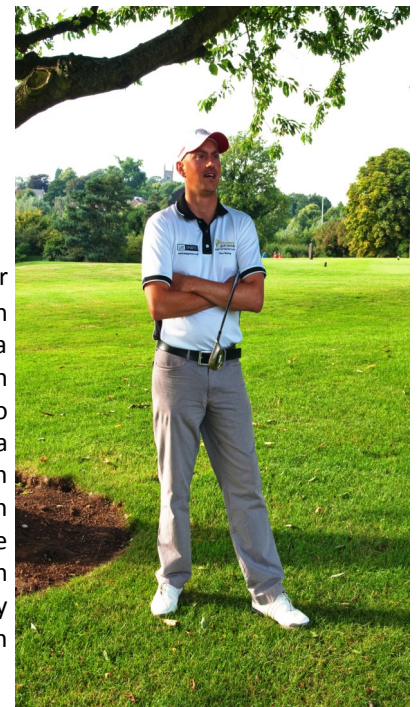


Increase your chances of success this winter...

- *Warm up and stay warm* - Leicestershire and England's all time greatest amateur and recent professional winner Gary Wolstonholme gave me great advice after a scratch league match against him during my amateur days. He said he warms up by completing a number of stretches at home before embarking on his journey to the golf course and as soon as he had stretched he would keep his sweater and even his coat on as long as he could to keep his muscles warmed and stretched. A good waterproof suit is a must, one that has a good breathable but waterproof lining like 'Gore tex' for example used in Sunice or Galvin Green and many others available on the market. This winter I am also using a compression top that is both thermal and supportive yet lets me swing the club freely. These tops have become extremely popular even on tour as players like Rory McIlroy are frequently seen wearing them (see www.skins.net for more information). Include your hands in this too by purchasing some good winter mittens and some hand warmers to place inside them, which will stop you losing the feel in your hands for those all important short shots.



- *crisp strikes on your pitch and chip shots* - We all know that trying to play a delicate shot upon sodden ground can result in a duff shot that ends up four feet in front of you. To avoid such catastrophes apply the same technology that prevents the club from digging into soft sand during a bunker shot. Purchase a wedge with an increased degree of bounce (how much the sharp bottom edge sits above the base of the club when resting on say 12 degrees, which upon applying your normal technique should stop the club from digging into the turf and catching the shot heavy (behind the ball). To enhance this further concentrate your visual focus on a dimple directly on top of the ball until well after you have struck the ball to decrease your chances of finishing with a face full of wet mud...Another great tip is when chipping from soft wet ground move the ball position an inch further back than normal then realign the clubface back square. This will help crisp up you strikes without sacrificing check spin which is crucial for consistent results and a positive execution.

Time to reflect - I use the winter to do three key things that I feel play an optimum part in improving my game and chances of success. Firstly, sit down and really think (or if you are more organised look at your seasons stats) about the strengths and weaknesses of your game over the past season or so and then prioritise a list of improvements to work on. For example if you feel you kept the ball in play and still never shaved as much off your handicap as you felt you should have, then maybe it's your putting. Not just practicing your putting, effectively practicing your faults, but actually seeking some professional advice on the fundamentals needed to become a good putter, whether technique or the mental approach. This now leads me into the second key element, which is seek regular professional coaching with your desired coach and more importantly stick too it and practice as I feel that this is the best way to sharpen the sword and become a better player. Thirdly, seek advice on your health and more specifically, your health that effects your golf, whether this is in the gym with a personal trainer working on strength training or stamina, getting your eyes checked by a qualified optician or simply learning what foods would be useful to eat to directly increase your concentration or general well being whilst on the course.

Dan Bailey PGA is available for coaching most days at either Lutterworth Golf Club's Indoor Video Academy or Discovery Golf Centre, Coalville. Please call 01455 557199, 07940962627 or email dan@leesports.co.uk to book. Gift Vouchers available.

