

GOLF

To get game ready, chip and putt

This week has been a reminder that it's still winter, but the first day of spring is only three weeks away. That means corporate and charity tournaments and other golf outings soon will be filling area courses.

Chances are good that you will have an opportunity — you might think an obligation — to play in such an event. The odds also are pretty good that your clubs have been gathering dust for several weeks, perhaps months.

You probably have little or no time to get your game in shape before the outing, and you are worried that you are going to embarrass yourself in front of your boss, colleagues or clients. You can't get your game in midseason form in one weekend. There are, however, measures to take to help you save face.

"This is certainly not a new message, but I tell people to just work on their short game," said veteran Austin teaching professional Barbara Puett.

"When you don't play for quite a while, that's always the part of your game that suffers most.

"Most tournaments like this are scrambles," Puett added, "so if you can putt and chip nobody is going to care if they don't use your drive all day. It's like the way Harvey (Penick) would watch people practicing before a round. He would point to how many people were pounding drives and how just a few were on the putting green. He would say that he knew who would be collecting the bets later that day, meaning the ones on the practice green.

"It's also the same principle that Harvey always emphasized, and that was to learn the

Doug Smith

Austin golf



Barbara Puett

'Chipping is just a shorter version of the full swing,' teacher says.

game from the cup backwards to the tee. That's also how you should approach things after a long layoff."

I asked Puett for advice for golfers in three scenarios prior to a spring outing: (1) Someone who has time for a couple of practice sessions. (2) Someone who has time for one practice session. (3) Someone who has no practice time whatsoever.

■ In two practice sessions:

"You can do a little bit more, but I would still concentrate on the short game," Puett said.

"Spend most of your time putting, chipping and with the wedge. Leave the driver in the bag, but perhaps hit some 3-woods. The wedge is a great club to work with because it is a miniature version of the full swing. Same thing with chipping."

■ In one practice session:

"I would recommend spending all your time putting and chipping, and perhaps a few wedges," Puett said. "Maybe spend more time on chipping than anything else. Chipping is just a shorter version of the full swing and requires the same timing. You get immediate feedback on your swing path and if you are making solid contact."

■ No time to prepare: "If

Golf calendar

Today: AISD Boys Invitational (B division) at Morris Williams (926-1298)

Friday-Saturday: AISD Boys Invitational at Clay and Kizer (444-0999)

Sunday: Central Texas Golf Association Member/Guest at Kizer

Monday: Jay L. Johnson Memorial Celebrity Tournament at Circle C (383-0505)

Monday-Tuesday: St. Edward's Invitational at ColoVista (303-4045)

March 4: Austin Senior Golf Association (2-man select shot) at Jimmy Clay (444-0999)

4-5: Austin Women's Golf Association 2-Day Eclectic at Barton Creek Crenshaw Cliffside (345-1535)

9: Pan American Golf Association at Jimmy Clay (444-0999)

11: Austin Senior Golf Association (individual net) at Morris Williams (926-1298)

12: First Tee of Greater Austin Foundation Tour (elementary and middle school) at Jimmy Clay (263-0709)

15: Austin Golf Expo at Clay/Kizer (444-0999); Rockdale Country Club Scramble (446-4013)

15-16: Morris Williams Spring Championship (926-1298)

Send holes-in-one and calendar items to Doug Smith at dsmith2786@austin.rr.com or fax to 302-0084 or 445-3868. Items must be submitted by the appropriate golf course or organization.

you don't have any time at all, I would at least try to go out in the back yard the night before you play," Puett said. "Swing at a few tees just to get the feel of the weight of the club and the motion of the swing. On the day you play, try to get to the course in time to hit some putts and chip, chip, chip."

St. Edward's tourney

Sixteen teams, led by the host Hilltoppers, will compete Monday and Tuesday at ColoVista in the St. Edward's University Invitational. Under the direction of second-year coach Mark McEntire, St. Ed's is off to a strong start this spring with a victory at the University of Texas-Brownsville Invitational and second place at last

week's Mary Hardin-Baylor Invitational in Belton.

Senior captain J.D. Dunn of Bastrop was medalist in Brownsville, and Ben Corbett, a freshman from Houston, has been runner-up in both tournaments. The rest of the Hilltopper lineup will include Pablo Rosas, Ryan Guier and Matt Luther.

In addition to the host team, the St. Edward's Invitational will include Abilene Christian, Austin College, Central Arkansas, Central Oklahoma, Concordia, Incarnate Word, Le Tourneau, Lincoln University, Mary Hardin-Baylor, McMurry, Northwood University, Oklahoma Panhandle State, Southwestern University, Trinity and University of Wisconsin-Parkside.