

player's corner



Under Pressure

BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND PLAY WITH SOME COMPETITIVE GAMES

BY TRENT WEARNER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRY STAVER

Scrimmages help athletes in almost every sport simulate real-game situations. But unlike football or volleyball players, golfers rarely practice under “game-day” circumstances. How can you take what you learn on the range and on the chipping and putting greens, and translate it into great shots and lower scores during competition? To make the connection, you need to put yourself in a pressure situation and practice in a way that will help you cope with on-course challenges. Here are a few drills to help you embrace the same pressure you feel when you play.

Short Game

1 CIRCLE DRILL
Place 10 balls in a circle around the hole—at a distance of 3 feet. Walk around the circle striking each ball, and see how many putts you can sink consecutively. If you miss, set them up again. It will help you get a better feel for short putts by setting up around a hole that slopes. Start close to the hole, but as you improve, gradually move the circle farther away from the hole. Remember to track your results in a journal so you can improve during your next practice session.

2 EVERY HOLE
In “Every Hole,” chip one ball to every hole on the chipping greens using the same club. Then try the same shots with a different club. Keep going to different spots around the green, experimenting with wedges and short irons. This will help you realize which club is most suitable for a particular situation. You’ll also enhance your feel and fine-tune your touch. Try putting out after each round of chips and keeping score.

3 WORST BALL
People who play with me know I can’t stand mulligans, breakfast balls and other freebies. They weaken one’s ability to recover mentally and physically from bad situations. Bad shots are part of the game, so you need to train yourself to grin and bear it. This game will help. Drop two balls just off the green and chip both balls to the same hole. Choose the ball that ends up farthest from the hole and then putt both balls from that spot.