

MAPLE LEAF JUNIOR GOLF TOUR

Article #2

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The 2012 Masters: Lesson # 1 **The Value of Emotional Balance**

Now that the first major of the year is over, I thought it might be helpful to take a look back and analyze exactly what happened and see how we can make sense of all of the great (and not so great) shots that this years' Masters provided us. All told, the Masters of 2012 may have provided more drama in the last three hours of the tournament than in the previous three days leading up to it. But that is the beauty of the Masters Golf tournament!

Just as the call of spring brings April showers and blooming azaleas, The Masters tournament is always set up for drama and as the golf historians have always said: the tournament starts on the back nine at Augusta!" Notwithstanding the events of Bubba Watson on the # 10 playoff hole, there were a number of spectacular events that were happening earlier in the round that set the tone for the entire tournament.

In particular, I thought it would be a good idea to re-capture and examine these events in a series of articles for the MLJGT and make sense of them and how you can utilize this information in your upcoming events on the Maple Leaf Junior Golf Tour. I hope this first lesson will help you to shoot lower scores and put you in the winner's circle!

One Great Shot – One Valuable Lesson!

The Shot: Louis Oosthuizen's Albatross on Hole #2

Louis Oosthuizen is a solid player from South Africa who was already a major champion before he found himself in contention for his first green jacket on Masters Sunday. Louis is a former British Open champion who sets himself apart from many of the world's elite players with his straight-forward play and no-nonsense consistency. However during the final round, Louis was witness to his own magic which may have unsettled lesser players. As a model of consistency and machine-like efficiency with his golfing motion, Louis was about to experience a personal high unmatched like no other in golfing history.

As Louis was stepping into his second shot at Augusta, which is a 545 yard, par 5 dogleg, he chose a full four iron to hit as his club of choice. As he struck his iron, he knew immediately that he hit it solidly. The ball traveled a distance of 225 yards in the air to the front of the green and the ball proceeded to roll another 20 yards back to the right pin position. In an instant, the ball found the hole and Louis made a wonderful double eagle that put him in the lead! This was one of the greatest and most astounding shots in Masters History and it was happening immediately in front of eventual champion, Bubba Watson. In fact, it was the first albatross (double eagle) that had ever been recorded on Masters Television coverage!

Smiling and appreciative of Louis's accomplishment, Bubba congratulated Louis and went on to do his own thing and play his shots into the green as well. However, in his interview after the tournament and playoff with Bubba, Louis commented that it took him about five or six holes to regain his emotional composure after holing the shot for his double eagle. He stated that he was "so high" from the crowd's roar and excitement that he could hardly keep his feet on the ground for the next series of shots!

Louis commented that it was hard for him to focus and maintain the appropriate balance and feel because he had so much adrenaline and other hormones dominating his system at that time. It wasn't until the eighth hole that he started to feel "normal" and his shot patterns and distances for his clubs started to fall within their appropriate range.

What we need to learn from Louis' story is that there will be many highs and lows in your golfing rounds. As a sport psychologist, I always address the issue of having emotional balance and composure when a golfer is playing his or her round. The need to stay emotionally stable and calm is vital. The reason is to conserve energy and to keep your thoughts logical and clear. When you become too high or too low, you tend to fall into waves of irregular thought patterns and your body systems are constantly in flux which makes an impact on one's feel and touch.

Often you hear of players who "lose their heads" due to frustration and anger, but you rarely hear about players losing their cool because of unbelievable great play or tremendous shots! It does happen and it is more common than you might suppose. For instance: How many times have you heard of golfers having a hole-in-one and then the rest of the round they simply get careless, lose focus and simply didn't care about their outcome because they had a hole-in-one?

This is an issue that needs to be addressed because when you are having a great round, many times players start to think that they are "playing over their heads" or they are getting uncomfortable because too much good stuff is happening to them. They simply can't stand too much of a good thing! They become too excited at their good play and start to wander with their thoughts and eventually lose their singular focus that created their success in the first place!

The key point that you can transfer to your game is that many times during a round of golf, you may be having a roller-coaster round where there are joyous emotional highs and frustrating emotional lows. The key is to be cool, calm and

collected. You will get hot during a round and sometimes you will cool down. The point is to adhere to your normal routine and not allow yourself to get caught up in the emotion of the moment!

I am not suggesting that you become a robot or become unemotional, but rather, enjoy the moment, appreciate the excitement and then realize that there will be many more shots to play as you move forward. Relish the moment, enjoy it and then move forward to the next shot renewed, refresh and invigorated to give the new shot the attention it deserves as well! If you can maintain your emotions in balance throughout the highs and lows of your golfing rounds will lead to more consistent play and many more top finishes!

A Final Word from Dr. Bob

Remember, one shot does not have to make or break your round....but it does mean that you can create some great momentum because of your wonderful execution. Another thing, if you see other players going hot or getting cold and complaining.....let them go! Do not allow yourself to get caught up in their emotional parade or pity party! If you can let go of what they may or may not be doing is a great way of getting totally involved with your game! Take a page from the Book of Bubba: Let go of others and what may be happening good or bad and get into your own stuff! By letting go of others and doing his own thing allowed Bubba Watson to put on the green jacket at the end of the day! You should do the same thing as well!

If you would like to consult with me or work with me individually, please contact me at my website address at www.drbobwinters.com. Or, contact me at drbob@drbobwinters.com or call me at my United States phone number of 407-340-7785. I look forward to your comments and your questions!

May you always play with emotional balance!

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