

Yip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah

Dr Brian Hemmings explains how coaches can help their charges avoid a panic attack when facing a short putt.

Hugely feared, and rarely discussed, the 'Yips' is a putting affliction which results in extreme technical, physical and mental difficulties for a player that can often lead to quitting the game.



Players who have experienced the yips have reported uncontrollable shaking, trembling, involuntary movements, an inability to move the putter back or forward, detached feelings, excessive anxiety, embarrassment and paranoia.

Typically, the player has become excessively focused on the outcome of (mainly short)

putts and a host of irrational thoughts and fears become overwhelming.

Try these three steps to get a player back on course:

1. Work with the player to fully 'reconstruct' his/her stroke. Bernhard Langer (left), who has overcome the yips twice, felt he had to change his stroke completely to feel he was executing a new skill.
2. Work with the player to create a hierarchy of 'stressful' situations to undertake from very easy to very difficult. Start with the least stressful first (on your own on the practice putting green) and gradually move up to more stressful situations over time (competition play) as the fear of missing/making a 'jabby/yippy' stroke begins to lessen. My experience shows that players realise it is largely a mental problem when they realise they can putt well when nobody else is around.
3. The yips are about fears and panic. Help your player begin to challenge those fears. What players begin to fear is the fear itself, not the missing of putts. Get your player to stay with it and keep practising; withdrawal from golf will only feed the fear!



Dr. Brian Hemmings has been lead psychologist to England golf for more than a decade and helped develop the mental skills of the likes of Ross Fisher, Danny Willett, Tom Lewis, David Horsey and Chris Wood.

He is also the author of *Mental Toughness for Golf: The Minds of Winners* and a regular presenter on the PGA's CPD programme. To that end he has devised a highly-regarded online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate course that carries 100 CPD points. Because it is online, the course can be completed at home – all that is needed is a player to work with.

For full details log on to www.golfpsychologycoaching.co.uk

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