

Tips

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Across the board, area professionals see their respective driving ranges full of all levels of golfers banging away at drivers and 7-irons. While the driving range business is good for the bottom line, these practice habits are not always the quickest way to start shooting lower scores.

“Practice your short game,” advised Zach Lampert, facility manager at Meadow Lakes Golf Course in Prineville. “For most players, half of their shots are chipping and putting, yet most people spend the majority of their practice time on the driving range, and very little time on the chipping and putting greens. At least half of practice should be around the greens.”

Lampert is not alone in this philosophy.

“Work on your short game as much as possible,” suggested Kevin Story, lead professional at Eagle Crest Resort. “Improving contact, speed, and distance-control are the fastest ways to start shooting lower scores.”

It is human nature for golfers to want to get better at what they’re already good at. Unfortunately, too many people neglect working on their weaknesses.

“Spend time learning where you’re losing strokes during your round,” said Howie Pruitt, director of golf at Aspen Lakes. “If you’re leaving putts short, go work on your speed. The same



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

PGA professional Tam Bronkey, left, conducts a lesson with Rolf Armstrong at Bend Golf Club.

goes for off the tee if you’re not finding fairways.”

Central Oregon professionals also acknowledge that playing well involves a monetary investment, as ensuring that you have the proper equipment is an essential part of the equation.

“Reach out to a PGA professional to get fit for a set of golf clubs,” said Brasada Ranch’s director of golf operations, Zach Swoffer. “All too often we see spouses or juniors using hand-me-down clubs that are too heavy and too stiff. There will be an upfront expense for a new set of clubs, but the enjoyment factor will be more than worth it with a set of clubs that

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are made just for you.”

Playing within yourself is another aspect of the game amateurs seem to struggle with.

“Don’t try the hero shot,” Pruitt added. “Sometimes taking a penalty stroke and limiting the damage is a better option than risking a compounded mistake.”

James Billings of Juniper Golf Course in Redmond

agreed that being honest about your capabilities is important.

“Take enough club to get the ball to the hole with a smooth swing,” Billings said. “Most golfers try to hit the ball too hard with not enough club.”

In the bigger scheme of things, the best thing golfers can do is ask for help.

“Take a lesson,” advised Jerrel Grow, director of golf at

Pronghorn. “Ask the instructor to keep it simple, maybe two things you can work on. And then go work on it. Most people don’t invest the time they need to get better.”

Above all, remember why you play golf.

“Never forget that golf is a game and games are meant to be fun,” said Taylor Giacomini, head professional at Widgi Creek in Bend.

In a game that’s endlessly complicated, there’s no shortage of advice to go around. If you’re going to get better and enjoy your time out on the links, it might be a good idea to seek the help of one of Central Oregon’s respected professionals.