



# The Yips

By Brian Zongker, PGA Life Member

If you are a true golfer, you have at least heard of the Yips. The Yips are like a disease or, more accurately, a mental disorder. For those of you who do not know what the Yips are, they are the inability to execute a simple golf shot. I'm not talking about a beginner player learning how to hit the ball and not being able to execute properly. I am talking about an experienced player not being able to make a 2-foot putt. As soon as he goes to strike the ball, there is some sort of flinch that causes the club head to twist and force the golf ball off in a strange direction and certainly not at the hole.

Most often, the Yips show up in putting but can manifest in just about any part of your game. What happens is that you are out playing golf and at some point, you have a short putt. One that you should make 100% of the time but, for some reason, you completely miss. You wonder, what was that? It's like when you sneeze for seemingly no reason and, unbeknownst to you at that moment in time, it's the beginning of a cold. Or even worse, the Flu. You don't think anything of it until there is another one. After that one, you are really beginning to wonder. The next short putt has you baffled and confused. What do you do? It's like Shaquille O'Neil trying to make a free throw.

The disease carries over from one round to the next. Then, from one month to another and, for some unfortunate players, the condition will persist for years. It has the tendency to snowball out of control and has ruined many a player -- even proven fatal to some aspiring careers. So, what is the cure? Hate to tell

you but there is none. It's the cancer of the sport. Sure, there are treatments and some players do go into remission. But it's somewhere in the back of their minds, lurking; it's still there.

Here are some things you can try. Speaking specifically to putting: Have one of those largely oversized grips put on your putter. These help to take the hand action out of your putts. You see, the small muscles of our hands are more susceptible to tension. They react violently to the impulses put out by our brains which will cause us to twist and turn the putter head and thus miss putts. A larger grip will help reduce this effect. Try a different way to hold the putter. A classic example is the "Claw" style putting grip. Or try a cross handed grip. Both will reduce hand action and therefore minimize the effect of the Yips. Try putting with your eyes focused on the hole or even closed. A bit dramatic and a little scary but can be effective. If you watch the players on TV, you will see these methods to combat the disease being used regularly. You can certainly up your practice time as well. Hit short putt after short putt until you no longer even think about them. Get to where you can make them in your sleep. Or better yet, just get some sleep. The Yips have been known to spill over into your personal life. Like I said, they are like a disease.

More than anything, try not to stress. The more you stress, the worse it gets. Remember it's just a game and a stupid one at that. If you need assistance with the techniques listed above, see your local PGA Professional.