



# **YOUR PRE-ROUND CONFIDENCE BOOSTER**

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## Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Golf State of Mind Pre-round Confidence Booster Audio Session.

The goal of this audio session is to ensure you are in the best state of mind to play golf *today*.

This isn't a physical warm up guide - it's better than that. During the next 30 mins, we're going to cover the mental keys to giving yourself the best opportunity to play a great round of golf, without actually making "playing a great round" the goal. It's amazing how powerful this approach is.

We're going to keep it simple, yet highly effective. I'm going to give you a plan for your round so that you can stay focused on what's most important - so that you can remain positive and in control of how successful you are, instead of being at the mercy of your scores.

### **When you're finished with this session you'll be able to:**

- Enjoy the round no matter how you play
- Control your nerves and maintain an optimal level of excitement
- Feel like there's no limit to your scoring potential
- Shift your focus from score to process, for better shots

- “Bounceback” by reframing your mind after you’ve hit a poor shot

OK, let’s get started with section one, where we’re going to get excited about the possibilities and create a mood for success ahead of today’s round...

## **Section 1: Choose to Enjoy Your Round and be excited, not fearful, about the possibilities**

Firstly, I hope you’re driving to the course or preparing for your round with a sense of optimism. You’re on your way to play golf!!! There are far worse things you could be doing. Golf is a game, a sport, something fun, certainly not a matter of life or death.

Whatever your level of play or the importance of this round to you, it’s going to be a great day regardless of how you score. How do I know this? Because you’re going to choose it to be that way!

Your attitude before your round has a huge influence on how well you play. So, simply telling yourself you’re going to embrace this wonderful experience you’ve been afforded is going to lift your mood, create excitement and help bring that fulfilling experience towards you.

This audio session is about creating a *mood for success* and will it provide you with the keys to keep that *optimism and enjoyment going*, right up until the last putt on the 18th green. It’s this that will help produce your best golf.

The first question I want to ask you is: *What do you really want to get out of today?*

Is it just to shoot a good score? Or is there something deeper and more meaningful? What do you really love about golf? What is your motivation for playing?

This is a very important question and requires that you think about why you are going to spend the next 5 precious hours playing the game of golf. Let’s put it in perspective.

Unless you play golf for a living, you are choosing to spend the next 4-5 hours of your free time playing this game. You could be doing something else like spending time with your family, learning a language or how to play a musical instrument, or watching your favorite sports team play. The game clearly means a lot to you for you to sacrifice doing something else.

We need to find something that you can take away from your round that has nothing to do with how you play, and make that part of your focus today. Something that is certain or guaranteed regardless of the result.

Let’s think about what these reasons could be:

- Is it that you can get outside in beautiful surroundings?
- Is it that you enjoy the company of the people that you are about to play with or the prospect of meeting new people?
- Is it that you are able to enjoy some exercise?
- Is that you get the opportunity to hit at least a few “quality” shots, just like a Tour player?
- Is it the mental and physical challenge the game provides?
- Is it being able to play a game that gets your competitive juices flowing?

Any of these are reasons that golfers love the game of golf. And all of them have nothing to do with the number that goes on the scorecard. But the value of these things are often outweighed by those (short-lived) things that appeal to the ego, such as what others will think of you if you shoot a good (or bad) score.

To guarantee yourself an enjoyable experience, and to make good scores more possible, remind yourself of why you love the game - it'll help you look on the bright side and stay positive when things aren't going your way.

So let's start by having an attitude of gratitude. Being grateful for the experience keeps our minds open and receptive to things that go beyond the numbers on the scorecard - and ironically you're more likely to see a lower number on there at the end of it.

Golf is a game. To be enjoyed. First and foremost.

### **Is score really important?**

I should say at this point that I don't want you to think I am trying to undermine score. Some of my students play at the very highest level, and if I told them “score isn't important” they'd think I'd gone mad. Of course it is.

But in a game where your mind has such influence over how you hit each shot, there needs to be focus on something that keeps nerves and anticipation at a manageable level. If a player puts too much focus on the importance of score, it creates too much pressure to hit a good shot *every time* and it's even harder to recover from bad ones.

Put it this way, if your only goal is to go and shoot a good score, what happens if you don't? Are you going to feel like it's been a complete waste of time? If so, then you might want to turn the car around and spend the time in some other way that will guarantee enjoyment. I meet so many golfers who finish a round looking depressed, as if it was a painful experience. Somehow this doesn't make sense.

To really become the best you can be, requires what's called a “growth mindset”. A growth mindset looks at the big picture; a long-term view of success and that whatever happens today,

happens for a reason and is part of your long-term “journey to better”. This is also known as a “mastery” mindset.

The opposite is a results focused “fixed mindset”, where everything is about the results and the outcome of every shot. It’s a more egotistical, short-term view, more about instant gratification.

Today is an opportunity to learn about your game and about yourself, whatever the outcome. This round (good or bad) is unlikely to change your life in any meaningful way. If you look at it in the right way, it will become a step on your “journey to better”. Let’s not try too hard for results, it’s what you learn and experience along the way that will make you a better player.

As Bob Rotella advises, tell yourself this:

*“I will refuse to allow anything that happens on the golf course today to bother me or upset me. I will accept bad breaks and mistakes and be tough in adversity. I am going to be in a good mood and a great state of mind for the entire round today. I’ll enjoy playing.”*

So now we’ve established that you’re going to be grateful and enjoy today’s round **WHATEVER** happens, let’s move on to your specific goals for today, so you maximize your chances of playing well.

## **Section 2: What should your goals be for today?**

So what should your goals be for today? After listening to the first part of this audio, you’ll know what they **should not** be. Outcome goals like “I’m going to break 80” or “I’m going to win this tournament” or anything that equates your success with your score, only creates expectation, pressure and moves you further away from where we need you to be today - in the present moment.

### **Focus on the process, not the outcome**

When Stephen Covey wrote the best selling personal development book *ever*, “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, he showed that people who focused on areas within their sphere of control, were more successful over time than those who focused on areas outside their control.

To be successful in golf, the same application of focus is necessary. There are things that are within your control, and things that are not. The things that are 100% within your control are what’s referred to as your “Process”. The area that is not 100% within your control is called the “Outcome”. To play your best, your focus needs to be on goals that you have complete control over whether or not you can achieve them.

What do I mean by “Process”? I mean specific actions you can take that will give you the best chance of accessing your best skills during every shot and positively influence the outcome, whatever the circumstances.

Here are some examples of process goals:

- Visualize every shot
- Pick good targets
- Feel every shot before you play it
- Set-up and align correctly before every shot
- Make tension-free swings with a good tempo
- Accept every shot
- Switch off in between shots
- Stay in the present
- Commit to every shot

### **Why focus on process and not outcome?**

When the ball leaves the club or putter-face, there's unpredictability about where it will eventually end up. It's uncertain and your brain doesn't like uncertainty. When you're continually trying to control something that's uncertain, it's stressful. However, the actions that will best influence the outcome of every shot (aka your process) are 100% within your control and these goals can be achieved with certainty. Much less stressful!

I'm not saying that you need to have to have long list of process goals to be successful, but pick 3-4 that you consider key to you performing well. These could be a combination of the things that you know you do when you're playing well, and things that negate the tendencies you have when you're playing poorly. If you achieve *all of them* throughout a hole, put a mark on the scorecard and try to get as close to 18 as possible.

You'll be very surprised how much easier this makes the game from the outset, and it will also keep you playing until the end, no matter what your score. Does this sound like a more achievable goal than beating a certain score or hitting a certain number of greens?

Don't get discouraged if at first you don't succeed in sticking to your process on every hole - as with anything, you'll get better at it with practice. Simply do your best to control the things that you can control and let the rest just happen.

## **Section 3: Separate you the player from you the person**

LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: Whatever score you shoot today or wherever you finish on the leaderboard has ABSOLUTELY no reflection on who you are as a person.

Those that play thinking that somehow they will be perceived as better people if they shoot in the 70s or win a tournament are playing what's called "ego golf", which is not conducive to long-term success or satisfaction from the game. As humans, we derive most of our long-term happiness from who we are as people rather than how successful we are in any sport.

When your ego or self-worth is tied to your performance in golf, it creates even more pressure to perform well and makes it harder to bounce-back when things don't go your way.

Would it be helpful if you could completely separate you the person and you the player? If you could somehow play without being concerned about what people will think of you if you shoot a good or bad score? Wouldn't it become a whole lot easier and free you up to play your best golf?

Today, I'd like you to try something different. I'd like you to "ACT LIKE A CHAMPION".

Pick one of your favorite players, and pretend to be him or her for the entire round. In the same way that a famous actor is able to inhabit the person they are trying to portray, this is what I'd like you to try today. Take on the body language of a champion and try to think and behave how they would. The goal here is to make you feel like this player and your actual self are unrelated. *You as a person* are not going to be judged by your score at the end.

I'm not saying you want to act like a robot and not take in everything you can from the experience. Among many things, golf is an opportunity to improve your character - you are able to experience a variety of mental and emotional challenges on the golf course without any real life consequences. Learning how to behave with grace, dignity, sportsmanship and have patience is something that this great game teaches us. Every round gives us an opportunity to develop "grit", that mentality that all champions have of being able to persevere in the face of adversity.

But instead of attaching your self-worth with the outcome of every shot and how it might make you look at the end, take that weight off your shoulders by separating you the person, from you the player. Your real persona and playing persona are limitless, but in their own way.

Now let's create the mood for success...

## **Section 4: Visualize a good round**

If you've been following my mental coaching for any length of time, you'll know that visualization is an extremely important part of success in golf. The great Jack Nicklaus said that he believes that at least 50% of his success in golf, is down to having visualized it first. Evidence suggests that people who regularly exercise the power of visualization of their goals have a greater chance of achieving them.

By visualizing, we're not setting any expectations, we're creating a virtual reality of your success and getting you in the mood to make it happen.

Take a few moments now to imaging striking really pure shots and hitting solid putts on the course you are about to play. Imagine the shots you are going to hit down the first hole and see

yourself confidently walking up to the ball. See your motion; rhythmical, with great timing and the ball being hit solidly down the fairway. Pick up the tee and watch it land in the perfect spot and roll another 20-30 yards down the fairway.

Now repeat this for your approach shot - see yourself hit the ball into the center of the green and then hole the putt. Play some holes in your head for the next few minutes, making a birdie on each hole. If there are specific holes that have troubled you in the past, you might want to pay special attention to imagining success on those. You can pause the audio if you like.

The aim here is when you actually get to those shots later today, you'll have a sense of *deja-vu* and familiarity, increasing your confidence and the chances of duplicating that same physical action.

### **Recall past success**

In the same way that visualizing future success helps, it's *always* a good confidence booster to recall past success. Right now, think about some of the truly great shots you've hit in the past or tournaments you've won. Pick 3 different times you've been successful and remember how it looked and felt.

## **Section 5: Pre-round warm-up**

Hopefully, you're going to reach the course in plenty of time, so you can prepare properly. Feeling prepared makes a difference in golf. Ideally, you've checked out the course map if you haven't played it before, so you can familiarize yourself with the best and worst spots to hit from tees and approaches (Google Earth is great for this).

The aim of a pre-round warm-up is to get your mind and body ready for golf, not work on your mechanics. It's time to get the right side of your brain, not the left, warmed up.

Every player has their own individual routine for warming up, so I won't go too much into specifics here, but from my experience, spending 15 mins on the driving range, 15 mins on short game and 15 mins on putting is plenty of time.

Always start with some stretches to loosen your muscles.

Next move onto the range. Set the tone for the day with your warm-up. You're going to be non-judgmental of the outcome of your shots on the course, so you may as well start during your warm-up. Finding a good rhythm, balance and tempo is the most important thing to get out of your range session warm-up - definitely not practicing anything technical.

You're getting your swing in sync. The proximity of your shots to the target shouldn't concern you. My experience tells me that there's no correlation between the quality of the warm-up and the quality of the round.

Go through your routine, breathe properly, quieten your mind and then let go during your swing. That's what you'll need to do on the course. You can put an alignment stick down to make sure you're getting aligned properly. Finish by imagining the first tee shot and make sure you hit one down the middle of the fairway before leaving the range.

For the short game and putting, it's really important to get your visualization and feel going. Hit to a variety of different targets with each of your wedges from a variety of different lies. Again, there no need to judge the quality of the shots.

The primary objective of your putting warm-up is to get a feel for the speed of the green, which is the biggest variable from round to round. Start by putting to the fringe, so you're not concerned at all by your proximity to the hole for the first few balls. Simply try to get a feel for the pace of the greens. Hit to different areas of the fringe, so you get to feel different distances and slopes.

Next, start putting to tees from 10, 15, 20 and 25 feet. Putt one ball to each and then repeat 3-5 times. If you place the tees properly on the green you should be able to find up-hill, down-hill, left to right breaker and right to left breaker. By putting to tees, you're narrowing your focus and not lowering your confidence by seeing the ball finish long or short of the hole.

Finish by holing 10 putts from 2ft, i.e. ones you can't miss. This will reinforce the look and sound of the ball hitting the bottom of the cup, something you're going to hear and see a lot of later!

You'll notice that by the time you've left the practice green, you haven't missed a single putt, let alone feel what it's like to 3 putt.

At this point you're ready to play!

## **Section 6: Dealing with First tee nerves**

For most golfers, the first tee is the most nerve-racking shot of the round. There's a sense that the first tee shot and first hole, sets the tone for the round.

We need to break this trend and become excited to play the first hole.

Firstly, I'm hoping the paradigm-shift of focusing on process instead of outcome will help you re-frame your focus when you start thinking about your score on the first hole. A look at the PGA Tour statistics shows that neither the first drive nor the first hole has any correlation with the score of any given round – and the same applies for amateurs. In fact, many great rounds in the low 60s have started with a bogey or worse. So before your next round, don't assume that your first hole sets the tone, because it doesn't!

We all know what it's like to be nervous on the first tee of a tournament. You've put in the practice and you know you're capable of playing well, but now you feel the pressure to make that happen.

If you feel nervous walking to the first tee - accept it - most Tour players are too - it's a good thing.

Nerves are there to remind you how important something is to you. With nerves, you're more aware and focused, and you *will* play better with them, if they are kept under control.

This is the first step in relieving the pressure. When you have butterflies, embrace it. If used properly, this energy can produce extraordinary performances.

If you feel a little nervous on the first tee, I want you to do a couple of things:

- Take deep breaths. I've got plenty more on "stress control" in my mental game training program, but proper breathing is the best way to get control of your heart rate and calm yourself down. Short breaths create tension, longer breaths counter tension.
- Think of something funny and smile.
- Think about the opportunity you've got, NOT the risk.
- Notice your posture. When we feel nervous we tend to hunch over and look down. Keep your posture as tall as possible and look ahead. Think of the way your favorite Tour player walks.
- Remember a time when you felt really confident - which doesn't necessarily have to be on the golf course.
- Put it in perspective. If the worst thing that happens on the first hole is a triple bogey, is it really going to matter 5 years from now?
- Deliberately slow everything down - when you're nervous, you do everything (walk, talk and swing) faster.

## **Section 7: Dealing with Mistakes and hitting the reset button**

The great Ben Hogan once said that he hit the ball *exactly* the way he intended only 5-6 times a round. And he was arguably the best ball striker in history.

When it comes to mistakes on the golf course, 99% of them are *process mistakes*. Your swing is your swing at the beginning of the round. Nothing is really going to help you swing the golf club any better at this point, except your process. It's your mind that plays the shot and it's your mind that determines how well you access the skills you already have. And the process enables you to use your mind optimally.

When you make a mistake on the course, it's an opportunity to improve your process, not your swing. After a shot that misses the target, take a look at what you could have done differently. Was it that you didn't have a clearly defined target? Did you forget to align properly? Did you have swing thoughts or were you tempo focused? Did you factor in the wind?

Whatever it was, it was probably a process mistake. Find out what it was and get closure on it. Then move on. Make sure you pay attention to whatever it was during the next shot process.

Remember that mistakes help us become better players, but also remember that the time to really look at "what you could do better" is at the end of the round, not during.

One major difference in the professional and amateur games is the response to these mistakes.

Champions are made not just because of the good shots they hit, but more so how they respond to their mistakes. Good players respond to mistakes, poor players react to mistakes.

Typically, amateurs hold on to their mistakes for longer and let it affect their mood. Pros know this is a mistake in itself. Today you are going to have the Tour player mind-set and acknowledge your mistakes and how you feel about it, but get back into the present moment quickly - ideally within 10 seconds. Make this a process goal!

Here's a challenge which will help you keep a positive attitude throughout today's round:

Try to find a positive in EVERY shot, regardless of the outcome.

It's not easy to do, but you'll notice that when you do this, you'll be far more accepting and keep a positive state of mind. You might have missed the fairway or green, but did you strike it well? Did you go through your pre-shot routine in full? Did you avoid any swing thoughts? Pick anything you did well and try to give yourself some credit instead of criticism.

Then hit the reset button. Replay the shot how you would have liked and move on. Say something like, "ok, got it, that's what I'll do next time".

## **Section 8: Have a solid shot routine**

Whatever your level of play, here's a reminder of the shot routine fundamentals.

1. Pick the right shot. Before every shot ask yourself "what is my strategy?" and "what is my target?"
2. Visualize - now you know where the target is, how will the ball get there? What does this great shot look like? Is it a high draw, a low fade? Whatever shot you are most comfortable hitting, get a picture in your mind of what it looks like.

3. Match the image of that shot with the feeling of it. Use your rehearsal swings to play the shot in your mind and feel what your body needs to do.
4. Check your aim. Greg Norman says “Of all the things you do before you play a golf shot, setting your alignment is the most important. And certainly, it requires the closest attention.”
5. Commit and trust. As you walk into the ball, your mind needs to be very quiet. All your “thinking” has been done. Your focus should be on the target and shape of shot ONLY. You need to trust yourself to make the swing needed and just let it go.
6. Accept the outcome and get back in the present quickly.

## Section 9: Trust your swing

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on a great swing. Or put another way, it's the best swing you're going to have TODAY, so you may as well trust it.

When we hit a few bad shot on the golf course, the most common tendency is to blame our swing mechanics for it and try to fix the issue. This is very counter-productive.

A fluid swing will make up for any technical imperfections you might have. You're far better off trusting poor mechanics (and being fluid) than doubting good mechanics. By giving yourself a lesson, you're making your swing more tense, which can cause any number of problems.

To achieve “fluid motion” requires full commitment to the shot process and letting go during your swing, not consciously guiding yourself through it. You have to rely on your sense of visualization and feel and trust your swing to produce the shots you see.

Sam Snead adapted the old Texas football saying and said “you've got to dance with the one you brung”. And this was exactly what he was referring to – you have to play with whatever swing you have today, and trust it!

## Section 10: The Time In Between

The time in between shots is a key, yet very over-looked part of the game. In fact, most golfers spend about 90% of the time they are on the golf course “in between” shots. But 99% of golf instruction is on the 10% *only*. I.e. the shot. Knowing how to manage the time in between is a must if you are going to reach your potential.

From my experience, most golfers lose more strokes during the time “in between” shots than they do actually playing shots. The reason, is that time is often filled with thoughts about either what just happened (the past), or what is about to happen (the future). When you put your mind in either of these “time zones”, it usually hurts your performance. Nothing can be done about

bad shots you've hit in the past and any thoughts about the future are "predictions", a fixation on uncertainty which causes stress and anxiety.

The best place to put your focus during the time in between shots, is "in the present". When you're in the present, you are just being. You're not judging, processing, dwelling or speculating. It's an emotionless, quiet time, unlike the past and future. Be aware of your surroundings, engage with your playing partners or focus on your breathing. You can try talking to yourself about what you're seeing, hearing and feeling as you walk down the fairway. This should help quieten your mind and help you stay relaxed.

Another thing to think about in between shots is your body language. If you're hunched over and looking downwards, you're adopting a weak pose, which studies have shown affects your confidence. Have you noticed how upright a Tour player's posture is when they walk? This is because it projects confidence, not only outwards, but inwards.

In between shots is also the ideal time to stay hydrated and eat some snacks to keep your energy levels up. If you don't eat and drink in between shots at least every 3 holes, your focus will dip and your scores will suffer.

## **Section 11: Your identity statement**

Who is your best "self" as a player? What is great about your game - let's put that into a strong sentence.

*"I am a good player. If I play smart and prevent the competition or bad-breaks on the golf course getting to me, I will see my true potential emerge. I am a mentally tough, focused golfer."*

Once you have your identity statement written down, repeat it several times before your round.

## **Section 12: The importance of eating and drinking right**

If you don't have sufficient energy, and keep it that way throughout your round, your performance will dip. Fuel your body for a good round. Be sure to drink plenty of water – it's proven that being dehydrated lowers performance and if you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Eat just enough to be neither hungry or full and keep it healthy (avoid starchy and sugary foods which will raise insulin and make you crash). Pack healthy snacks like fruit and nuts to maintain your energy levels (to stay focused) throughout your round.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

## Let's do a quick recap:

Choose to enjoy the round today and have an attitude of gratitude. Focus on the things you'll get out of the game irrespective of the score you'll shoot.

Set 3-4 process goals, things that are key to your success. Make achieving these the measure of success, not what score goes down on the scorecard.

Act like a champion. Your score has no reflection on you as a person, so detach you the player, from you the person. Those people who will judge you based on how you hit a little white ball around are ego golfers themselves.

Visualize playing a great round. Visualization has been scientifically proven to enhance performance.

Use your warm up time to warm up your visualization and feel, not work on your mechanics

Embrace nerves on the first tee – you'll play better with them, than without them.

Respond well to mistakes

Stick to your shot routine

Trust your swing – it's as good as it's going to get today

Pay attention to the time in between shots

Remind yourself about your positive attributes as a player with your "identity statement".

Eat and drink for a good performance

## **Follow this plan and the results will take care of themselves.**

Thanks for listening to this session. I hope you're feeling like you've already made a great start on setting the mood for 4 hours of fun, playing the game you love.

If you would like a one-on-one phone or skype session with me, to set goals for the season, learn how to practice more effectively and learn the mental skills needed to reach your potential, please email me at: [david@golfstateofmind.com](mailto:david@golfstateofmind.com)