This is where the rubber meets the road, as they say. This is truly where it all happens in golf, so you had better hop in and fasten your seatbelt, because we are going on a very bumpy ride. By the way, if you are already breaking 100 you will still get some good ideas from this section. The same goes for those of you who are not breaking 100, yet, you will get some good ideas out of the following sections.

I only say it is going to be a bumpy ride because most of you want to start shooting lower scores, but you aren’t willing to do what it really takes to do it. The thing that gets me about it all is that this is not only the most productive part of the game, but it is without a doubt THE MOST FUN part of the game of golf, and most golfers just do not see it.

In order to begin breaking through to your next level you are going to have to start doing a few things you have not been doing in the past. If you will take a moment to think about that one you will have to come to the same conclusion.

It was Albert Einstein who once said his definition of insanity was “continuing to do the same old thing and expecting a different result or outcome.” Thank you for letting me paraphrase it, and put it into my own language. Yet, it is the truth.
You cannot even begin to believe or understand how many golfers come to me expecting me to help them see a change in their golf game, but they really don’t expect to have to change anything. It’s crazy how we think as human beings. We are totally comfortable with the way we are doing things, yet we are not at all comfortable, or happy, with the results we are getting.

Well, we are going to change all of that in the next few issues.

First off I am going to share with you how the average golfer should go about lowering his/her scores from above 100 to a number which is consistently below 100.

If I were to give you a questionnaire to fill out asking for responses to the inquiry as to how you would best suspect this could be achieved most of you shooting over 100 would all say, “If I could hit my tee shots longer and straighter I would not have the penalties, and then I would begin to consistently break 100.”

Typically speaking that is so far from the truth that it isn’t even funny. Most of you are not breaking 100 because you cannot chip and putt worth beans. Then secondly, you are getting into too much trouble because you make terrible decisions. You attempt to hit golf shots which you have seen on the television, but with which you are not familiar.

As an example, I was on the course with a gentleman recently who could not break 100 to save his life, and he has been playing the game for well over twenty years. He is an average athlete, so his coordination is neither great nor poor. He is a very typical average player. I have seen them for over forty-five years of instructing the swing and the game.

We came up to a three par which has a carry over water of just slightly over one hundred yards. That is not a long way to fly a golf ball. However, when you cannot break 100 this becomes a challenge. It isn’t a challenge if you are just out hitting balls on the range, because the one hundred yard carry is nothing to you. Here is where the problems begin. We are now trying to not only fly the ball over water for a short distance, but we are also trying our hardest to get onto the green.

Guess what our mind sees? It sees the water and it SEES ALL OF THE TIMES YOU DID NOT GET OVER IT IN THE PAST. This is very typical for a higher handicap player. He/she tees up the golf ball for the
shot and then says out loud for everyone to hear, “Don’t knock it into the water this time, Dummy.”

Then he/she turns to their playing partners and say, “Every time I play this hole I knock it into the lake. I never seem to be able to get over it with my tee shot, and I just can’t figure it out.”

Make a HUGE note of this: THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND ONLY HEARS NOUNS AND VERBS. That is true for every language and every nationality on the face of the earth. We are made that way as human beings.

The golfer just told himself, “HIT WATER.” That is what the subconscious mind heard. Then, when he hits it into the water he is totally confused.

Let’s take an honest look at the situation. If you are not breaking 100, then you are basically averaging more than eight bogeys and ten double bogeys on an average par 72 golf course. If you actually had an average of eight bogeys and ten double bogeys you would shoot exactly 100 for your eighteen hole round. Agreed?

What you need to do in your round is to stop making triple bogeys and anything higher than that. Then you need to get to the point where you stop making ten double bogeys and only make six or eight of them. This would bring you under the 100 mark in nothing flat.

In fact, if you were to make eighteen bogeys, you would be shooting 90 every time you teed it up for an eighteen hole round. That would marvelous, wouldn’t it? Well, you can do it, and it will not be a difficult thing to accomplish. It only takes a small degree of mind control. You must be able to begin to control your own mind and thoughts.

How is that so? It is all in the shot selections you are making and in your chipping and putting. I will first of all almost guarantee you that you are three putting as many times as the number of strokes you are consistently over 100.

For example, if you are shooting 106 consistently, I will guarantee you that you are three-putting at least six or seven times in your average round. Your putting alone will probably bring your score below the 100 mark.

When I was in my teens my brother and I would play nine holes from time to time taking only a putter. That was the only club we would take with us for the round. We had to learn how to hit the ball and roll it a fairly long way down the fairway with that putter, but we also had to figure out how to stay out of as much trouble as possible.

At the start, we would really struggle with it. We would knock the ball into a bunker and have to knock it out backwards or to the side because that was
where there was no lip on the bunker. It didn’t take too long for us to see that that was not an advantageous play, and we learned to go around the trouble.

We got to the point where we could break 40 on a consistent basis. In fact, we both could CONSISTENTLY break 40 for nine holes with a putter before we could do it with a full set of clubs. That embarrassed us both, until we took the time to think and figure it all out.

When we had all of the clubs we would attempt to go over any of the hazards. When we had only a putter we would go around all of the hazards. We soon found there was a message there which we had completely missed.

Once we started going around the problems and hazards on the course, we both started breaking 40 quite consistently.

The same thing goes for you who are not breaking 100. Who cares what it looks like? You have got to begin to play the game at the same level as your abilities. You should not be attempting to hit every shot like the miraculous one you hit one other time in your life. You need to begin playing shots with which you are one hundred percent (100%—I did not do that to talk down to you. I did it as an emphasis) certain you can hit.

So what if that means you putt every shot so you stay out of trouble? I know you do not want to use your putter for every shot, and I do not need for you to do that. However, if you do not have good control with your driver, you need to find out which club you can control fairly consistently. If that is your 5-wood or your 7-wood, then that should become your club of choice on most occasions—including your TEE SHOTS.

Once you have found a club with which you are able to keep the golf ball fairly consistently under control then you want to play a few rounds using that club and staying out of trouble. You will see your scores drop immediately, and you will be quite surprised that you do not have to hit the ball three hundred yards in order to play better golf. What a revelation that was to me when I found it nearly fifty years ago.

Now here is what I want you to do. Take each and every hole on the golf course and add one stroke to the par. A four par becomes a five par.

Then subtract two putts, because you are NOT ALLOWED TO THREE–PUTT. That will leave you, as in the example above, five minus two equals three. Now, if this is a 375-yard hole you divide the 375 by the three shots, and you will see you only have to AVERAGE 125 yards per shot in order to get on the green in three shots.
How hard would it be for you to hit a golf ball 125 yards? There should be nothing to it. The game of golf just became so stinking simple that it isn’t even funny.

The three-par hole we mentioned above has now become a four-par hole and you have TWO SHOTS to reach the green. You no longer have the requirement of attempting to hit it over the water. Hit it to the side somewhere and chip or pitch it somewhere onto the green in two, and then roll it into the cup in two putts. You have an easy four on the hole, and the water is no longer an enemy of your mind.

If you will do this on every hole you will be breaking 100 in no time at all. If you have a very long four par, make it into a six par. Who cares? You must learn to mentally turn the game into a simple, easy task, or it will no longer be fun to you. FUN is the name of the game.

Go get it and have a great time doing it. Quit trying to make shots which consistently get you into trouble and take the easy route. You will be in the 90’s in just a few rounds.
BREAKING 90

OK. Now you are breaking 100 consistently and it is time for you to go to your new level. Where do you start in order to achieve the task in the shortest amount of time? It is once again in the “scoring” category. You must get rid of all of the double bogeys and all of the triple bogeys.

This will happen in two main ways: first, you must eliminate ALL THREE–PUTT GREENS; and secondly, you MUST ELIMINATE ALL PENALTY SHOTS.

Years ago my dentist came to me for lessons. He wanted a consistent program for improvement, and he made a commitment to faithfully put in the time necessary to make those improvements.

He came to me playing to a 26 handicap and seven years later he was playing almost scratch golf. As we were on the way down with his scores we first built a good, consistently repeatable, golf swing. This was very simply. I have done it with golfers for over forty–five years. I took him through the “4 Simple Steps” program.

As he began to make the changes in his golf swing his scores came down quite rapidly. It was no time at all until he was playing off an 18 handicap, shooting consistently right around the 90 area. It was at this point he asked me one day what we were going to be doing next and I told him we were going to begin to eliminate all of his penalty shots.

You should have seen the look on his face when I said that! He immediately said, “I have six to eight of those on every round. If I can get those out of my game I will be playing to a ten or twelve handicap. Do you think that is possible?”

I assured him it was, and we set out to get it accomplished.

The first thing I did with him was to find which ball pattern made him feel the most comfortable, a draw or a fade. Then we set out to make that his “go to” shot and he started working on hitting that shot as much of the time as possible, not only on the range, but also when he was out on the course playing.

By doing this we basically eliminated one side of the golf course. Now he could start all of his shots down one side of the course and let the ball work its way back toward the center. By starting his shots toward the edge of the fairway or the green, it gave him a lot of room for the ball to travel, or curve, before it reached any of the trouble.

It only took him one month of diligent practice in order to achieve this goal, and his handicap dropped to a twelve in one month. He had never thought of doing nothing but eliminating his penalty shots. That was too simple for him.
Golfers by nature want to IMPROVE THEIR WHOLE ROUND. They are not looking at one hole, or one type of shot for their fix. In the doctor’s case we discussed which holes on his course he seemed to consistently find the trouble and have to take a penalty stroke or two. Once we examined that issue we came to the realization that he was typically over hooking the ball when he played holes where he thought he needed a draw to play them best.

When we took the time to talk about the holes which gave him the problem it was usually a dogleg left hole and he was trying to draw the ball around the dogleg. This was when he would turn the ball too much and he would end up in the river or out of bounds, which ever the case might be.

The main issue with all of this was the simple fact that he was not a scratch player, but he was trying to play like a scratch player. He wanted to do what the scratch players all did, and it was costing him.

As we evaluated his typically average round we found that if he was willing to make bogeys on these holes he would eliminate the double bogeys and the triple bogeys, and his score would definitely come down. He had never taken the time to simply accept the fact that bogeys are better than double bogeys and triple bogeys.

Don’t laugh. You have done the very same thing, without realizing it. You have continued to try your hardest to make a par on a hole you might NEVER PAR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE AND PLAY GOLF. This has caused you to make a lot of doubles and triples, and it has cost you the ability to break into your next level of the game.

Greed is a great destroyer of all of our lives, and it will affect every area of our lives. It has no friends, and it takes not prisoners. It will destroy each and every one of us if we allow it to do so.

Greed on the golf course is a terrible thing to fight. We all have made a par or two on one of the toughest holes on our golf course, so we think we should make a par on that hole EVERY TIME WE PLAY IT. That will never happen, so give it up right now!!

I have told golfers for many long years, and I know it is true for beginners as well as for tour players, if you were to play only one hole on any given golf course fifty times in one day, you would NEVER PLAY THE HOLE THE SAME WAY TWICE. You might make the same score on the hole many, many times, but you will NEVER PLAY IT THE SAME WAY ANY TWO TIMES.

You will not hit the golf ball the same place on the fairway any two times, and you will not hit the ball onto the green any two times the same place. You will not make the same putt or two putts no matter how many times you play the hole, so stop trying to do it that way.
In other words, a golfer goes out and shoots his all-time best score. Naturally, he/she is extremely excited about it all. Then the very next time that golfer goes to the course he is SUBCONSCIOUSLY trying to hit the golf ball to the exact same places on the golf course so he can shoot that great score again. He is not merely swinging the club and playing the game, playing the shots as they come to him. He is too busy trying to copy something on the course—not paying attention to his golf swing.

It all comes back to the thing I keep trying to get you to understand. This is only a game, and it will never happen the same two times in a row. Learn to play the game, rather than trying to PERFECTLY CONTROL every shot.