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Junior Golf

“Stepping out of your Comfort Zone”

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As individuals, we’ve been brought up and have learned over time that feeling uncomfortable is bad. Society says, do what makes you most “comfortable”. Stay in your lane. Don’t try anything out of the ordinary. As golfers, we’ve experienced most of the same. “Hit fairways and greens and you’ll have a successful round.” However, think for a second ... How many of your great rounds, and I mean really great, did you hit 14 fairways and 18 greens? Most likely, the answer is none! At some point, you probably ended up in a greenside bunker after a poor approach and had to manage a miraculous up and down. You could have even found yourself behind a tree in the rough where you had to carve that beautiful cut 7-iron to the front of the green. The point is, golf is a game of imperfection and so is the recruiting process. No matter the day, we are going to have our mishits and misfires!

So, you have the choice... Will you use your imagination and play the miraculous shot on the 18th hole in order to save par and win the tournament or will you punch out to the



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fairway? This is the same question I ask my players during the recruiting process, will you be ordinary like everyone else or will you differentiate yourself from the pack?

So, what is our "comfort zone" exactly? Why is it that we tend to get comfortable with the familiar and into our routines, but when we're introduced to new and interesting things, the feelings of excitement fade so quickly? Finally, what benefit do we derive from breaking out of our comfort zone, and how do we do it? Answering those questions is a tall order, but it's not too hard to do. Let's get started.

Put simply, your comfort zone is a space where your activities and behaviors fit a routine and pattern that minimizes risk and stress. It provides a state of mental security. You benefit in obvious ways: regular happiness, low anxiety, and reduced stress.

However, I'm a big believer of what some psychologists call "optimal anxiety". Optimal anxiety is that feeling somewhere between totally over anxious and completely relaxed but ALWAYS out of your comfort zone! Optimal anxiety is that place where your mental productivity and performance reach their peak.

So how can you step out of you comfort zone in the recruiting process?

- **Do the research** – Google.com, GolfStat.com, YouTube, Niche.com. Not much more needs to be said, team bio's, scoring averages, practice facilities, upcoming tournament schedules, recruiting questionnaires and much more can be found online at your fingertips so make sure you're prepared for the process before it happens.
- **Make Dials** – instead of trying to make a difference behind a desk or a computer screen, pick up the phone and start to dial coaches. Just remember a 15-20% response rate is normal so set your expectations early and often.
- **Introduce Yourself** – don't try to do too much on the first call. A simple introductory call of 5-10min will do just fine. Go slow, be patient and tell the coach who you are.
- **Set the meeting agenda**- most often players just "go with the flow" of the visit, phone call or messaging conversation. I encourage you to thank them for their time, tell them



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you have some questions for them, ask them if they have any questions for you and set a purpose for the call or meeting.

- **Be Open, Honest and Vulnerable** – Too often, players get caught up in the moment and forget to be themselves. Understanding nerves and other thoughts can get in the way, make sure to do your best to give each coach your “real story” and not try to impress too much.
- **Ask the REAL Questions** – I see far too often, that players “drag out” the recruiting process and are left with little or few options. Most likely, this is because they were too afraid or timid to ask the real questions upfront. It’s not unreasonable to ask about roster spots, scholarship money, future recruits, or travel schedules. Stay curious!
- **Always leave with a clear purpose** – It’s important that at the end of the recruiting cycle with a particular coach, if you feel like you’ve turned over most of the stones and asked many of the right questions to always make sure there is a clear future. It’s far too common that I ask recruits, “Ok so what’s the next step with “so-and-so University?” and they come back with a resounding “I’m not sure”. Instead, ask the coach at the end of each unofficial visit, meeting, phone call or email, “What’s our next step?” or “Do you think it would make sense to talk again soon?”

What do you really gain when you're willing to step outside of your comfort zone? Use the above strategies when interacting with coaches and beginning to build relationships with them. Not only will you leave with a sense of personal achievement, but you will also make a unique impression on each and every coach that you come across. So, wave your comfort zone bye-bye and begin today on a journey to better!

Best of luck on the recruiting trail!

Mike Smith is the Founder & CEO of ForeCollegeGolf and specializes in assisting junior golfers & their families through the college recruiting process. Email him @ mike.smith@forecollegegolf.com

