

# Strategic Steps

LEARN HOW PLANNING YOUR STRATEGY AHEAD OF TIME CAN IMPROVE YOUR GOLF GAME, WITH TIPS FROM NEWPORT BEACH COUNTRY CLUB'S DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION, CARLO BORUNDA.

BY ASHLEY RYAN

With the many mental aspects of golf, there's no doubt that a solid strategy is essential. From choosing the correct clubs to hitting the proper distance — practice makes perfect in determining what your game plan will be while out on the course. According to Carlo Borunda, Newport Beach Country Club's director of instruction, coming up with a strategy ahead of time is one of the best ways to be prepared on the course. "A golf course strategy can keep you from making bad decisions at critical moments during the round," he explains. "In a round of golf, you are faced with tough situations where you are challenged by the way the golf course is playing or by an errant shot. If you have a strategy, you will be able to face these situations with a better attitude and clearer mindset, which will undoubtedly help you play better."

Here, Borunda reveals how to create your own strategic plan, which things to consider and how post-round reflection can help you change things up for the future.

**Bay Window:** Why is it important to have a strategy before heading out on the course?

**Carlo Borunda:** Your strategy helps you prepare yourself as you practice and warm up prior to your round.

**BW:** Is golf course strategy something that should be planned out ahead of time?

**CB:** Yes. As an example, I like to tee off with my fairway woods or hybrids on the shorter holes and shape my shots

to limit where my golf ball may miss. ... I heavily rely on the strength of my wedges and putter. I may not always post sub-par rounds, but I usually shoot even par because of this type of play.



Strategic Play: Note where the trouble is located (red out-lines) and play to the safer locations on or around the green.



**BW:** What tips do you have for someone who is trying to create a new strategy?

**CB:** When you can, try to play with some better golfers. ... Ask plenty of questions on how they play specific holes that you might struggle playing yourself. This was instrumental in my becoming a consistent golfer.

**BW:** What things are most important to consider when it comes to strategy?

**CB:** Understand your strengths and plan your strategy in a way that allows you to take advantage of those skills. You should also know how well you are swinging the club and controlling your ball flight as you warm up. This can help you decide which clubs you should use during your round. For instance, this may help you decide how often you will use your driver for the day.

**BW:** How does your pre-shot routine fit in with golf course strategy?

**CB:** Your pre-shot routine should include strategic planning. Your club selection, aim and the shape of your ball flight are all ways of improving how you play each hole.

**BW:** How can golfers minimize stress on the course by incorporating a strategy ahead

of time?

**CB:** Develop a plan on how you want to play the different types of holes. I like to play aggressive on the par 5s and shorter distance holes where I can use my wedge to attack the pin locations. I'll play conservative on the par 3s and the more challenging holes. I also take a look at where the bunkers or water are located [see photos] and play to the safer locations of the green so I can minimize extra strokes.

**BW:** Are there any specifics golfers should consider when coming up with a strategy ahead of time?

**CB:** How well you swing certain golf clubs can play a big role in how you play the golf course. A great wedge player can take chances from the tee box as they know they can get the golf ball near the hole with their short game technique, in case of an errant drive. The longer hitters can take advantage of the par 5s and longer par 4 holes as they will be able to use scoring irons for their approach shots.

**BW:** Is it the same every game or will it change depending on the circumstances of the course?

**CB:** The type of trouble the golf course presents or weather conditions can have a big impact on how you play certain holes. You may want to lay up on the more challenging holes where penalties are lurking. If the wind is with you, you may want to take advantage of the wind and make an aggressive play from the tee box.

**BW:** Should golfers reflect after a game, then rework and revise their strategy depending on how it went?

**CB:** Absolutely. Your post-round analysis can help you with your practice program. You may need to put extra work in specific areas of your game before your next round of golf. If you happen to play better than expected, you need to take note of all of the reasons why so you can use this newfound strategy for future games.

**BW:** Do you have any tips for how to handle it and keep your head in the game when your pre-developed strategy doesn't pan out?

**CB:** In-game adjustments are very common. You may need to take more golf clubs for better contact with the ball. Make sure you adjust your alignment so you are aiming where you won't be hurt by your dominant miss (slice or hook).