



EXCLUSIVE BY  
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## VISUALISATION, ROUTINES & CONFIDENCE

**CONFIDENCE** is based around repeated successful experiences. For a golfer this means performing a particular type of shot many times. The more competitive the situation in which a shot is successfully executed, the more likely the player is to have confidence reinforced.

If you have learned a new shot or are improving your swing technique, how can you gain confidence with it before you have the experience of multiple successful experiences?

One way is to create mental representations of the shot or improvement. It is very important that this representation includes rich visual imagery, associated physical sensations and even sounds. Our brains recognise realistically imagined events in the same way as actual events.

If you are sitting in a chair imagining yourself playing golf (**pic 1 & inset**), your body will mimic the movement via micro-muscle movements. These will be invisible to the eye, but highlight the importance of quality, even in imagining what you would like to achieve. This is the reason why Sybervision training, which was popular around 20 years ago, worked so well for some people.

When you are on the course and take a practice swing, there will be times when you are unhappy with that practice and repeat it, so you feel better prepared to hit a good shot. In the same way, you can act as a movie director when performing imagery training.

To do this, imagine you are watching yourself performing a swing just as your coach has suggested you do. When you picture yourself swinging that way, are you entirely satisfied with what you see and feel? If not, then edit the image and replay it. Once you are satisfied with what you see, feel and hear then step into the image so that rather than watching yourself swinging the club, you are imagining you are actually swinging the club.

Before you hit any shot on the course you will create some representation of the shot you are facing, whether you are aware of it or not. It is far better to take advantage of that by controlling the quality of your images than leaving it to chance ... and don't we all hate being reminded of the position of a hazard or boundary fence by our opponents?

Incorporate this imagery into your game development ▶

PHOTOS: BRENDAN JAMES X TO





by doing it at home when you have some quiet time, include it as part of your practice session at the golf club and include it into your shot routines.

The more practice you have at doing this, the better you will become at creating powerful images and benefiting from them. It is a wonderful way of achieving perfect repetition without the physical strain.

## FOUR ROUTINES

Another way to gain confidence is to ensure you have solid routines which you have practiced so they become near automated. There are four routines.



### PRE-ROUND ROUTINE

This includes any preparation before the start of a round. Imagining you are playing a round (or parts of the round) the previous day. Use this information when you are making preparations for your next round.

- Select which clubs you require for the day, this may be dependant on the course and the weather conditions and is particularly important if you have multiple wedges, woods and utility clubs (pic 2).
- Mentally prepare for the upcoming round while going through a warm-up;



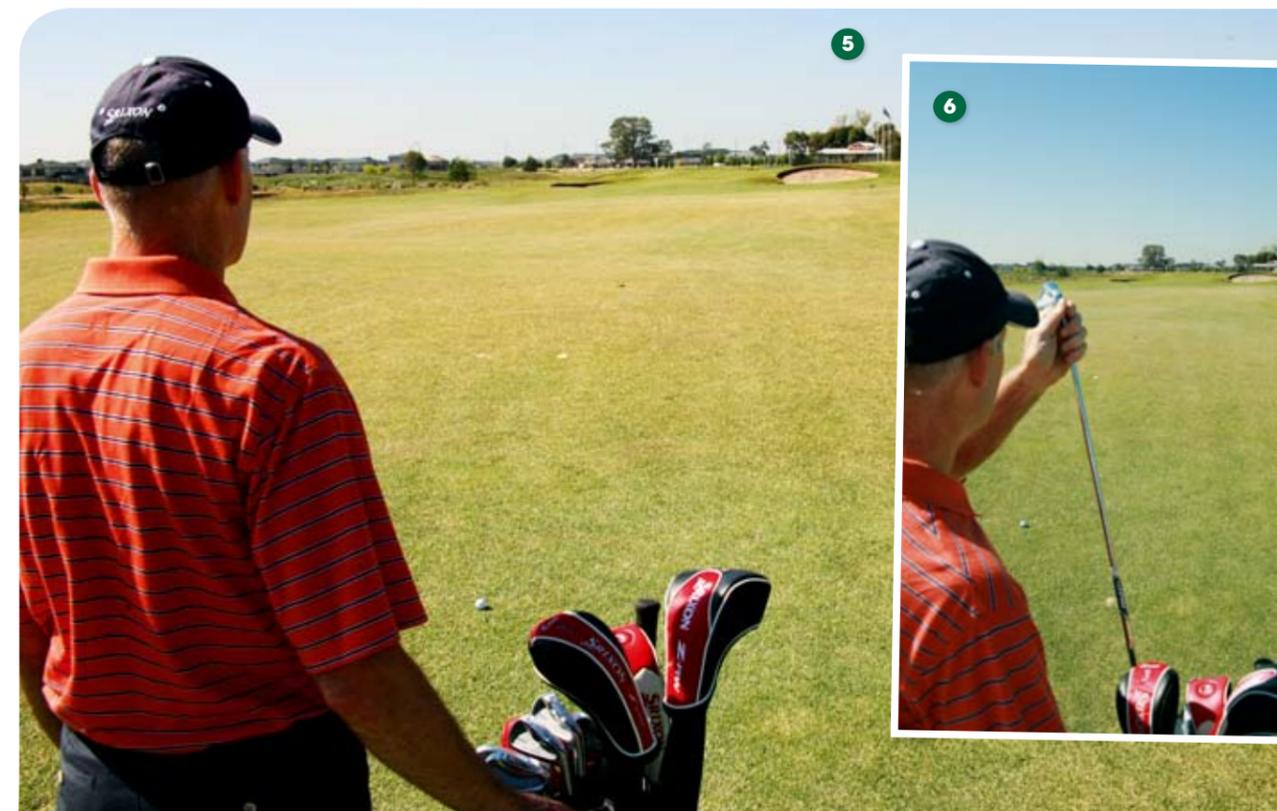
stretching (pics 3 & 4) and hitting some practice shots.

- Making sure you have any food and water you require.
- Ensuring movement, breathing, posture and thoughts are conducive to performing well.

### PRE-SHOT ROUTINE

This is your checklist time.

- Assess distance, lie, wind direction and strength, elevation of green, target position (on green or fairway), danger and safety zones (pic 5).
- The visual and feel aspects associated



with this process help to finalise shot and club choice.

- Select a club (pic 6) and make a clear decision on your shot prior to beginning your shot routine.

### SHOT ROUTINE

Once you have selected your club and are decided on how you want to execute a shot, you can begin your shot routine. This typically commences two or three paces behind the ball (pic 7).

- Hold a strong image and feelings of certainty that you are about to execute the shot as planned.
- Learn to walk to the ball and set-up the same way each time you play a shot. You will need to develop this on the practice fairway (pics 8 & 9).

### POST-SHOT ROUTINE

Your response to the shot you have just hit may well have an influence on how you approach the next shot. When you are playing well this usually isn't an issue, unless you are performing much better than your expectations.

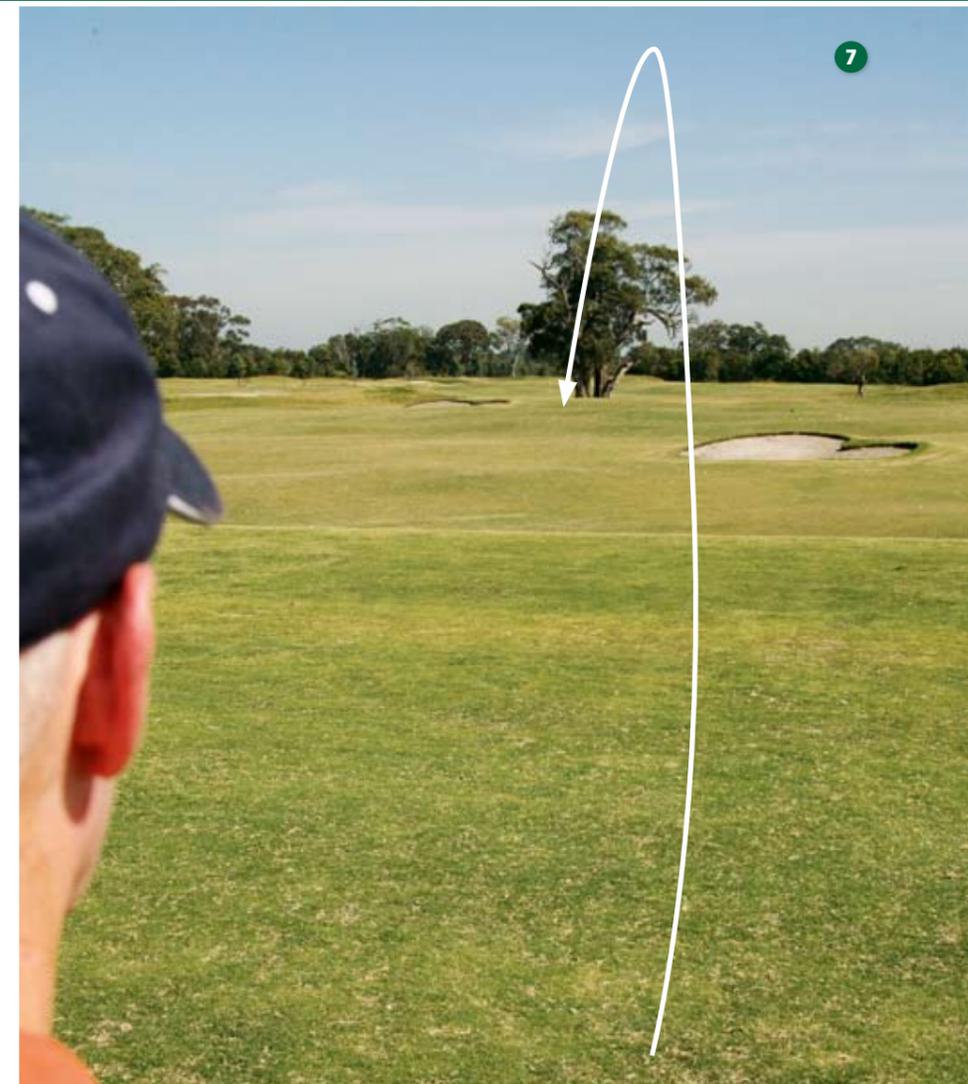
- If you hit a good shot, acknowledge the good shot. This can be done by saying to yourself, "That is just like me to hit a good shot," or you may choose to smile and anchor the success with a physical response such as clenching your fist lightly.
- If you hit a poor shot, instantly shut down any internal dialogue or critical inner voice. Consider what you would like to have done and mentally rehearse playing the shot you would have preferred.
- Whatever appropriate response you have made, by the time the club is in the bag, dismiss any further thought about the shot. This will give you the best opportunity of approaching the next shot in an ideal frame of mind.

Think of these routines as skills, and like all skills they need to be practised. This can be done mentally anywhere, on the practice fairway and on the course. It is best that you are used to using your routines prior to using them while playing in competition.



Peter Knight is one of only three PGA Master professionals in Australia and is the director of Elite National Development for Golf Australia.

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