

MATCH PLAY LANGUAGE

Here are some golf terms used in match play that do not apply to stroke play.

Halved Hole: When each of the opponents have the same score on a hole, it is halved/tied. In order to win the match, it is necessary to win more holes than your opponent.

Dormie: A match is dormie when one player has won as many holes as there are holes left to play. The player who has the winning holes is said to have his opponent dormie. The opponent can at best only tie the match to go into sudden death.

All Square: In match play competition when both competitors have an equal number of holes that they have won, the match is tied, or "all square."

Up and Down: Scoring is kept by comparing the holes won by each player. If you have won 4 holes and your opponent has won 2, you are said to be "2-up" while your opponent is "2-down." The final score indicates the hole at which the match ended. In this was the case at the finish of the 17th hole, the match would be over and the score would be written "2-and-1."

Conceded Putt: A putt of any length can be deemed to have been made (conceded) by your opponent. When he tells you to "pick it up" he has conceded that you will make the putt. Your score is then as if you had putted the ball into the cup. This only applies to match play and is at the discretion of your opponent.

MATCH PLAY STRATEGY

Since match play is a player vs. player competition, the strategy is more complex than that for stroke play. In stroke play, the golfer plays against the golf course and a large field of other golfers. In match play, the golfer plays directly against one opponent who is watching and plotting against you. In addition to managing your game, you need to know what is going on in the match so you can plan your shots accordingly.

Strategy #1: Play the golf course

Play the golf course and not your opponent. If you focus on what your opponent is doing, you will create additional mental and emotional problems. For example, if your opponent hits a really good shot, you may counter by trying to hit your best shot. If your opponent misses a shot, you may not concentrate as well on your next shot. You need to be aware of the standing of the match, but play the golf course, not your opponent.

Around the green is the time to pay attention to what your opponent is doing. Depending on how things stand on the hole will determine whether you need to be aggressive and go for a chip/putt or be conservative and lay up.

Strategy #2: Play your own game

Determine what your personal scorecard is. Plan your strategy for each hole taking into account your strengths and weaknesses. If you are a bogey golfer, don't think you can pull off spectacular shots for a birdie because you can throw out the hole if it doesn't work.

Play your own game. Don't hit shots that you don't own. Play the percentage shots. If you are a fast player and are playing against a slow player, use the extra time to relax, slow down, and plan your shots.

Strategy #3: Get off to a solid start

Use your mental skills to get off to a fast start. “If I win the first hole, I can win them all,” is a good way to think. Don’t make excuses for a bad start by saying there are a lot of holes left to play. Stay positive. Playing consistently will put pressure on your opponent.

This is not a time to be socializing with your opponent. Keep all conversation superficial and to a minimum. Pay attention to your own game.

Strategy #4: Keep the ball in play

The best way to put pressure on your opponent is to keep the ball in play. “Drive for show” doesn’t apply here. If you are the short hitter off the tee you have the opportunity to hit on the green first and put pressure on your opponent. When you play “like a machine,” hitting fairways and greens, the pressure on your opponent is unrelenting.

Strategy #5: Be patient

Most matches are lost by making untimely mistakes. If you hit the ball O.B. off the tee, let your opponent hit before you tee it up again. Take the time to release your tension and think clearly about regaining your tempo. You might find that your opponent has also hit into trouble.

When you miss a shot and wind up in trouble, take the time to plot your strategy. This is no time to succumb to your emotions by hurrying to get out of the situation so you will feel better. Get the ball safely back into play instead of trying to make a spectacular “tin cup” shot to make up for your missed shot.

Strategy #6: Don’t give up

Remember Winston Churchill’s complete graduation speech at his former boarding school; “Boys... Never, never, never, give up!” Remember Tiger Woods performance when he came back from five down in 1996 to win his third consecutive U.S. Amateur title.

Showing your perseverance can wear down your opponent. If you show signs of giving up he will be encouraged to play even better.

Strategy #7: Increase your lead

When you are ahead in the match, it is human nature to become complacent. This is the time to continue doing what got you ahead. Play each remaining shot as if the match depended upon it. Plan to increase your lead.

Strategy #8: Maintain your arousal level

It is important to maintain your composure and not get too excited about winning holes, or dejected by losing holes. You will win and lose some, tie some, and your opponent will win and lose some. At the first tee, put on your “game face” (unchangeable expression) and maintain it throughout the match so your opponent will not know what your inner feelings are. Expect your opponent to hit his “best shot” every time so you won’t be surprised when he does.

Maintain your pace of play and preshot routine. Tightness and tension will cause you to change your routine and speed up. Leaving out steps in your routine is a signal that you have fallen out of your preprogrammed way of thinking and have allowed fear thoughts to enter your mind.

EMOTIONS

Match play can easily play with your emotions. If you take the lead you may become more relaxed. If you fall behind, you will most likely feel more pressure. A player who has the lead will probably play more conservatively. The player who is behind will probably play more aggressively believing he has “nothing to lose.”

Whether or not your opponent concedes your putt can play with your emotions. Decide that you have to make every putt. Be mentally prepared to hole out every putt. Don't expect your opponent to concede anything.

Deciding whether to concede a putt to your opponent can also toy with your emotions. Conceding putts under one-foot is considered sportsmanlike, but know that these can be missed. Be decisive about giving putts dependent upon the situation, not on whether your opponent gives them to you. Gamesmanship dictates that you give short putts early in the match so your opponent doesn't build up confidence. Then later in the match you don't concede the putt when it is crucial that your opponent make it.