



SUUNTO ON

How Not to Rely on Luck

**WHEN LOWERING
YOUR HANDICAP.**

GOLF GUIDE

GOLF IS HARD. It takes a lot of time and effort. You want to lower your handicap and when you get it down, there comes a day when you wish it could be a little higher. It is a game you sometimes hate to love. Well, you can make it a bit easier. Knowing exactly what to practice and knowing exactly what to do on the course makes golf somewhat less frustrating.

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GOLF STATISTICS

The best golfers are usually professionals. And the top players battle for victories in the most important tournaments of the game. That is where the biggest purses in pro golf also exist.

The Official Money List is a traditional way to follow how the players perform on professional tours. The winner of the Money List at the end of a season is highly respected when the best players are being compared.

For a professional golfer to be able to win the Money List or Major Championship every part of the game has to be on the top level. You have to be ranked highly in many categories of the game's crucial statistics.

Every swing in every tournament on top pro tours is put into statistics. This is how we can **analyze the game** of the players and how they rank among peers.

For an amateur golfer, one of the best ways to follow the improvement of his own performance is the handicap system. But when lowering your handicap, it is essential to learn more about your game. Amateur golfers do not necessarily have to keep as good a count of their every shot as pros, but learning more about stats and keeping score on some of the most important statistical categories will improve your game effectively. By taking a close look at stats we can find the highs and lows of our game. In this guide we introduce you to golf statistics and how to understand them when improving your own game.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Official World Golf Ranking, which is endorsed by the four Major Championships and the five professional tours which make up the International Federation of PGA Tours, is issued every Monday, following completion of the previous week's tournaments from around the world. This statistic is the average number of points earned per event in the last 104 weeks. These points are awarded based upon finish position as well as the overall performance level of competitors. The points are initially worth double their original value and decline gradually over this two-year period. There are 8 13-week periods and points decline by .25x their value each period.

SCORING

The score of your golf round is the most important number in your game. The one who scores the lowest is the winner. That is very simple, but how your total score is actually made up is more complicated. Did you score well because of your driving off the tee or your performance on the putting green?

You can divide your round of golf into **games-inside-the-game**. By taking a closer look at each category of the game you can easily notice which part of your golf needs to be improved for better results. By analyzing statistics we can also notice the big gap between amateur golfers and professionals.

Pros hit their **drives** longer and more accurately. Off the tee, amateurs playing with a high handicap often give pros 100 yards advantage. And tour professionals usually hit the fairways when even advanced amateur golfers hit approximately every third fairway.

The difference between amateurs and pros gets even wider when **approaching** the green. When the best players in the world hit three out of four greens, for an amateur golfer one successful approach shot in every four is a good ratio.

Up-and-down — the percentage of times a player misses the green in regulation but still makes par or better — is a crucial factor in scoring. On professional tours, the average up-and-down percentage of the top players is around 60, when high handicappers usually manage up-and-down in only one out of five attempts.

The closer to a hole we get, the bigger the margins between pros and amateurs are. **Putting** is often considered as a game of its own. And the putting surface is the place where high handicap players give 10–20 strokes to the world's best in every round.

You can also examine your game after a round of golf by taking a closer look how you did on par-3s, par-4s and par-5s.

Next time you tee off, remember to keep better score of your games-inside-the-game. This is how you will be on the way to being a more improved golfer.



FACT

Stroke Average is defined as the average number of strokes per round played. Birdie Average is the average number of birdies made per rounds played.



DID YOU KNOW?

On the PGA Tour, Scoring Average is a weighted average which takes the stroke average of the field into account. The adjustment is computed by determining the stroke average of all competitors for each round played.

The All Around statistic is computed by totaling a player's rank in each of the following statistics: Scoring Leaders, Putting Leaders, Eagle Leaders, Birdie Leaders, Sand Saves, Greens in Regulation, Driving Distance and Driving Accuracy.



DID YOU KNOW?

The statistic category Bounce Back measures the percentage of time that a player is over par on a hole and then is under par on the following hole. John Daly led this category in 2004 with 32.6. After making a bogey or worse 233 times he was capable of bouncing back 76 times to go under par next hole.

DRIVING

“You drive for show but you putt for dough.” This famous old line is still true. But when you take a good look at stats on professional tours, it is fair to say that you also drive for money. Today, pros hit very far and the stats also tell us how important it is to have distance and accuracy off the tee to be a successful player.

Debate about driving distance versus hitting fairways is common and never ending.

The best golfers outperformed the others by the widest margins on par-5s. Par-5s need distances off the tee and for a long hitter, they are played as par-4s. Birdie average is heavily weighted toward par-5s. 50 percent of the birdies on the PGA Tour are made on par-5s, even though they make up just 20 percent of the holes.

Driving distance is one of the key factors that separate amateur golf from pro tours. Long drives are important in an amateur's game and when you put down your distances off the tee, be honest with yourself. It is the only way to make statistics work for you.



TIP

For amateur golfers, more emphasis should be put on the accuracy of drives. Next time you head for the first tee, remember to keep score of every fairway you hit. Hitting the green is much easier from the fairway than from the deep rough.



FACT

FAIRWAYS IN REGULATION — FIR Fairways In Regulation, or driving accuracy, is the percentage of times a player is able to hit the fairway with his tee shot. It can also be defined as the average number of fairways per round. FIR is not used in par-3s.

Driving Distance is the average number of yards per measured drive. On professional tours these drives are measured on two holes per round. Two holes that face in opposite directions, to counteract the effects of wind, are selected. Drives are measured to the point they come to rest regardless of whether they are on the fairway or not.

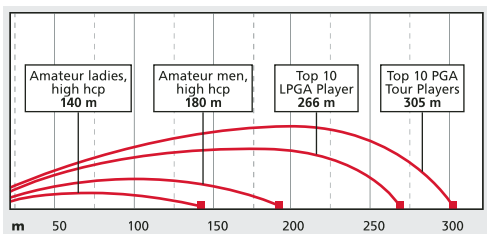


TIP

Next time on a golf course, ask your playing partner for a stats challenge. Give one point for every fairway hit, green in regulation, sand save and up-and-down. At the end, the one with more points usually ends up with the better score.



STATISTICS Driving Distances



GREENS IN REGULATION — GIR

One of the most widely used golf statistics is GIR — Greens In Regulation. On professional tours or at your local golf club, many players rate their rounds according to GIR.

Greens In Regulation measures very effectively your play from tee to green and sums up a long game, excluding putting.

To achieve a green in regulation, the ball must be on the putting green in the expected number of strokes in relation to par. The par for a hole always includes two putts, so to achieve a GIR on a par-4, you must reach the green with your second shot.

GIR means that the ball must be on the putting surface. If it is a couple inches off in the fringe of the green and you are able to putt it, it does not count.



FACT

GREENS IN REGULATION is defined as both the average number of greens per round and as a percentage of greens hit. A Green In Regulation is defined as the number of shots that a player should take to reach the putting surface on any given hole, being one for par-3s, two for par-4s and three for par-5s.

A green is considered hit in regulation if any part of the ball is touching the putting surface and the number of strokes taken is 2 or more less than par.



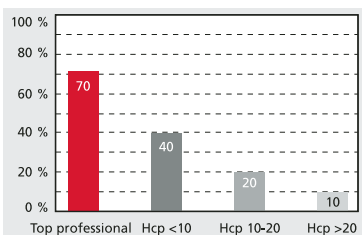
DID YOU KNOW?

The Ball Striking statistic is computed by totaling a player's rank in the Total Driving and Greens In Regulation ranking.

Joe Durant who led Ball Striking Statistics on PGA Tour 2004 was ranked 5th on total driving and first on Greens In Regulation.



STATISTICS GIR



DID YOU KNOW?

Annika Sörenstam led the GIR category on the LPGA Tour 2004 with a 78,8 percentage. She would also have been the first one with that number on the men's PGA Tour.

PUTTING

The putting green is the place where champions are made. Putting is the most important statistic because about 40 percent of your total score is made on greens. At the same time, it is probably the easiest place for a high handicapper to take off shots from their scorecard. Everyone three-putts sometimes and nothing will add to your score faster than missed putts.

There are many factors involved in putting — the condition and speed of the green, the line of a putt, estimating the breaks and even the direction in which the grass is growing.

For an amateur player, keeping count of his putts is the most common way to keep statistics. Next time you may take a step further and analyze your putting game more closely.

On the PGA Tour, there are 26 putting categories but experts agree that the most reliable is the putting average, which measures putts taken on greens hit in regulation.

But remember: putting statistics do not tell everything. Real champions can make crucial putts when it really counts, on final greens on Sunday afternoons.



FACTS

PUTTS PER GIR is defined as the average number of putts taken per greens in regulation. If a golfer hits 12 greens out of 18 and takes 21 putts on those 12 greens his Putts per GIR is 1,75 (21 putts divided by 12 greens).

AVERAGE PUTTS is defined as the average number of putts taken per round. The use of the putter from off the green does not constitute a putt as far as the statistics are concerned.

PUTTING AVERAGE in the PGA Tour category of Putting Leaders, measures putting performance on those holes where the green is hit in regulation (GIR). For these holes, the total putts are divided by the total holes played. By using GIR we are able to eliminate the effects of chipping close and one putting in the statistics.



DID YOU KNOW?

On the 2004 PGA Tour, Brad Faxon went 362 holes without a three-putt.

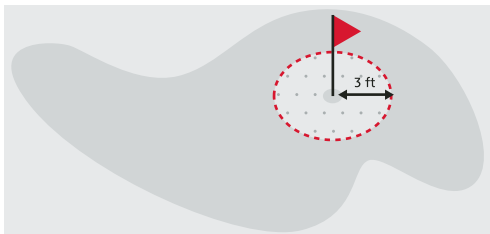


TIP

Most three-putts occur from long distances, and to avoid three putting you have to judge the distance correctly. Concentrate more on getting the distance right than keeping the line.

Even pros use a simple drill to practice their putting game. Visualize a three-foot circle around the hole and try to get your putts inside the circle. If you are successful you will have a make-able, easy second putt.

This simple tip will help you avoid three-putting and get your putting statistics improving. Use this circle drill from long distances of up to 60–70 feet.



UP-AND-DOWN

To get up-and-down from a tough position is always rewarding for an amateur player — and even for the best players in the world. Up-and-down means that you can get the ball into the hole in two strokes from outside the green.

If your second shot on a par-4 is just short of the green and you make a chip and a putt for a par, you've made up-and-down. In statistics, this category measures up-and-downs as a percentage of the times the player misses the green in regulation, but still makes par or better. It excludes sand saves — to get up-and-down from green side bunkers — which is its own category in golf statistics.

When we take a closer look at the best players' statistics, it is easy to see a correlation between up-and-down and the money list leaders. The best of the best are capable of getting up-and-down more often than the others.

For amateur golfers, it is very important to keep score of up-and-downs. If you learn that it is difficult to save par from outside the green, you have to work more on your short game to improve your handicap.



FACT

UP-AND-DOWN is the percentage of times that a player misses the green in regulation, but still makes par or better. Up-and-down is also known as scrambling.



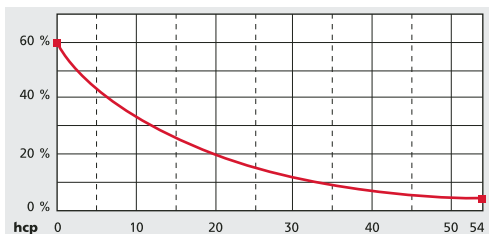
REMEMBER

How to get up-and-down when you have missed the green is one of the most difficult decisions to make. There are so many options with the club and shot selection. You can use almost any club in your bag to make a successful shot. At the same time, many techniques have been used to make perfect results. You may even have seen pros hitting wood from the fringe of the green with a putting grip and motion.

To be known as a player capable of making up-and-downs, your main focus on choosing the club is to keep things simple and make a commitment to your decision. Do not hesitate to putt outside the green if this is the high percentage shot to get the ball close to the pin.



STATISTICS **Up-and-down**



SAND SAVES

Many high-handicap golfers admit that the shot they fear most is the bunker shot, and especially the green side bunker shot. This fact is somewhat surprising because this is the one shot in golf where you do not actually make a ball contact.

The main problem in bunker play is that many golfers do not understand how the club and sand should interact. They do not know the basic principles of the construction of the sand wedge, and it is difficult to understand the goals of this shot.

For a professional player, a bunker shot is usually one of the easiest in the game of golf. If you can turn a dreadful bunker shot in to a sand save, you are on the way to becoming a more improved golfer.

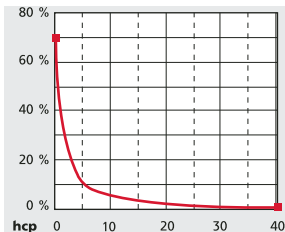


FACT Sand Saves

Sand saves is the percentage of times a player was able to get 'up-and-down' once in a green side bunker. Defined as a percentage of times that a player takes two strokes or less to complete a hole after visiting a green side bunker, regardless of the score on that hole.



STATISTICS Sand Saves





REMEMBER

The biggest mistake amateurs often make is failing to finish their swing. They hit into the sand properly, but then they stop their swing, and the ball stays short. The key to getting out of the bunker, onto the green and closer to the pin is to make a full follow-through. Don't worry about hitting the ball too far. If you've hit far enough behind it, the sand will cushion the shot. The only time you should shorten your finish is if the ball is buried or you have little green to work with.

If you practice bunker play, you make more sand saves but you also eliminate three-putting the greens.

STROKE PLAY – SCRATCH AND HANDICAP

In a modern golf we are used to follow stroke play competitions in television because a major part of golf tournaments uses this scoring system. In the early days of golf things were different; a format called match play was much more widely used.

Stroke play is a round of golf in which the score is kept by counting strokes. A stroke is a swing a golfer takes at the ball and counts toward total score. The object is to use as few strokes as possible in playing all holes of a tournament and in the end the one with lowest total score wins.

Stroke play is called scratch play when competitions are played without handicap.

If players are tied after the final hole in scratch play competition, a play-off between all leading players is organized. Usually a one hole playoff with sudden death format is played when earlier it was common to play a full 18 hole playoff round to determine the winner.

A golf handicap is a fine system created that player from all levels can compete against each other on equal terms. Handicap is a numerical measure of an amateur player's playing ability which can be used to calculate a net score from the actual number of strokes used. Handicaps are administrated by golf clubs and golf associations but they are not used in professional golf. In handicap stroke play playoff is seldom used. The winner is usually determined by final 9, 6 or 3 holes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Although a one hole playoff is played in almost every professional tournament, things are different in Majors. The Masters Tournament has a one hole playoff, but The US Open uses an 18 hole playoff system. In The British Open a 4 hole playoff is used and the winner of The PGA Championship is determined by a 3 hole playoff.

MATCH PLAY

Match play is second most popular form of competition in golf and there are many different ways to play match play. The main principle of match play is win more individual holes than your opponent.

The player with the fewest strokes on an individual hole wins that hole; the player winning the most holes wins the match. The stroke total for 18 holes simply doesn't matter in match play.

Match play is a format of play where each hole is won, lost or halved. In match play the unit of scoring is the hole and on each hole you can gain one point. The golfer with the lowest score on a given hole receives one point. If both golfers have same score, the hole is halved.

Stroke play is more a player versus the course approach, when match play is directly player against player. There is only one opponent you must win, and that's the opponent you're facing in the match you're playing.

Nowadays in men's professional golf there are only few match play tournaments for individual pros. The biannual Ryder Cup, where teams from USA and Europe compete against each other, is the most famous match play competition in golf.

SCORING IN MATCH PLAY

At the start of a match, the score is tied or in other words, all square. The score is then recorded in terms of one player's lead over another player.

For example, if player X has won 5 holes, and player Y has won 2 hole and they have halved 4 holes, player X is leading 3 up.

A winning score of 2/1 means that the winner won the match by 2 holes with 1 to play. The highest score possible is 10/8.

If player X is leading for example 4 up and there are four holes remaining, it is called dormie. That means player X needs only one hole halved to win the whole match.

The final score of a match play event can be listed in different ways. 1/0 or 2/0 means that all holes were played and that the winner was leading by either one or two holes.

For example 3/2 means that 16 holes were played and the winner was leading by three holes. The match was over because the winner was ahead by more holes than the number of holes left to play.

And if the match is tied after 18 holes players continue to play more holes to determine the winner. 20 holes after winner's name means that game was over after two extra holes.



DID YOU KNOW?

In two famous amateur titles, The US Amateur and British Amateur Championship, match play format is used to determine the winner. After two rounds of stroke play 64 players face the challenge of match play. All elimination matches are 18 holes except for the final, which are 36 holes.

The PGA Championship, one of the four major championships, changed from a match play format to a stroke play format in 1958.



TIP

In match play choosing a strategy has a significant role. Because of the different scoring system golfer can use different strategy on different holes. For example, if your opponent hits a bad tee shot, you can play more conservatively because you have a good chance to win the hole with a better score. In some situations you can also take more risk when calling your shots. It does not count on how many stokes you lose if the miss you bold effort.

STABLEFORD

Stableford scoring system is a stroke play format in which the player with highest total points wins. In Stableford final score is not determined by strokes taken but with points earned for your scores on each individual hole.

Stableford is a form of stroke play and, with only few exceptions, the rules for stroke play apply. Stableford system is much more popular in amateur club tournaments in Europe than in the US. But even in professional golf, on both PGA Tour and the European Tour, a modified stableford tournament is played.

STABLEFORD SCORING

When amateur golfers play Stableford competition, a handicap system is usually used to count up the points. The most often used way to calculate Stableford points is that a scratch golfer gets one point from bogey, two points from par and three from birdie and so on. If the score is double bogey or worse he receives zero points.

A golfer with 18 handicap will score one point from every double bogey he makes, two points from bogey and three from par. Stableford scoring is easier to understand if you think that you get two points from your net par. For example playing with handicap of 36 gives you two points from every double bogey (net par) you score. This scoring format is also good for the pace of the play. If you can not get any points you simply pick up the ball on that hole.



DID YOU KNOW?

The father of Stableford points system is Dr Frank Stableford (1870–1959) and it was first used on May 16, 1932 at Wallasey Golf Club, Cheshire.



STATISTICS **Stableford Points per Hole**

| SCORE | COURSE HCP | | |
|--------------|------------|----|----|
| | 0 | 18 | 36 |
| Albatross | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Eagle | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Birdie | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Par | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Bogey | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Double Bogey | - | 1 | 2 |
| Triple Bogey | - | - | 1 |

TEMPO AND RHYTHM OF THE SWING

The tempo and rhythm of the swing are the big secrets in the golf swing. Golfer's swing is usually natural and it is said to reflect individual's personality. The tempo and rhythm vary with each individual and range from fast to medium to slow or anything in between.

Because it is very difficult to see tempo of the swing with naked eye very few teaching pros analyze this part of swing. It is also very hard to train your tempo and rhythm if you do not have an instruction device for practice. Two swings that look very different may be very similar in tempo when you analyze them in details.

Good tempo and rhythm are the most notable parts of swing that separates good pro from high handicap amateur. Good players have the ability to swing every club at a **consistent tempo** and with great balance. After a tournament you may have heard when a touring pro tells after a great round of golf that his rhythm was exceptional that day.

Tempo and rhythm are linked with balance. For example when two good players seem to have different tempo in their swing, a great balance throughout the swing from start to the end of the follow through in both cases is exceptional. A good tempo and rhythm is also like glue that keeps movements of body and club fluently in balance.

Although tempo of the swing varies from every individual, in most cases golfer is told to slow down his swing. When you hurry your swing there is more room for error. Player may have problems in his tempo related from mental stress and tension may result from too hard grip pressure or bad stance.

When you realize that your tempo and rhythm are the most significant factors of your game your consistency will improve considerably.



DEFINITIONS

TEMPO indicates the duration in seconds of the swing, measured from club take-off to ball contact

RHYTHM indicates the duration of the downswing compared to tempo. For example, if the rhythm is 25 %, the downswing will take one fourth of the whole swing.



TIPS

SLOW MOTION DRILL

One of the most effective ways to analyze how you can maintain a good swing tempo is to make slow motion swings. Take you club back and all the way to the top of the backswing very slowly. Then bring back your club to the impact and finish your swing in slow motion style. If you are not able to repeat your swing in slow motion you have to pay more attention to your balance and swing tempo. This is a very good tip especially for fast swingers.

DIFFERENT CLUB — FULL SWING — SAME TEMPO

You can see often amateurs hitting their drivers faster than short irons. Different swing tempo results off balanced and inaccurate swings. To achieve more consistency in swing tempo and rhythm, you have to focus on keeping same tempo in each full swing regardless of the club you hit. From driver to pitching wedge the same swing tempo will lead to more consistency and result more accurate shots and lower scores.

Next time on driving range concentrate on swinging different clubs with similar tempo. Practice also your balance with hitting different clubs with you feet close to each other. This forces you maintain good tempo and rhythm.

LENGTH AND SPEED

Tempo and rhythm of a golf swing is very individual. This applies also to length of your back swing and club head speed. Some golfers are naturally more flexible and can create more speed to club face with fast and correctly timing hands. Golfers are also built differently and bigger and stronger body also affects to swing and speed of a club. With training you can work on your swing and make also alternations to your swing plane and backswing.

For achieving more on golf course it is important to find **consistency** to your game. With keeping your tempo and backswing similar you end up having a smooth swing which is easier to repeat time after time.

When you feel more confident with your good rhythm and balanced swing you will gain automatically more club head speed to your swing. Faster club head speed combined with correct shaft and correct angle on impact will result more accurate and longer shots.

Club head speed is controlled by a number of factors. The most important ones to consider are the speed and width of the body rotation, the speed of the arms and the speed and timing of the hand release.

When golfer has a balanced swing the club head speed will increase to the moment it will hit the ball. If the tempo of the swing will remain same the club head speed will increase when you change from an iron to a driver.

The club head of driver moves faster because it follows the larger circle during the same time than with iron. This speed of the club head varies a lot (130 mph to 60 mph) between pro golfers and inexperienced beginners.

Ball distance is a direct result of club head speed and proper club face contact. The most important ingredients in good club face contact are swing plane, face angle and angle of attack.



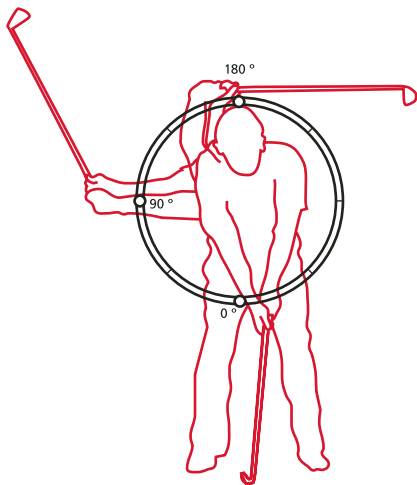
DEFINITIONS

LENGTH indicates the length of your swing plane in degrees.

SPEED indicates the calculated club head speed (either as kilometers or miles per hour)



Length of Swing in Degrees



TRAINING EFFECT

Golf is a game of confidence and trust. Mental aspect of the game plays a major part when champions are playing for the victory or when you challenge your friend in casual round of golf. You can work on building your confidence with different mental drills and practices. But when you are alone on the course there is no one else you can trust.

The most effective way to increase your confidence is to practice more and better than others. When you know that you have trained hard you can truly believe in your swing on a golf course and play on your best level.

Practicing and knowing that you have trained right way gives you enormous amount of confidence. If you have a good mentor or golf pro to help your swing and mental game you can achieve new levels in your game.

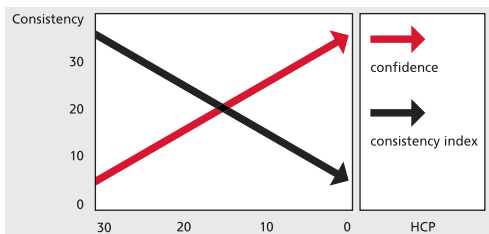
You can use also a golf training device to gain more **consistency** on your swing. That will provide more confidence on your game and lower your scores eventually. You need to trust that tempo on your swing is right when you are on the course and sometime best way to get that confidence is to analyze your swing with numbers given by instruction device. They will never cheat.

The more consistency you get to your swing the more **confident** you feel on the golf course. You are on a way to become better player and you will enjoy the game of golf even more.



DEFINITIONS

CONSISTENCY illustrates your ability to repeat your swing measured with tempo, rhythm, length of the backswing and club head speed. Consistency can be evaluated with index. The smaller the index number is, the greater your consistency is.



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