

# Adopt Annika's Attitude: **Make practice count**

Do you want to include the principles of experts into your game?

Do you want to make your practice count?

Do you wonder what techniques a player such as Annika used to maximise her game?

**A**s the HSBC Women's Champions rapidly approaches Singapore's shores for 2009, it is sad to note that Annika Sorenstam will not be competing in the field. Annika has provided spectators and competitors with nothing short of

professional conduct both on and off the course over the last two decades as a dominating force on the ladies professional tour. With over 80 tournament wins and 10 majors she has definitely contributed to the professionalism of the ladies tour.

There are numerous techniques and strategies that golfers such as Annika integrate into their game. Living the life of an ultimate professional athlete includes many aspects; one of the more important aspects is their conduct at practice.

If you take a look at the long term athlete development model there is a stage called 'training to compete' when athletes typically select one sport to focus on and learn to increase their training effectiveness to maximise their skills and thus potential to achieve success in the sport. Anders Ericsson has conducted several research studies and promotes that expert performers tend to practice for 1000 hours each year for 10 years to be at the top of their game. He claims that elite performers engage in what we call 'deliberate practice' – an effortful activity designed to improve individual target performance. Additionally, he found that there are certain criteria that must be met for practice to

Annika Sorenstam of Sweden plays a shot on the 13th hole during day one of the Grand China Air LPGA 2008 on October 24, 2008 in China.



Photo by China Photos/Getty Images

Aspect	Technical Time	Practice Time
<b>Technical</b> The skills regarding the way you hit the ball – your ‘technique’.	Using the mirror to get feedback on your swing plane in your living room or on the range.	Playing shots from the 3rd tee box with full pre-shot routine.
<b>Physical</b> The skills regarding your body’s fitness and recovery – strength, aerobic capacity, power, rest, sleep, and diet.	Attending pilates class to strengthen your ‘core’ or a stretching class to help maintain flexibility.	Warming up before every practice session and every round just like you do for a competitive round.
<b>Tactical</b> The skills regarding your shot selection, decision making, organisation, and the way you prepare for the course conditions.	Testing how a chip shot reacts on the green by trialling different clubs, landing spots, and swing speeds with 10 balls.	Playing 1 chip shot with full pre-shot routine on to the green that forces you to live with the result of 1 shot.
<b>Mental</b> The skills regarding your ability to manage your emotions, think productively, stay disciplined, maintain confidence, communicate effectively, and keep your goals clear.	Spending 15-30 minutes each day doing diaphragmatic breathing.	Using breathing between shots or before you walk into the ball each shot when you are playing practice rounds.

be considered conducive to producing expertise.

It is acknowledged that recreational golfers may not have the same amount of time to dedicate to practice as a full-time athlete pursuing a career as a professional golfer, however the principles of how you can train can effectively be applied to your training.

One of the dimensions of training to compete involves differentiating your ‘technical time’ from your ‘practice time’. The aim is to practice the skills you need and want to have in place to maximise your competitive game.

The table below provides comparisons and examples of ‘technical time’ and ‘practice time’ for each aspect of the game:

These are a few examples to help you to differentiate between when you are training yourself to learn, improve, and/or maintain skills in each of the four areas versus when you are practicing them as you’d like to use them in a competitive round.

Golfers of all levels will have

skills that they are better or worse at compared to other players so it is helpful to review your goals so you can then plan your practice schedule to match those goals.

It is beneficial to ask yourself, “How do I want to spend my time working on my golf game?”

Here are two potential answers to your question:

“Becoming a master of technical training and be continually saying, ‘I can do it on the range, but when I come out on the course to play...’

or “Learning how to use my practice to ensure it transfers to competition”?

It will be no surprise to you that the range dragging across ball after ball with the same club is about as far away from competitive golf as you can get. Liken this to hitting a ball on to a wall if you are a tennis player. Yes, there is a role for this technical training and it must be a part of your practice schedule, however it is strongly recommended that it is not the only

facet nor does it fill the majority of your practice schedules.

**Mental Notes:**

1. Review your current goals for your golf game and your practice schedule.
2. Develop a list of activities for your practice schedule; make sure you have those that are technical time and that are practise time.
3. Incorporate both of these types of activities into your practice schedule.
4. Ask your teaching professional for ideas of how you can make your practice schedule effectively prepare you for the competitive game; find activities that are more ‘game-like’.

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