

Stick to a Routine

As most of you have probably heard by now, last month I had the privilege to accompany one of my students, Taighan Chea, back to the Masters to compete in the Drive-Chip-Putt Finals held on April 1st. He was competing the youngest division, boys 7-9 years old.

After the Driving and Chipping skills competitions, Taighan was in 2nd place. The putting competition was held on the historic 18th hole at Augusta National. Walking to the staging area, Taighan knew was going to have to do something special to pull off the victory. We both watched studiously as the 8 boys before him hit their 30' and 15' putts, paying attention to the speed and break. We determined the 30' putt was really fast and broke slightly right to left. Speed was going to be key. On the 15' putt, we noticed something that everyone else missed. The initial break was right to left, but the putt slid left to right at the end. Now he had his reads.

After the 8th competitors distances were totaled. It was his turn. With cameras everywhere broadcasting live all around the world...his name was announced and on the jumbo screen his picture appeared. Talk about pressure for a 9 year old! Taighan calmly walked onto the green, took another look at the putt and then rolled it down to 1' 3". After the production crew gave him the go ahead he headed down to the 15' putt. This would determine it all.

As with the 30' putt, Taighan took another look at the read to confirm what we thought. He addressed the ball and made a beautiful stroke. As the ball approached the hole he crouched down with anticipation. Watching the ball slowly roll in the front right edge, he sprung up, threw his right hand into the air and gave what is now that historic fist pump. He had done it!



Since getting back I have been asked numerous media outlets, "What was the key to his success?" My answer has continually been that he stuck to his pre-shot routine. This was both a reminder of a couple of key elements to his putting stroke, but more importantly helped him focus and block out everything else going on around him.

If you watched the competition you would have noticed he first read the putt from behind the ball. Walking down towards the hole, he took a second look from half way on the low side. His final read was from behind the hole looking back up towards the ball. He walked back behind the ball. He took two practice strokes with his eyes on the hole. He addressed the ball. Took one last look at the hole. His eyes returned to the ball. Then he just made one of the most beautiful and free strokes I have ever seen him make!

So the next time you head out the course, spend some time working on a pre-shot routine. This will come in very handy the next time you find yourself feeling pressure on the putting green.

For help with learning how to build and "Stick to a Routine" or any other area of your game, please visit www.brianflugstad.com to book your next lesson!