

OFF-SEASON TIPS BY DAN SHELDEN, DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION

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OFF-SEASON UPGRADES



Here we go again! It's winter and for most of us that means snowy grounds and golf clubs stuck in your garage. In Illinois we are lucky to have a golf season that lasts six months (May–October) just leaving the other half of the year to watch golf, think about golf, and do just about everything except play golf. Just because the weather doesn't permit outside play, we can still do some things indoors that will help maintain and improve your game for the season ahead! If you want to hit the first tee next spring in mid-season form, here are a couple things we can do to keep our golf game sharp:

1 Yearly Reflection: We all want to shoot lower scores, but we sometimes direct our limited practice time towards areas of our game that provide little return. You must have a plan for your practice session so you can make better use of your time and see improvement along the way. During the offseason, professionals will evaluate their performance from the previous season and set goals for the upcoming ones. Setting clear and achievable goals is essential for motivation and tracking progress. A good way to evaluate your performance is to look at scores from the past year and statistics inside of those rounds. Most amateur golfers will write down their scores, not really understanding where a shot was wasted during a hole. There is nothing wrong with that, but it doesn't answer the question most people ask, "How can I be more consistent?" A better understanding of these stats can help you identify a focused golf practice routine to improve in those areas where you're lacking the most. But which are the most important stats to help you improve?

Rule #1: No Bogeys On Par 5s: Par 5's are to be taken advantage of. For any longer hitter, turning Par 5's into Par 4's is mandatory. The average Par 5 scoring on the PGA Tour is 4.63. But birdies/eagles aren't essential for taking advantage of Par 5's. Par 5's can be viewed as one of the easier holes to make Par.

Rule #2: No Double Bogeys: A bogey will never kill your round, but a double will. If you are already in a bad position, leaving the hole with a bogey is your best option. Trying to hit the miracle shot when stymied behind a tree is recipe for disaster! Take your medicine and walk away.

Rule #3: No Bogeys with less than a 9-iron: You've just striped a drive down the middle and have a 9-iron into the green. Your first initial thought is, "this is a great birdie chance." While that may be correct, let your mindset get away from the added pressure of making a birdie and focus more on making a good swing. Remember, the average number of birdies per round from PGA Tour Professionals is 3.72. Why should we think we will make one every time we have pitching wedge in our hands?

Rule #4: No blown easy up and downs: We all miss greens, it's part of the game. However, don't over-complicate your chance to save par.

Rule #5: No 3-Putts: This is probably the worst feeling as a golfer because it's a momentum killer. For putting, the big thing is to focus on getting any putt outside of the 10+ foot range inside of 3 feet. Even if the putt finishes short of the hole, if it's inside the imaginary 3ft foot circle, you have increased your odds to make the next putt dramatically.

2 Short Game & Putting Indoors: A significant portion of a golfer's game (as we just discussed) revolves around the short game. The offseason is an ideal time to work on these aspects. A small chipping net with some foam balls can be a great way to learn to set up properly, get your shots into the air and control distance. Putting for 10-15 minutes all winter can go a long way once the season arrives. Focus on the simple things that are essential to good putting (Start Line & Speed). Use a yardstick to work on start direction and putting to a cup or hole 10-20 ft away is great for practicing speed control.

3 Speed Training: How many of us would love to start this season with 15 more yards on your drive? This is not as hard as it sounds if you train appropriately. The secret to improving your clubhead speed is to train your body how to stabilize high speeds of rotation. In other words, you can only swing as fast as you can stabilize, hence why most of us fall over or lose our balance if we try to swing harder. This off-season, try to spend some time trying to swing fast! Research has shown that if you spend three times a week swinging a lightweight club your body will learn how to stabilize higher speeds of rotation. Since the club is lighter than you're used to, it will be traveling at a higher speed than normal. Now all you have to do is try to maintain good balance and a solid posture as you swing the club.

If you have a lightweight club to swing that is a perfect training aid. Turn your driver upside down and grip the club by the neck of the clubhead and work on swinging one-handed. Or if you are looking for a more structured method, there are a couple of products to help with swing speed: Superspeed Golf ([#1 Golf Swing Speed Training System | SuperSpeed Golf](#)), The Stack System ([The Stack System](#)) or an Orange Whip ([Home - Orange Whip Golf And Fitness](#)). I have a Stack System and have really liked the layout of the app and the method they use to help you swing faster!

4 Physical Fitness: During the offseason, professional golfers work diligently on their physical fitness. They often set up a structured training regimen to improve strength, flexibility, and endurance. This might involve weightlifting, cardio workouts, yoga, or Pilates. All of these things take a bit of time and effort - which makes it a great thing to work on in the off-season. Flexibility allows for a better range of motion as well as your ability to turn athletically. Here is an example of some mobility & flexibility exercises to work on in the winter, as well as a strength exercise that Rory McIlroy does to help with speed ([Top 5 Stretches for Golfers to Hit it Longer and More Consistent \(youtube.com\)](#)) & ([Rory McIlroy's strength day workout | GolfPass | Golf Channel \(youtube.com\)](#)).