



FORECOLLEGE GOLF

Guiding Players Forward

Prepare like a “Pro”
for Practice Rounds



Arnold Palmer once said “Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated; it satisfies the soul and frustrates the intellect. It is at the same time rewarding and maddening - and it is without a doubt the greatest game mankind has ever invented.”

At ForeCollegeGolf, we believe that ***golf is an extremely variable risk-aversion game.***

Let’s break that down...

The conditions of golf courses are extremely variable, and we rarely see the same shot twice, ever! Our competitive environment (golf course) is very different from our practice environment (driving range), and therefore, we shouldn’t treat them the same.

Risk aversion explains how the best players can recognize a risk and how to make the proper decision in each moment. Making the proper decision isn’t only about being informed, it’s about being disciplined.

The best players have learned to implement proper strategy under pressure, time and time again. It



FORECOLLEGE GOLF

Guiding Players Forward

doesn't matter if you are a junior golfer or a tour pro, establishing a solid game plan and a strategy should be a top priority because it's one of the most overlooked areas of performance!

Playing a practice round while being hyper-aware of a few things will allow you to create an effective game plan for each tournament, have more confidence going in and be more ready to handle the pressure, stress, and nerves of competition. Additionally, if players create purposeful preparation habits early on in their junior golf career, they will be more prepared for higher-level events on even harder golf courses in the future.

- Do you go into tournaments second-guessing your strategy?
- Do you feel like you forget everything you learned in your practice round?
 - Do you feel unprepared after only seeing the course one time?
- Do you think you could gather better information, like a tour caddie?

Tour pros have caddies that scope out the conditions of the course over a few days, sometimes even a few weeks, before the event begins. These professional caddies gather as much quality information as possible to give their player a slight edge during competition. Fractional shots matter here, so hitting one more fairway or one more green or taking one less penalty stroke could mean the difference of winning and losing. Caddies are hyper-aware of things like the firmness of the greens, pin locations, landing areas, and expected weather conditions for the week. Commonly, you will see them on the golf course testing ground conditions, rolling putts to see the break of the green, or testing things like rough depth or sand density. Caddies also set up drills, practice training stations, carry gear or prepare their player with things like towels, gloves, food, hydration, etc. The best players/caddies understand that shaving 1 shot off their scoring average could mean the difference between being 50th on the money list and 126th and losing their Tour card each year, essentially keeping, or losing their job.

So how can we “Prepare Like a ‘Pro’...with a Tour Caddie”? Here are some simple, yet often overlooked, ideas to incorporate BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER your practice rounds:

Before the Practice Round

- Order a yardage book (w/ USGA green maps) – Puttview or Strakaline are great options
- Use Google Maps or Google Earth to view the general layout of the course, shape of the holes, greens, and landing areas off the tee.
 - Make initial measurements for “boundaries” (distance between penalty areas at your carry distance) and fairway widths. Pencil-in these measurements into your yardage book for reference during the practice round.
 - Write down which clubs you’ll be hitting into the Par 3’s and 4’s and begin to consider the risk/reward tradeoff is on the Par 5’s.
- Check the prevailing wind direction and weather forecast for the week ahead and be sure to monitor it as the tournament gets closer.
- Pre-round workout, warm up, and stretch!



FORECOLLEGE GOLF

Guiding Players Forward

Day of the Practice Round

- Full workout, warm-up, and stretch. Just like you plan to warm-up on tournament day.
- Check the wind for the day and compare it to the predicted wind for the next few tournament days.
- Test the speed/break of the greens with a digital level to confirm what your eyes are seeing (or feet are feeling).
- Keep your yardage book handy to confirm specific targets and where the widest “landing zone” is off the tee.
- Locate the proposed hole locations or “dots” for the tournament rounds and ask yourself “based on the approach shot yardage and foreseeable challenges, where should I aim and where do I want my ball to end up?” (Short left of a back right hole location OR add 3 yards to the shot because of a deep bunker)
- Games/Ideas:
 - *Full Swings:*
 - Hit a shot or two from the rough, fairway bunker, and/or green side bunkers during the practice round to ensure you are comfortable with the effect these conditions may have on the golf ball. PGA Tour average is 9 FWRY’s and 12 GIR’s per round, prepare for the unexpected!
 - Play worst ball on the 3 easiest tee shots, and best ball on the 3 hardest tee shots
 - After you hit your approach shots, walk up to the green and observe your surroundings
 - Write down each approach shot you hit, how far it went and the wind direction. This extra information may become useful in subsequent rounds.
 - *Around the green:*
 - Spend most of your time on & around the greens establishing a feel for the firmness and speed of the greens.
 - Locate a proposed hole location that’s close to the edge of the green (within 5yds) and hit 30+ ft speed putts on the “fat side of the flag” and hit difficult chip shots on the “short-side”. Watch how chips/pitches react on their first bounce.
 - Use a digital level or the TourRead app to measure slopes near hole locations, while testing your green reading.

After the Practice Round

- Take a break to refresh, relax, and have a meal/shower
- Reflect on your experiences that day and ask yourself:
 - What did you do WELL?
 - What could you have done BETTER?



FORECOLLEGE GOLF

Guiding Players Forward

- How will you do it BETTER next time?
- Review your gameplan from before the practice round and ask yourself: Do I need to make any adjustments to my yardage book or gameplan? i.e. Club changes off tees, targets, spots to “miss” around the greens”, tricky hole locations)
- Create a final game plan off the tee by knowing the “boundaries” (distance between penalty areas) for par 4s and par 5s, and pick SPECIFIC targets for YOUR desired landing area, preferred shot shape, and tee location, especially on holes with potential hazards/doglegs. Tee shot “boundaries” on some holes may be fairly wide (80+ yds) and not include much risk, while other landing areas may be narrow (less than 40yds wide) and include deep bunkers, penalty areas and/or doglegs requiring a much more risk-averse strategy.
- Rest, recover, & sleep!

Best of luck in preparation for your upcoming events, we hope you perform at your very best! Please reach out to us if you have any questions about the above information or if you have any ideas, games, or prep techniques that YOU would be willing to share with ForeCollegeGolf.

Sincerely,

Mike Smith

President & Founder, ForeCollegeGolf