

Divide and Conquer

Learn how to stay in the moment by playing a round of three-hole matches – against yourself.

By Lynn Marriott and Pia Nilsson
Golf for Women



It's easy to project ahead when you're playing golf. You string a few good holes together, and suddenly you're thinking, "If I can par the last three holes, I'll shoot my best round ever." What happens next? You lose your concentration, make double bogey or worse, and fall apart.

One way to learn to focus is to organize your round as a series of six three-hole matches. Write down your personal par for each hole according to your handicap (e.g., if you're an 18-handicapper, you get one extra stroke per hole), then try to beat or match your score. Your goal is to win or tie each match. For instance, if your personal par for three holes is 5, 5 and 4, and you score 5, 4 and 5 (see scorecard), you win the match 1-up.

This game forces you to treat each shot as if it's the most important one of the day, whether it's your drive or your second attempt at pitching the ball onto the green. It stops you from thinking ahead or rewinding the past, and helps recharge your batteries, too. If you get off to a horrid start, you can put it behind you, because after the third hole, the match is over and you start anew.

Try this when you play. Who knows, you might shoot your lowest score ever without even being aware of it.