

Golf Croquet – some mental aspects

This is all about using routine(s) to reach equilibrium & mental balance

(a) prepare for the event/game

- know where & when it's on, and get there early enough to feel "ready";
- go to the toilet, have a drink before hand, check your partner is ready if playing Doubles;
- take all your equipment to the court (mallet, hat, sunscreen, raincoat & extra clothing);
- think about who you will be playing and what they do well/do badly (but be mentally prepared for them to do different things/play worse than you expect)

(b) be positive

- know you've done (enough) training to be ready;
- play one game at a time – don't get distracted thinking about how many other games you need to win, or if they're leading the competition;
- play one shot at a time. This shot could lead to all sorts of possibilities, so it is important to focus on doing this shot well, rather than focussing several shots ahead;
- be aware what the next shot is likely to be, since that could affect how you play this shot, but concentrate on this shot;
- keep telling yourself you can do this shot ("this is why I practice"/"I've done this before")

(c) play your shot

- be ready to play – keep an eye on their shot so that you can play your shot, w/o having to rush & find your poise;
- relax when you're not playing a shot – take some deep breaths, slow the heartbeat, be calm and wait patiently. Your turn will come...
- it's all about shot preparation (see Geoff Jamieson's 10 hints);
- you need a consistent preparation on every shot, even if the intent & distance vary;
- if you're placing a ball, pick a spot and try and put your ball exactly there (rather than just heading in the general direction). Pick a spot in the hoop that you will run your ball over as you run the hoop (helps get position after the hoop as well);
- stalk the ball, check the target, watch your ball, easy backswing, slow smooth flow swinging through the ball, follow-through to target. Stroke the ball....
- practise until your muscle memory knows what to do – then you can just "supervise" the shot, rather than have to think about every factor (which is difficult & exhausting);
- ideally you'll encounter "flow". The target looks huge, your swing is great, everything goes perfectly - it doesn't happen every time, but try for it....

(d) talk to your Doubles partner/team mates

- encourage them, give them positive feedback (but keep it real);
- don't bag them out – they have as much invested as you, and will be trying their best;
- sympathise if necessary, and tell them their next shot will be a good one;
- useful to discuss (quietly) what you might do next, while the oppo is playing their shot. Don't distract oppo, but this saves time and also tells oppo you're a solid team;
- listen to what your partner wants, but let them know how you feel about it (this may cause them to change their mind). It is often necessary to try difficult shots due to the state of the game – do your best, and you'll be pleased with how many great shots you make! Stay positive.

(e) finally, remember it's just a game, not life & death