

Winter is Here Now What!?! (Do's and Don'ts from the 1980's)

Winter in cold weather states, usually shuts down most golfers games until spring. The problem is if you don't do anything for your golf game ALL Winter then when you finally start back up in Spring it will take you until May or June to find your game. By that time it's close to the start of Summer and you could have lowered your handicap much sooner and you have wasted half the season just getting back in form.

It was (1980's something) and I was a total amateur golfing nut. I took it upon myself to setup my own "custom made "indoor driving range in my house. Luckily, I owned a little row-home (do they have row-homes anywhere else besides PA?) anyway, I had 12 foot ceilings and I was going to fully take advantage of them. I proceeded to setup a mattress (bought at Good-Will) length-wise up against a wall in a spare bedroom and firmly secure it to the plaster (is there plaster anywhere else but PA?) with a concoction of drywall screws, long-ass nails, rope, eye-hooks, duct tape and a wooden wedge. No selfies back then unfortunately.

My girlfriend at the time, showed her loving support for me by placing her Walk-Man headphones on her ears and proceeded to read a book (or go to her mother's) for 2 to 4 hours per night while I practiced, cursed and broke stuff (Shanks!) in the room. I proceeded to literally cut a hole into the first mattress after a few weeks from the constant pounding of repetitious balls into its dead center...yeah right "dead center" I wish... continuing on with the story...I ending up going through 2 more mattresses before the weather finally broke and a driving range in my area opened for Spring. The 80's were a time before simulators, Track-Man, indoor golf teaching/practicing facilities and heated outdoor stalls, (at least in my in my neck of the woods). The damages to the drywall, plaster, window, (only one was broke), ceiling scuff marks, wood trim and floor scraps were well worth the effort for I was going to RULE the Spring golf season!

I was feeling great! I was soooo pumped up for Spring and the start of the season I could hardly wait. I charged out to the driving range on the first above freezing day that came along. I remember it like yesterday, it was (March something) and the temperature was a high of 43 degrees with a 12 mph wind. Good enough let's go try out our new swing!

I warmed up as usually, did some stretching, hit some small chips and slowly progressed up to my full power swing. All right, who I am kidding, I ran from the parking lot (it was freezing!) to the golf shop, bought my bucket O' Balls and went to the first driving range stall I could find. I took three back and forth full swings with my DRIVER to "warm up" I placed a ball down and started dreaming about playing on the PGA Tour. After all, I had practiced ALL winter, I had destroyed 3 mattresses, a window, a girlfriend's hearing, a neighbor's sleep patterns and a spare bedroom, who more than me deserved to crush the first shot out of the gate?

I struck the first ball, barely feeling any contact on the face, (did I whiff?) ...Holly crap I whiffed! No, I did not whiff, soon the sting of the hit into my frozen fingers provided the feedback that I had made any contact whatsoever. I did not even see where the ball went do to the cold icy tears in my eyes. I hit another ball and it went to the right, no that's not right it went WAAAAAYYY to the right (I am right handed). I knew what a "banana ball" was but this was nothing like that. I would have been OK with a banana ball considering I could not feel my extremities. No, this was more like a "Boomerang Ball", (trademark pending) my ball took off to the right and seemed as if it would fly completely around the globe (in a 180 degree flight) and somehow return back into my bucket that lay at my feet! I hit about 30 more balls and they all flew the same way. I had real tears in my eyes by now and was completely despondent.

I eventually worked out of it (July 1990 something) by myself (I never had a lesson until I became a PGA Pro) but I had learned extremely valuable lesson(s) that Winter. Never hit balls without seeing the ball flight or having a qualified golf teacher working with you indoors. The mattress I had set up in the room had a forward ball flight of only about 10 feet. I could not see the curve of the ball all Winter long. Therefore, I had no idea what my path and face relationships were. What felt like a great path and square hit was obviously something completely different. I had to overcome a ton of stuff that I had mistakenly grooved for months during the Winter.

Hopefully, my story has made you chuckle and will prevent you from making any similar mistakes.

Here are my suggestions for keeping your game going during the cold winter months.

- Winter is a great time to “bulk up” your swing. I lift heavier weights and do less reps in the Winter and do more reps with lighter weights during the golf season. So hit the gym!
- Flexibility suffers in the Winter as we tend to sit more than the warm months. The days are shorter and it’s colder at night so we sit more inside rather than being outside moving around.
- Stretching at work sitting in your chair. But do stretch motions of your back swing and forward swing. Stand up and touch your toes every hour for a few reps. My hamstrings get really tight and then my back start aching. Buy a foam roller they work great! Internet search for both!
- Eating! I put on my winter weight (blame the caveman its heredity) same as you. But I try to limit the gain each year as it is harder to loose in the Spring as I get older.
- Simulators, indoor teaching/practice facilities, your basement, make a golfing cave instead of a man-cave. Get creative if you have any room whatsoever. Many examples on the internet.
- Putt! If you don't do anything get a putting ramp or mattress (just kidding) putting mat and keep your sanity and your touch at the same time. Just feeling a ball hit the face lightly (impact) will keep you going all Winter.
- Read a book! Or two! Great time to pick up a mental book on golf. Message me if you want my top 5! I don't recommend a golf instructional book for Winter. You most likely will not transfer what you're reading in January into a positive outcome in April by yourself. No offense but I made this mistake myself more than once!
- Rest! It is OK to give your game a rest. I totally take off for November and December and I feel great going back to golf coaching January 2nd every year. Give yourself a break from golf, you will start to miss it and appreciate more if you do.
- LESSONS with Mark! Duh! You knew that was coming...You know Winter is the best time to make major swing changes if you have to? The reason is you're not worrying or concentrating so much on results when you work indoors. You not running out to the first tee to see if the lesson is “working” yet. At St. Luke's I used the full gym quite often with my students. I can show you how to do golf specific exercises in the gym to strengthen and create speed and flexibility in your swing.

That's it. Thanks for reading and I hope you do “something” this Winter for your golf. Send me your feedback and comments and questions. I would like to wish everyone a safe Holiday Season, good health and a bountiful New Year!!!

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