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THE MENTAL GAME: DON'T LET THE BOOGIE MAN FOOL YOU!

by Annette Thompson

If you are like many golfers, you see ghosts and boogie men on the course! By that I mean you see problems that aren't really there. Think about it the next time you play to see if you are being scared by some of these "problems" that don't really exist!

As a teacher I often hear students say, "I've got to get this ball OVER the water." But wait! Have you ever seen water higher than the ground you're standing on? (OK, so there's an occasional waterfall...notwithstanding!) You never really have to hit your ball OVER water...just across it! So the challenge is not height of shot, it's just length! Usually you can hit it two feet off the ground, and as long as it is long enough...you're OVER the water! Therefore your job becomes a little easier...take enough club, look at the target (not what's between you and the target), and make a rhythmic swing, keeping your eye on the ball, not the feared outcome!

A second comment about a supposed horror I hear is, "I've got to hit it high enough to get over that bunker." No, wrong again. You've got to choose a CLUB that will hit it high enough, and more importantly, stop on the green. I often show students that even a driver will go over a greenside bunker...it just won't stop on the green! So, once you've chosen your club, trust it to go over whatever is between you and the

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green. Your job is to take some swings in which you concentrate on looking at where you want to go and feeling the length of swing you'll need to go there. Then, simply step up and trust yourself to repeat that feeling as you strike your ball, allowing the club to "do its thing"!

And of course the most common boogie man on the course is DON'T...as in, "Don't hit it in those tress," or, "Don't do what you did yesterday," or "Don't miss it...fill in the blank" Just focusing on not doing something is the one best way to do it! Your brain does not compute negatives so when you say, "Don't hit it in the trees," your brain focuses only on "hit it in the trees." So, stop doing that! Instead, focus on what you really want to do and assume that doing so will prevent your hitting it in the trees!

So as a new spring season starts, make a pact with yourself to not look for the boogie man out there...it will help you avoid the bogie man!

Annette Thompson is an LPGA Master Professional and a member of the LPGA Teaching and Club Professional Hall of Fame. A reoccurring selectee to numerous national and regional lists of Best Women Teachers, Thompson teaches winter seasons in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, and during the summer, can be found in North Carolina, where she is affiliated with Pine Needles Resort in Southern Pines. Annette's blog appears regularly on the LL4G web site, and she expects to have a new book about playing the game available later in 2014.



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