

Green Reading & Alignment

General tips for reading the break of Bermuda grass greens (Southern U.S.)

1. Methods for finding high and low areas on the green
 - a. Use the plumb-bob method to help identify high and low area around your putt
 - i. Stand directly behind your ball in line with the hole
 - ii. With one eye closed, hold your putter by the grip at arm's length, letting the putter hang straight down
 - iii. Let the bottom of the putter shaft bisect the ball and the top of the shaft bisect the hole
 - iv. Which side of the shaft shows the higher ground?
 - b. Walk full circle around your putt
 - i. Don't always trust your read from behind the ball; look at all angles
 - ii. Stand halfway between your ball and the hole
 - iii. Look across the line of your putt at a 90 degree angle
 - iv. Do you feel like the ground you are on is going uphill or downhill?
 - v. The degree to which you feel uphill or downhill will determine how much break to play
 - c. Look for certain landmarks
 - i. If a green has water on one side (pond, creek, etc.) the green will generally slope toward the water
 - ii. If the course is built on the side of a mountain (i.e. Southern Arizona courses) the green will generally slope away from the mountain
 - iii. Locate any severe undulations in the green
2. Find the grain of the green
 - a. The blades of Bermuda grass don't grow straight up and down like the blades of Bent grass do.
 - b. The direction the grass is growing will influence the roll of the ball
 - c. On Bermuda greens the grass appears to be different color throughout the entire green.
 - i. If the grass looks "shiny" or a lighter color of green, the grass is growing away from you or you are down grain
 - ii. If the grass looks "duller" or a darker color of green, the grass is growing toward you or you are against the grain
 - iii. Also, look at the hole. On Bermuda greens the hole will be cut very sharp on one side of the hole and the other side will be brown or not cut as sharp. The grain will be growing toward the brown side or the side that is not cut as sharply.
 - iv. When putting down grain the putt will be faster and will break less as the ball loses speed
 - v. When putting against the grain the putt will be slower and will break more as it loses speed
 - d. Scenarios when putting across the grain
 - i. Green slopes right to left and the grain is growing from right to left = play for the putt to break more. The grain will increase the amount of break.

- ii. Green slopes right to left and the grain is growing from left to right = putt will still break from right to left but play less break. The grain will keep the ball from breaking as much.

3. Make every putt a straight putt

- a. With practice, reading greens will only take a matter of seconds
- b. Before playing your round, use a dark colored marker (Sharpie) and draw a straight line through the label of your golf ball to help with alignment.
 - i. For example: the label is not “Titleist” on the front of the ball, it is “ProV1” on the side of the ball
- c. Once you have determined whether your putt is uphill or downhill and how much it will break:
 - i. Pick an aiming point to the right or left side of the hole. How far to either side is determined by how much you think the putt will break
 - ii. Align the line you have drawn on the ball with the aiming point you have just chosen
 - iii. Stand behind the ball to check if the line is pointed in the right direction. If not, correct it now.
 - iv. Once you have aligned your ball correctly, address the ball by first matching the line on your putter to the line on the ball
 - v. Second, take your stance and align your feet parallel to the line on the ball
 - vi. Trust the way you have aligned your ball. Don’t readjust your alignment at the last second while standing over the ball.
 - vii. Now that you are aligned correctly hit the putt as though it is a straight putt and let gravity and the grain of the green do the rest.