



Fore! Your Game

Your Equipment Guide For The Gear Enthusiasts

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Spring Golf Survival Guide

In Western New York, all it takes is one 50 degree day and golf courses around the area are inundated with phone calls and e-mails inquiring about course conditions and opening dates. While the excitement around that first tee shot of the year is palpable, take some time to focus on preparation...in particular, preparation of your golf bag.

We all have visions of that first round filled with sunshine and birdie putts. The stark reality is generally damp conditions, a cool breeze, and bogey putts. What if I told you that preparing for the realities of spring golf can help lower your scores and result in more enjoyable rounds?

Ok, I'm not necessarily saying the difference between birdie and bogey putts is what's in your golf bag. You still need to make good swings but how you prepare can increase the probability of a good swing. So let's discuss the changes you can make to eliminate the excuses of a bad round.

Keep Your Hands & Feet Warm!



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

Personally, the number one priority in playing effective golf in cold, damp conditions is the ability to keep your hands and feet warm throughout the round. There are multiple ways you can effectively accomplish this.

The easiest, most inexpensive way is to slip some disposable hand and feet warmers into the side pocket of your golf bag to have available when needed. These warmers are safe, air activated, and will last the entirety of your round. In addition, they take up very little room in your golf bag and unlike bulky gloves, won't affect your ability to make an effective golf swing.

You can find single packs for purchase but also multipacks for under \$20. Keep a couple in your golf bag for the season for those unexpected weather conditions.

Layer Effectively



Photo Credit: Gerbing Heated Clothing

One of the most frequent complaints I hear during spring golf is the disdain for wearing multiple layers and how it impedes an effective golf swing. Depending on your budget, there are solutions out there to combat this. At this point, every golfer is aware of how flexible base layer clothing

can help. Unfortunately, this can require further layers to keep you warm and can restrict the motion of your golf swing.

This is where heated clothing comes into play and can be the solution you are looking for. Now, before you dismiss the idea, it's important to understand what is meant by heated clothing. Imagine a normal base layer or 3/4 zip that you are used to wearing equipped with flexible heating elements embedded into the clothing.

The heating elements are powered by a small, portable, lightweight battery (similar to those used to charge cell phones) which fits into a side pocket. Turn the heating elements on and off based on the conditions while also varying the temperature between high, medium, and low. This allows you to adjust your comfort level throughout the round based on the every changing weather conditions this time of year.

Having flexible clothing that also provides adequate levels of warmth can reduce the amount of overall layers required on those colder days. Less layers equals more flexibility and more flexibility increases the probability of better shots. The only detractor with this option is the price tag. Be prepared to spend \$100+. Consider it, however, an investment in your game like any other piece of equipment.

Prepare for Rain!

It's not exactly breaking news that if you're playing golf in the Spring that rain may be in the forecast at some point over the 4.5 hours in the elements. Don't be caught off guard by this. There are two simple and effective ways to stock your golf bag before heading to the course.

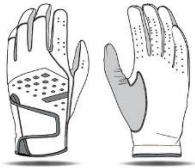


Photo Credit: Getty Images

First, invest the \$20 for wet weather golf gloves. There are plenty of options available and they really do work. You could soak these gloves in a bucket of water and still grip a golf club effectively. None of your playing partners want to hear you complain that the club slipped nor will they give you a mulligan (not the guys I play with at least). Since you may only use these gloves a handful of times a year, they can last many seasons in your bag without further investment.

Second, get yourself some effective rain gear and have it at the ready. This is something that seems obvious but you do not want to be the one person in the foursome that is unprepared. There are many different options, styles, and price points so take some time to figure out what is best for you. Some players do not like having bulky rain gear consuming valuable space in their bag so one trick is to use a vacuum-sealed bag. This minimizes the bag space occupied while allowing you to keep it in your bag at all times throughout the season.

Ok, ok...Let's Talk Clubs

It was only a matter of time before talking about golf club setup to maximize your ability in wet, damp conditions. The fact of the matter is there are club designs out there that perform better in various course conditions. Here are some suggestions.



Photo Credit: Callaway Golf

First, it is important to understand the dynamics between course conditions and optimal ball flight. Wet course conditions will naturally reduce the runout the golf ball has when landing. Therefore, you want shots that maximize carry distance to minimize the impact of the ground on the outcome. The equipment focal point

here is prioritizing hybrids over long irons and there are multiple factors at play as to why.

In general, hybrids are "easier" to hit than long irons but they also have longer carry distances. Equally as important is the turf interaction advantages. The softer the turf, the more consistent your ball striking needs to be. Long irons have a tendency to dig into the ground more so than hybrids that allow for a bit more forgiveness if you are *occasionally* prone to fat shots here or there. Additionally, golfing in the spring usually means thicker rough and hybrids are a much better option to get the ball airborne from those nasty lies.

Next on the list is wedge setup. Many golfers are aware of the concept of wedge grinds and bounce as it relates to swing type (shallow vs. steep) but may not be sure how this interplays with course conditions. Let us fix that. The concept at play is similar to the hybrid-long iron discussion above. The course conditions in the spring requires contact that is more precise and there are wedge design features that allow for more forgiveness.

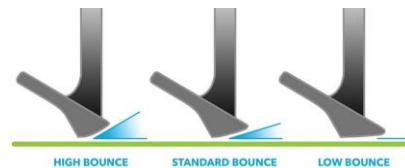


Photo Credit: igw.com

Players often hear the term "bounce" which simply is the angle between the ground and the leading edge of the golf club, which affects the part of the wedge that makes contact with the ground during the swing. Simply put, in wetter conditions, you want to reduce the chances of the leading edge of the club digging into the ground. Therefore, prioritize high bounce wedges in wet conditions because the leading edge is further away from the ground at impact. Again, if your budget allows, it is not a bad idea to have high and low bounce wedge options available to allow for interchangeability based on course conditions (soft vs. firm).

One Final Thought...

While this article focuses on how to better prepare yourself for spring golf before stepping foot on the first tee, here is a tip after you strike that first shot. That is to understand how wet conditions affect launch and spin characteristics.

In simple terms, if you are striking a wet golf ball with a wet club, the layer of moisture between the two surfaces

creates less friction. The result of less friction is less spin, which depending on the type of shot, can lead to a varying level of unforeseen outcomes.



Photo Credit: Amazon.com

One thing is certain...less spin equals less control and reduced control equals poorer outcomes. So what can you do to minimize this impact? Carry a dry towel and a portable groove brush to ensure that you strike your shot with a clean and dry clubface.

This will reduce the amount of moisture between the club and ball while increasing friction. The result will be more consistent, predictable golf shots and lower scores.