

Tour Pros' V Amateur's

Jonathon Fleming
05/01/2021

Stand on any practice range at a Tour Event and it's impossible to pick a winner. You can see who's hitting it the furthest and who are the best ball strikers, but I have seen many good amateurs with comparable swings who wouldn't look totally out of place amongst them visually. Of course, this is what they do day in day out for a living, but it got me thinking exactly why these Tour Professionals are just so much better. They have a way of making the game look extremely easy, and watching TV coverage appears to revolve around them crunching massive drives, holing a lot of putts, and signing their scorecards for 68.

I thought it might be interesting to dig a little deeper and find out just how they are doing it. I'm basing the following on a better than average amateur in the 6-12 handicap range.

Driving distance.

The average driving distance on Tour is 290 yards. I find this quite surprising because we are led to believe that they are smashing it 350 yards every time. Actually, only around 20 % of Tour Pros hit it that far. David Toms only averaged 270 yards on the PGA Tour and won 13 times, as well as a Major. A reasonable club amateur can hit it about 250 yards, and if we take into account that the courses on Tour are much longer, our approach shots in terms of distance, are reasonably comparable. The average distance for approach shots on the PGA Tour is 170 yards. That's not worlds apart from what we face at our local clubs. So, off the tee, we are not on completely different planets comparatively, in terms of what we face next. The approach shot.

Approach shots.

Tour Pros average 12 greens in regulation per round. For every green they hit, they are making up .25 shots on the field. This means for every 4 greens in regulation, they are making a birdie. Hitting 12 greens in regulation, again, doesn't seem completely outside the realms of possibility to achieve for a decent amateur. I have played many rounds where I have hit at least hit this many greens.

Scrambling.

An area where I think Tour Pros really separate themselves from amateurs is their ability to get up and down when they do miss a green. The best on tour are averaging in the high 70% range. This has a lot to do with them knowing exactly where to miss and not short siding themselves with a difficult pitch or chip. This comes with experience and extremely good course management.

Putting.

Another telling statistic that separates Tour Pros is the fact that from 6 feet and in, they are making 70% of putts. This takes an enormous amount of pressure off the rest of their game and an area of the game where Amateurs throw away a lot of shots. Pros typically spend a vast amount of time practising putting because they know there is such a fine line between finishing in the top ten or missing the cut, which can be just a couple of shots over 4 rounds.

Unforced Errors.

Perhaps one of the biggest contributing factors is that Tour Pros very rarely make big numbers. They tend to always follow a bad shot up with a good one. The severity and frequency of bad shots considerably influence a player's scoring level. This can be down to Tour Pros simply playing a lot more golf and being physically more conditioned.

Conclusion.

I believe an amateur playing off an 8 handicap has all the tools to shoot sub-par rounds, but by virtue of not playing as much Golf are probably more prone to mental fatigue and making the big numbers more often than a seasoned professional.

Tour Pros simply play more golf, practise more, and know the areas of the game that result in low numbers, i.e. the short game! Through hours spent on the course, they are more consistent ball strikers. This results in making fewer mistakes, and although they probably don't make as many putts as you would think, their 6 foot putting percentages are considerably better than that of an amateur. If they do miss a green, they have played the percentages and it's on the right side to get up and down. Overall this transfers into lower numbers and perhaps takes some of the mystery out of the 'art of scoring'.

