

MILANOGOLFS / FIELD GUIDE 001

# BREAK 80.

THE ROAD BACK TO SCRATCH

BY MILAN NARAYAN

# BEFORE WE START

There is something you should probably know about me.

I did not learn golf through a system. I did not have an academy. I did not have TrackMan. I did not have fourteen clubs, a swing coach, a putting coach, a strength coach and a bloke on Instagram explaining what my pelvis should be doing at impact.

For a while, I basically had one golf club.

## A six-iron.

My family did not have much money when I was growing up. My dad wanted me to play golf, so we hired clubs when we could. We went to garage sales looking for old ones. Eventually, Dad bought me one brand-new club: a steel-shafted six-iron.

I was a little kid. The bloody thing used to hurt my arms when I hit it. But it was mine.

So I hit it. Again. And again. And again. Until eventually I became really fucking good with a six-iron.

I did not know it then, but golf was teaching me something I have carried ever since:

## YOU DON'T NEED EVERYTHING. MASTER WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

I reached scratch as a junior. Not because I had some perfect doctrine for becoming a scratch golfer. I played. I watched. I listened. I experimented. I learned the game until a lot of it became instinct.

Then I walked away.

I was bullied badly around the game when I was young, and eventually golf stopped feeling like the place I wanted to be. So I left it behind for a long time.

Years later I picked up the clubs again, played with Lydia's family, got beaten, and felt something come back immediately.

That little voice was basically: absolutely fucking not.

I could still feel the golfer I used to be in there somewhere. The problem was that I could not always explain him.

And that is what this series is really about.

# THIS IS NOT A DOCTRINE

I am not going to pretend I followed seven magical drills as a kid and emerged as a scratch golfer. I didn't.

A lot of what I learned became instinct. So now, on the road back, I am doing something I never had to do the first time: unpacking those instincts.

What do I see before a shot? What am I protecting against? Why does one chip feel obvious to me while another golfer sees five options? What decisions actually save shots? Which parts of good golf can be explained, repeated and handed to somebody else?

I am going to find out in public.

This is not me standing on a pedestal telling you I have golf solved. It is me rebuilding my own game, pulling apart what I learned as a junior, testing it again as an adult and bringing you with me.

**The goal is not to make you play like me.  
The goal is to help you discover how good  
*you* can become.**

## WHY BREAK 80?

Scratch is the destination I am chasing. Breaking 80 is checkpoint one.

And the funny thing about 79 is that it does not need to look heroic.

On a par-72 course, 79 is +7. Eleven pars. Seven bogeys. Zero birdies.

Read that again. Zero birdies.

No miracle wedge. No 25-footer. No drive on a short par four uploaded to Instagram with horrible slow-motion music underneath it.

Just eleven pars and seven bogeys.

**79 IS BORING.  
BORING GOLF IS MAGNIFICENT.**

# THE GREAT LIE

Every golfer has said some version of this after shooting 86: "I'm actually playing pretty well."

No. You hit some good shots. There is a difference.

I know because I do it too. I'll hit a drive 260 metres down the middle and immediately think: old Milan. He's back.

Then I'll miss the green, hit a mediocre chip, miss five feet and make bogey. A few holes later I'll pull one into trouble, attempt a recovery shot Seve might have thought twice about, clip a tree and make double - while somehow still believing I am striking it beautifully.

Golfers are incredible accountants. We remember every good shot and quietly restructure the debt.

Most golfers are not as far from their target score as they think. Their card is usually being destroyed by a handful of moments.

So do not begin with: "How do I become dramatically better at golf?"

Begin with:

## WHERE AM I GIVING SHOTS AWAY?

## THE REAL TARGET: NO DISASTERS

A bogey does not destroy a round. Bogey is annoying. Double bogey starts negotiations. Triple bogey has you opening the calculator on your phone at the turn.

Make bogey on the first? Fine. Seventeen holes left.

Make triple? Suddenly you are trying to "get shots back." That phrase should terrify you.

Golf does not know you made double on the previous hole. The next par four is still a par four.

Stop trying to collect a refund.

# THE THREE HORSEMEN

## 01 / PENALTIES

There are bad golf shots. Then there are golf shots that require paperwork. A penalty costs you the stroke and the position. Before a dangerous tee shot, ask one question: **What club gives me the best chance of playing my next shot from grass?** We like grass.

## 02 / THE THREE-PUTT

Nothing makes a grown adult question his existence faster than hitting a green in regulation and walking off with bogey. From long range, your first job is not to hole it. Your job is to make the next putt boring.

## 03 / THE SHORT-SIDE SPECIAL

This often looks like a short-game problem, but the mistake happened before the chip. When the flag is tucked, know where the easy miss lives. Middle of the green is not cowardice. Seven is embarrassing. Twenty-five feet is not.

# THE 0 / 1 / 0 LENS

For now, I want you tracking only three things:

**0 DOUBLES OR WORSE**  
**1 THREE-PUTT MAXIMUM**  
**0 PENALTY STROKES**

This is not a law of golf. It is a lens.

If you shoot 84 with three doubles, three three-putts and two penalties, you do not need a forensic investigation. There is your round.

You probably do not need a new driver. You need to stop donating golf shots to the golf course.

# PLAY THE SHOT AFTER THIS ONE

This is one of the things I want to unpack as I rebuild my own game: good golfers are rarely thinking only about the shot in front of them.

They are also protecting the next one.

If I miss this green, where can I still make par? If I cannot make par, where is bogey almost guaranteed? If I hit driver here, what trouble comes alive? If I chip sideways, what number disappears from the card?

This is not negative golf. It is intelligent golf.

When I was young I did not have language for all of this. I just played enough that many of these decisions became automatic. Now I want to slow those instincts down and show you what is happening inside them.

## GOOD GOLF IS NOT JUST BETTER SHOTS. IT IS BETTER MISSES.

## SIX THINGS I WANT YOU TO TRY

### 1. MIDDLE IS SEXY NOW.

Twenty-five feet for birdie is fine. Eight feet for bogey from a bunker is not.

### 2. KNOW THE EASY MISS.

Before the approach, find the place that keeps the hole alive.

### 3. TAKE ENOUGH CLUB.

Know your real carry. Your ego does not get a scorecard.

### 4. TREES MEAN SIDEWAYS.

If you are properly blocked, take your medicine. Bogey is alive. Seven does not need an invitation.

### 5. DRIVER DOES NOT HAVE TO PLAY.

If it brings water, OB, bunkers and a small residential community into play, put it away.

## **6. IF IT FEELS WRONG, RESET.**

Back off. The phrase "fuck it" has preceded an extraordinary number of terrible golf shots.

# PRACTICE: BUILD INSTINCT, DON'T COLLECT DRILLS

I used to think the fact I could not explain exactly how I became good was a weakness.

I don't anymore.

I became good by playing. By hitting thousands of shots. By seeing what happened. By getting curious. By learning from people wherever I found them.

I still remember going to garage sales with Dad. At one house, an older man put a sand wedge in my hands. I had barely seen one before. He showed me how to open the face and had hula hoops sitting in his yard as landing targets.

He told me to send the ball there.

I remember the club. I remember the hula hoops. I remember the feeling when I did it.

That is how I learned golf: little moments becoming instinct.

So I am not giving you a seven-day miracle program in this guide. Instead, practice with a question.

## WHAT AM I TRYING TO LEARN FROM THIS SHOT?

If you are chipping, choose a landing spot and learn what happens after the ball lands.

If you are putting from long range, learn how far the ball rolls when your eyes tell you 30, 40 or 50 feet.

If you are hitting wedges, learn your carries instead of guessing.

If you are playing nine holes, notice the decisions that made the next shot easier - and the ones that made it miserable.

Do not collect drills for the sake of feeling productive. Build experiences your brain can remember.

# YOUR FIRST ROUND

Do not rebuild your swing tonight.

Do not buy anything.

Do not watch fourteen YouTube videos and arrive at the range tomorrow thinking about hip depth, wrist angles, ground forces and whether your left nostril is externally rotating.

Play.

Nine holes is enough.

And while you play, pay attention.

After every shot, ask yourself what you were trying to do. When something goes wrong, do not immediately diagnose your entire golf swing. Ask whether it was execution or decision-making.

Bad seven-iron? Execution. It happens.

Driver into water when 5-wood leaves a perfectly manageable approach? Decision.

Flop shot over a bunker when sideways keeps bogey alive? Decision.

Trying to hook a four-iron around a tree because you successfully did it once twelve years ago? Historic stupidity.

Then, after the round, write down three numbers.

## **DOUBLES OR WORSE. THREE-PUTTS. PENALTIES.**

That is your starting point. Mine has humbled me too.

# THE ROAD BACK

I am not writing this from the finish line.

I am writing it from the road.

I reached scratch as a junior. Then I left golf behind for years. Now I am coming back, and I want to see how much of that kid is still in there - and how much better I can become by finally understanding what he knew.

I am going to play. Film it. Talk through shots. Test ideas. Keep what works. Bin what doesn't. And tell you the truth when I play like an idiot.

But the point of Milanogolfs is bigger than watching me chase a handicap.

Golf gave me something when I was young.

It gave a kid with one six-iron somewhere to become good at something. It gave me confidence. It gave me moments I can still see decades later.

And I think this game can do that for other people too.

I do not care whether you ever become scratch.

I care whether you discover that you are capable of more than you thought.

## YOU DON'T NEED EVERYTHING. MASTER WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

I'll see you out there.

### - Milan

Junior scratch golfer.

Current work in progress.

Road back underway.