

Playing the numbers game

Dr Brian Hemmings explains how using statistics can change expectations

I often show players tour putting statistics to build their confidence without them hitting putts. My belief is that amateur players usually form very unrealistic expectations about what distances they 'should' hole more putts from because of what they see tour players doing on television.

I make the point that we are often watching the highlights of the leading players on their good days, and also we frequently only see the excellent putts that go in. This can make players think and feel like most putts should go in for them too. This comparison with the best on their good days breeds very unrealistic and unhelpful thinking.

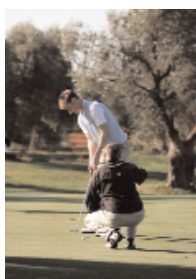
Check out these tour statistics below from the European Tour in 2010. Ask your players what they think of the conversion percentages from certain distances. I think they will say the figures are often lower than they would expect. This raising of awareness can make players lower their own unrealistic expectations and therefore improve their putting confidence.

Putt Length	Average Tour Player Conversion
1ft	100.0%
2ft	99%
3ft	98%
4ft	90%
5ft	80%
6ft	69%
7ft	60%
8ft	52%
9ft	46%
10ft	40%
10-15ft	29%
15-20ft	18%
20-25ft	12%
25ft +	5%

A Realistic Putting Game: 'Par-Birdie'

Players I work with love this game as it replicates the real game-thinking very closely because of the scoring element. It can also help develop players' pre-putt routine and get them to treat each putt the same, regardless of what the putt is for (i.e. for par or birdie). I usually notice that the quality of practice increases hugely in this game.

- Play any distance from hole relative to standard of player
- Each *alternate* putt is for par or birdie
- Birdie putts can be longer as this is more realistic (6-10 feet)
- Par putts should be shorter (3-4 feet)
- Move round the hole/s to get different putts/reads
- Start at level par, win at -3, lose at +5 or set your own level
- Works well individually and in pairs
- Try 18 putts and see what closing score is



Dr. Brian Hemmings has been lead psychologist to England Golf for more than a decade. During this time he has helped develop the mental skills of the best emerging English golfers including the likes of Ross Fisher, Richard Finch, Danny Willett, Tom Lewis, David Horsey and Chris Wood. Brian is author of the book 'Mental Toughness for Golf: The Minds of Winners' and is also a regular presenter on the PGA CPD programme. Brian has released a fully online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate course that carries 100 PGA CPD points and has been completed with great reviews by PGA professionals. Go to www.golfpsychologycoaching.co.uk for full details. The course is full of practical activities for the PGA professional to guide players through improving their mental game, and is endorsed by some of England's best coaches. You can complete the course at home so you will have no travel costs or time away from your work. All you need is a player to work with and the time to complete the course activities. For a price reduction type in the promotional code 2012 to reduce the price from £295 to £219.