

Five Questions to Ask Yourself After Each Round

Do you finish your round, pop the clubs in the trunk, have a drink in the clubhouse and then head home after you play? If so, you're missing out on something very important that can make you a better player.

According to the work we have done with some of the world's leading athletes, including professional golfers at all levels, setting aside 15 minutes to reflect on each practice session and round can significantly help your performance in the long-term. Each one of my clients keeps a performance journal to track personal information and insights. At the end of a practice session or round, the athlete asks him/herself a series of questions, which are based on their individual profiles.

I can tell you that the athletes I work with who are diligent about keeping a performance journal and reflect on each practice session and round, consistently perform better than those who do not. Reflecting on performance helps boost self-efficacy, or the belief in your abilities in various situations. The reflection process helps build a sense of commitment to the player's development and that player takes the lessons/experiences from each round and is always moving one step forward.

Luke's Secret Weapon

For a period in 2012, Luke Donald was the No. 1 player in the world — even with a surgically repaired wrist and ranked 177th in driving distance.

How did he do it?

With a lot of talent, a belief in himself and with the help of a ball point pen.

Donald keeps a simple black binder loaded with a daily calendar that you can pick up at the office supplies store. The pages are loaded with personal knowledge and self-belief about Donald's game. Donald calls it his performance diary. I call it an essential tool that has helped him leverage his experience and maximize his abilities.

Each evening Donald uses the journal in a number of ways. He may jot down goals for the next day, he might keep track of technical swing feels after a big practice session, something that was working for him on the course, he might keep his statistics or just write down general thoughts and observations from the round that may help later.

Writing has power

In terms of learning, player development and communication, writing has the potential to offer a powerful difference for a golfer. I have seen, as researchers have attested, that writing can help a golfer in a number of ways including:

- Enhance their self-awareness

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- Build self-confidence
- Sharpen overall mental skills
- Increase coping abilities

How you can get started

I highly recommend you begin, like Luke Donald did, with a small book that becomes your designated “performance journal.” The book can be a calendar, or you can input your own time periods, and pages would be designated for your practice sessions and rounds.

Like Donald, your performance journal will be a collection of information about you. It could be small goals that you’d like to achieve in the coming months, technical ideas that are helping you play well or thoughts about your approach to the game. Here are few general questions you can begin with to begin the reflection process:

1. How did I practice or play today? Why do I think I practiced or played that way?
2. What did I learn from the practice or round? Did I notice anything during the practice that could help me improve? Where do I need to put my focus in the next practice session?
3. Did I let go of poor shots/mistakes quickly and get right back to business? Or, did the mistakes stay with me? If so, for how long?
4. What would I rank my confidence in the practice or round, from 1-10? Why?
5. Did I enjoy myself during the practice session or round? Why or why not?

Over time, you’ll notice patterns in your game that lead to success, and those that hinder your performance. Since we remember very little of what happens day-to-day, your journal becomes your memory, and may become your strongest tool for improvement going forward.

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