

# RIGHT ON TRACK



**EXCLUSIVE**  
by Mark Gibson  
Golf Australia  
Teaching Editor



Having got through the business end of the season on the track successfully, Marcos still has some unfinished business with me.

We have covered his long game swing really well, improved his short game technique, developed his putting and now he must start putting some better scores together.

To achieve this I have to investigate why a player like Marcos, who has all the shots still doesn't score to his potential. I played a game with Marcos around The Grand, on the Gold Coast, and after a few holes he hadn't hit what I would class as a bad shot yet was averaging bogey golf. He would hit a green in regulation then three putt it or only just miss the green and still walk away with bogey. It was a combination of partly selecting the wrong recovery shots as well as missing the greens in places that made getting down in two shots nearly impossible.

To correct this problem I have had Marcos playing rounds at Lakelands recently a bit so as to explain the planning of a hole as well how to execute the shots to plan.

Firstly, how to plan a hole. This one area where touring professionals set themselves apart from club golfers. Yardage books are like gold to them and are vital to the planning of their playing strategy (pic 1). If you are able to access a course guide at a new course, do so because it might mean saving as much as ten shots on your round, depending on the course.

The 8th at Lakelands is a 335-metre par-4 with water left and fairway bunkers in play if you allow them to be. I asked Marcos what his satisfactory outcome would be on the hole and he said a par would be great. To achieve that we took the fairway bunkers out of play by hitting enough club to pass the centre bunker, but not enough club as to reach the longer ones.



Peter O'Malley consults the touring pros bible - the yardage book.

PHOTOS: MATTHEW HARRIS; TRES BIEN PHOTOGRAPHY

## instruction

With a yawning bunker down the left as well as the water, which flanks the fairway all the way to the green, I got Marcos to hit from the left side of the tee aiming in the right half of the fairway (pic 2). The reasoning behind this is so that Marcos is aiming away from the trouble that can result in big scores. A tee shot hit solidly on the selected line or even close to the line will leave a short iron in and he won't have to negotiate a shot over water to reach the green. This leaves a little more room for error.

The iron shot into the green is aimed between the flag and the right edge of the green to, again, take the water left out of play. Even a shot that is not well hit will still be a realistic chance at hitting the green and par will be possible.

Play like this can sometimes leave you with slightly longer putts than many players are comfortable with. This can then entice the player to take a higher risk line with an approach shot. This can only end in disaster.

Marcos has worked really hard on his lag putting so the

slightly longer putts don't give him any cause for concern.

The way to plan the hole is to stand on the tee with a realistic target score in mind and design a strategy to take all the high risk factors out of play. This will help make the big scores disappear from your scorecard as it has for Marcos.



2

## Half the mission is complete

Well one half of my mission for 2004 and '05 is now complete. My final round victory at Eastern Creek sealed the 2004 V8 Supercar Championship title with my team mate, Russell Ingall finishing second. It gave me back to back titles and Stone Brothers Racing and Ford first and second in the Championship.

The second half of my goal is also going very strongly. My "Race to Single Figures" has kept me very busy and at times very frustrated.

Having started the year shooting scores in the 90s, with all the hard work from Gibbo and the support from Srixon, I'm proud to say the official AGU handicap now sits at 11.4. With no racing until March, I've

been hard at it on the golf course trying to get those last few shots shaved off my handicap.

Lately I've felt I've been able to hit the shot that was needed but couldn't score. However, as you all know, sometimes you don't make any changes and all of a sudden things click and your game comes to gether.

There is still work to do though. My bad shot is still a weak cut but I've found an answer to more consistent putting, a new overlapping style grip.

To all the *Golf Australia* readers who have sent their emails of support a big thanks. I look forward to seeing on the course or at the track soon.

- Marcos Ambrose  
2004 V8 Supercar Champion

