.

10 out of 10 Pitch Shots

As the name implies, hit pitch shots from various distances, knowing that before you can go on to another distance or end your practice, you must hit ten balls inside your bullseye. Because you are hitting shots that are closer to a target, you must challenge yourself by making your bullseye as tight to the hole as realistically possible.

Drive to Target

With your driver, pick out a target down range. It could be a tree, a flag, anything that is big enough to consume your visual attention. As you prepare to address your shot, be thinking about nothing more than the target, visualizing it in your mind's eye. As you execute your swing, focus solely on that target, and nothing more.

Using this drill, you are trying to accomplish two things:

1. Can you keep your focus on the target the entire time you swing the club?



2. After the swing, can you recognize any swing issues that prevented the ball from flying to your target?

Accomplishing both missions, as well as hitting the ball to your target, will provide instant feedback to you. This includes offering insight to your ability to focus on a target long enough as a way of avoiding distractions to the motion of your swing, as well as increasing your kinesthetic awareness of what your body does as you swing.

10 in a Row Putting

Can you hit ten putts in a row, sinking all ten putts, using a lie that is flat? Try doing this. From ten feet, hit ten putts, with the goal of sinking all ten putts. If you are having a tough time accomplishing this, try throwing a variable into the mix to help you.

This variable is to make practice swings and hit the putts staring at the hole, similar to how you would look at a bullseye throwing a dart. As you do this, you will notice that your body will take the information provided by your eyes to automatically correct your swings as you make practice swings beside the ball. Trust this information to work as you execute each putt.

Never underestimate the power of Target Acquisition and Orientation. When all else fails, this concept is your security blanket. Gear your swing down, lower your expectations, and focus on your target.

SHORT IS WRONG AND RIGHT IS LONG

You Can Never Go Too Long

The second biggest mistake all golfers make, regardless of their skill level, is missing their targets short. Make no mistake about it, the statistical research compiled by many companies supports this fact. The total blame for this phenomenon is you, the golfer, picking the wrong club in any given situation.

Typically, that wrong club is the one you must swing harder. It's the club you're trying to "step on" or swing "the hardest," using maximum effort, hoping you "career" the carry distance needed to avoid trouble.

The second pillar of *Instant Golf Improvement* is not a riddle. It's an amazingly simple problem that takes little effort or knowledge to solve. What is the distance your shot must carry? And what is the club, on average, that will achieve the carry distance? But you can't make that decision if you do not know yourself. (See Chapter 5)

Exceptional circumstances aside, most amateur golfers often overlook this amazingly simple decision. For a golfer who considers themselves "more skilled," hitting one less club provides a challenge, but doing so presents a risk/reward situation. And when the ball falls short of the target, the risk was far greater than the reward. Most advanced and highly skilled golfers take into account all the intricate details of carry distance, computing which club will carry the proper

distance, and details such as atmospheric conditions, ground conditions, and how they are playing at that moment. All of these affect their decision between taking one more golf club or hitting one less club a little bit harder than normal.

But no matter the skill level, all data indicates that when a green is missed or a drive lands in a water hazard, you should have chosen one more golf club and made your normal swing. Doing so provides you with more opportunities to hit any target you choose. And in the case of hitting greens, it provides you with more opportunities to make fewer putts.

Let's explore some of this data to educate and persuade you to never be short of your targets again.

CONTINUED CONFIRMATION OF OLD RESEARCH

I remember graduating from college and receiving the gift of my first subscription to *Golf Digest Magazine*. I couldn't wait to read the articles by the dominating touring professionals of the time explaining how they played their best. And I enjoyed the unveiling the centerfold, which featured the best golf school the industry has ever known and the locations and dates where you could attend a Golf Digest Golf School. Little did I know at that time, I would be the National Director of Instruction of Golf Digest Schools 25 years later.

I distinctly remember an article about how and where golfers miss greens. The publication conducted a survey with over 200 golfers of various skill levels, ages, and genders. Each was asked to hit a series of shots from various yardages and lie conditions. The yardages were selected based upon average length that a golfer hit three specific clubs: their wedge, their 8 iron, and their 6 iron. Balls were placed both in the fairway, in

the first cut of rough, and in the primary rough. As each golfer hit their shots from the various yardage locations, the staff of the publication plotted the landing spot of each shot with small survey flags.

At the conclusion of each golfer's set of shots, all shots were plotted on a map of the hole and labeled appropriately to indicate where the shot originated. After all the golfers completed their shots, all the data was tabulated together, as well as within separate skill levels.

The results were astounding. When a golf shot, from any distance and any condition, missed the green, it missed short of the green 83% of the time. There were some misses left and right along with some misses long. But most misses landed short of the green.

Ball On and Ball Off Green



As the results were broken down into skill levels, there was an obvious difference between the most elite players and the beginner players, but that was already assumed. However,

within each skill category, the results were the same as compared to other skill categories. Within a reasonable margin of error, the most elite skilled players missed fewer greens short than the less skilled players.

As the shots were being hit and the data was being tabulated, the golfers were asked a series of questions related to what club they chose for each shot location and why. They were also asked how far they thought each of the club's carry and total distance was. This information was cross-referenced to the plotting of each shot. The findings again stared everyone in the face. Most of the shots missed short of the target were hit with a club that had no chance to carry the distance required to hit the green.

Since this article was published in the mid-1980s, countless studies conducted revealed the same outcomes. The number one reason you miss your targets short is a poor choice of club prior to executing any golf shot.

HOW DO YOU INSTANTLY FIX THIS PROBLEM?

Instant Golf Improvement is not about practicing as much as it is about knowledge, knowing oneself, as explained in Chapter 5. It's the knowledge you need in relation to you and your game, the tools you have at your disposal to lower your scores, and not limiting your tools just to your golf clubs. Your tools include your mind and your body. The combination of the three can sometimes vary from round-to-round, day-to-day. Improving your golf game and scores instantly requires an understanding of the averages you and your golf clubs can consistently repeat. This allows you an opportunity to never miss your targets short again.

But you'll have to check your ego at the door. Egos affect all ages, genders, and skill level of golfers. Bragging rights of

how far you can hit a particular club always come into play when having to choose between two golf clubs to a specific yardage. The better part of discretion in all cases is to play the averages and percentages, choosing the club and hitting the shot the given circumstances requires.

OTHER FACTS TO CONSIDER TO ENSURE YOU'RE NEVER SHORT AGAIN

Did you know that 95% of the golf holes around the globe have trouble in front of the green? Five percent or less have trouble behind the green. Those are the facts; the facts that should compel you to choose the golf club that can hit the middle of a green 100% of the time.

When there is trouble behind a green, it's trouble! You must be aware of every hole you play and be familiar with the difficulties of each. If you know that most of the trouble is in front of the green, it should be easier to pick a suitable club and make a normal swing. Why would you choose a club that brings all the trouble in front of the green into play? Doing so requires perfection.

Golf is not a game of perfect, as a famous book title suggests. It's a game of misses. Your ability to make your misses better than your competitors is what makes your score lower. And the one miss you always have control over is avoiding the short miss to any target.

Another fact to consider the next time you attempt to hit the "perfect shot" is the margin of error for the perfect shot. According to my technology partner, FlightScope, a perfect shot happens once every 1.2 billion shots. Think about it. Are you ever going to hit that many shots in your lifetime? Probably not. The likelihood of you hitting a perfect shot during a round of golf is slim to none.

Keeping this astounding number in mind and being honest with yourself, how many perfect shots do you hit when trying to swing as hard as you can?

PRACTICAL DRILLS AND STRATEGIES TO AVOID MISSING SHORT OF ANY TARGET

Here are a few strategies and drills you can use to instantly understand your distances, thereby, never being short of your targets again:

Regular Gapping of Your Club

If you decide that you are going to put some practice in, let's make sure you're aimed and aligned correctly, as outlined in Chapter 1. And let's document how far each shot travels in the air for every club. Known as "carry distance," you can only control how far the ball will carry. Once your shot hits the ground, you're at the mercy of mother nature.

When you have the chance, hit a minimum of ten shots with all your scoring clubs, 7 iron through your wedges. Record how far each shot carries. If you have the convenience of a launch monitor to document this information, it's in your best interest to use it. Delete the high and low carry distance shots. And average the other eight shots.

It's not enough to do this once. You should do this on a regular basis. Touring professionals do this on a weekly if not daily basis because atmospheric, environmental, and course conditions can change in a matter of minutes. These changes can have a positive or negative impact on carry distances. Doing this exercise at least once a month provides you the knowledge of how far your average carry distances are.

Side note, trying to find out average carry distances when playing golf will not yield the averages you're looking for. You can certainly document your total distances on the golf course but not your carry distances.

Ideally, gapping your golf clubs three or four times within a brief period, one to two weeks, can provide great information about your carry distances. The average of all those sessions is a piece of information in which you can always feel confident knowing that you created those distances.

Until Further Notice, Always Hit One More Club

Less is not more! Always choose more club. If faced with a yardage that puts you "in between clubs," always choose more club. Doing so should eliminate any trouble in the front of the green, and it provides you with a bigger margin of error should you not hit a perfect shot.

Until further notice means that until your ball striking becomes more consistent, always side with more club. Until your ball striking prowess produces longer carry distances, always choose more club.

The Right Equipment in Your Golf Bag

I often see clients come to golf schools or coaching sessions with not enough wedges. Or the wedges are not properly lofted to fill the carry distance "gaps" in their games. In addition, clients will tell me they can't hit a particular club, but they'll leave it in their golf bags anyway.

If you do not have the right equipment you'll need to cover the carry distances you experience when playing golf, you will miss targets short! Most of the

time you've chosen the shorter club with more loft and tried to kill it. If this describes you and your bag of equipment, then fill in the clubs that are missing. You'll always come up short of targets if you don't have enough equipment.

In addition, ensure that the lofts of your irons are consistently gapped. Typically, golf club manufacturers build club sets with the loft of each club differing by 4°. Sometimes 5°. For the average golfer, your clubs should never be more than 5° different between clubs.

As you go about your Instant Golf Improvement journey, always realize the worse mistake you can make is being short of your target. You're short of your target because 99% of the time, you choose the wrong club! It's that simple.

With golf being a game of misses, using Murphy's Law as a strategy will never let you down. When in between clubs, choose the longer club with less loft. Guaranteed you'll avoid the most obvious and penal dangers while providing a little bit easier short game shot, which creates more opportunities to improve your scores.

With all the facts of this chapter now in front of your mind, how will your club selection improve during your next round?