

Decisions, Decisions

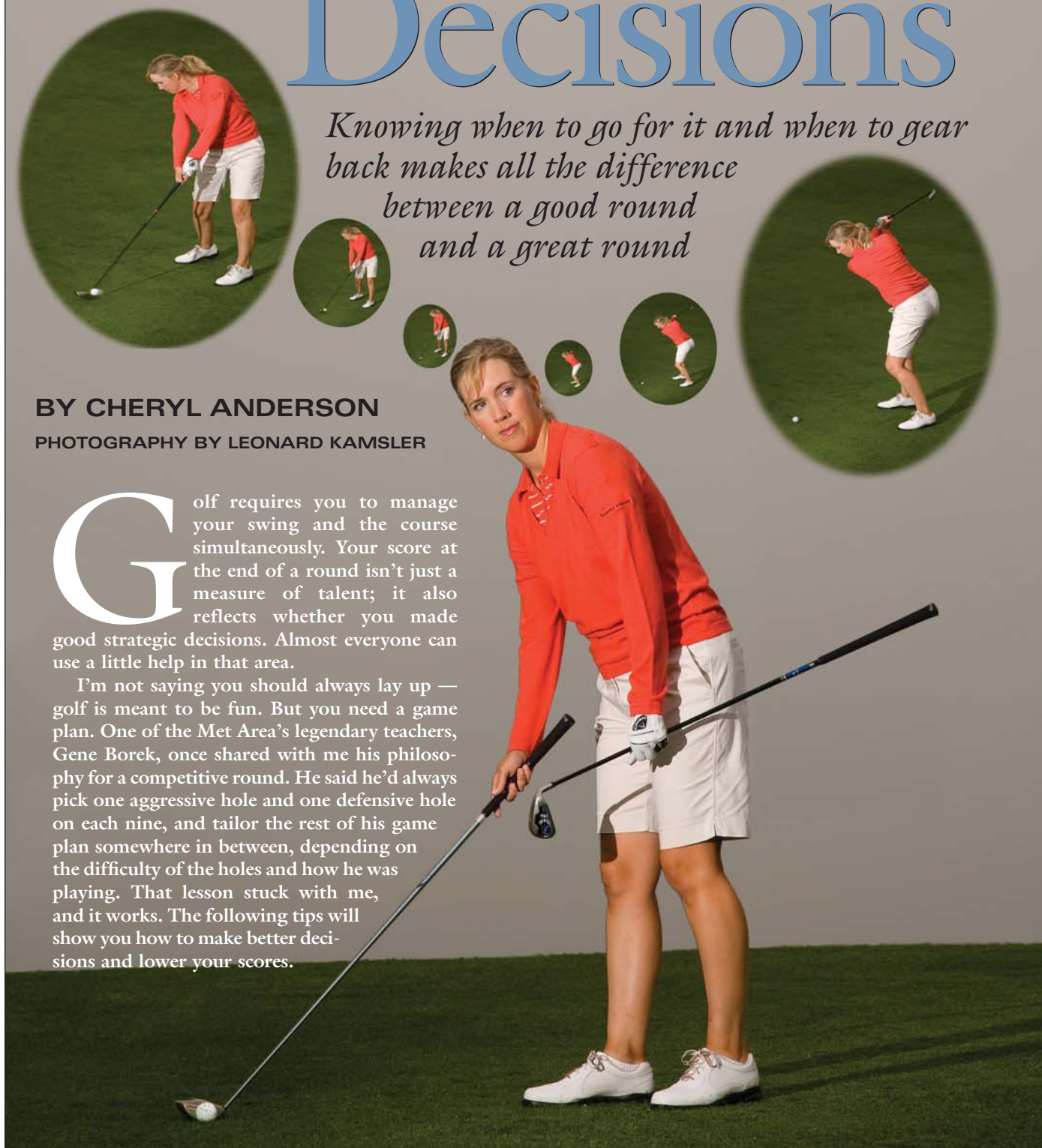
Knowing when to go for it and when to gear back makes all the difference between a good round and a great round

BY CHERYL ANDERSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEONARD KAMSLER

Golf requires you to manage your swing and the course simultaneously. Your score at the end of a round isn't just a measure of talent; it also reflects whether you made good strategic decisions. Almost everyone can use a little help in that area.

I'm not saying you should always lay up — golf is meant to be fun. But you need a game plan. One of the Met Area's legendary teachers, Gene Borek, once shared with me his philosophy for a competitive round. He said he'd always pick one aggressive hole and one defensive hole on each nine, and tailor the rest of his game plan somewhere in between, depending on the difficulty of the holes and how he was playing. That lesson stuck with me, and it works. The following tips will show you how to make better decisions and lower your scores.



Lay Up or Go For It?

Let's say you hit a good drive on a par five that you consider to be a birdie hole. You're only 220 yards out, but there's a creek about 20 yards short of the green. Should you go for it or lay up with an iron? Whenever you're faced with a decision, go through this checklist of five factors:

- 1 **Lie...** is the ball sitting up or down?
- 2 **Weather conditions...** are the temperature and wind favorable?
- 3 **Confidence...** how are you feeling?
- 4 **Point in round...** early vs. late, and are you trying to protect a score?
- 5 **Skill level...** can you pull off the shot five times out of 10?

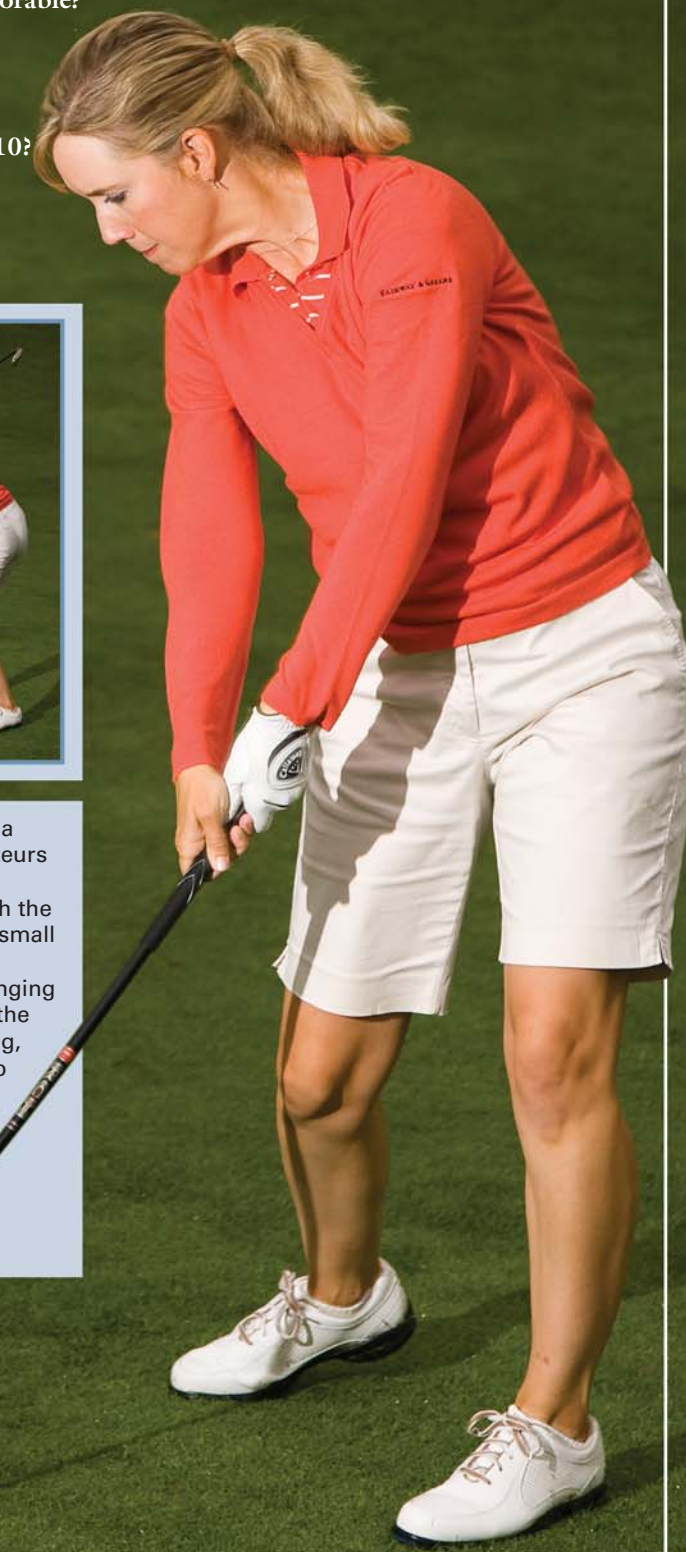
At least three, and preferably four, of these factors should be in your favor before you decide to go for it and try an aggressive shot.

If you lay up... Choose a club that will leave you a comfortable third-shot distance to the green, and remember to complete your backswing (right). This will help you make a strong, confident swing toward your target and ensure that you are able to hit the green with your next shot.



If you go for it... When hitting a fairway wood off the deck, amateurs often try to pick the ball clean. Instead, hit down a bit and brush the ground. It's even okay to take a small divot (main photo, right).

Begin the downswing by swinging the butt end of the club toward the ball. As you take a practice swing, do the pump drill: Bring the club back and forth into the impact area a couple times, with the butt end leading (left). The lag you create from this move will give you those added yards.





Drive it Smart

Let's say you have trouble controlling a draw and you come to a hole that is a sharp dogleg left. Going back to Gene Borek's advice, you should make this your defensive hole and aim your tee shot straight toward the fat part of the fairway rather than challenge the dogleg. You may have a longer approach, but you'll be in the short grass.

Play smart shots aggressively... Don't lose focus just because you're choosing the smart shot. Think about what you're doing and commit to the plan. In this case, you want to check and re-check that you are aimed toward the fairway and away from the dogleg (above). Also, line up the logo of the golf ball, or a black line that you drew on it, straight toward your intended target (right). You might be used to doing this on putts, but it's also very helpful on drives like this, where accuracy is a must.



ODYSSEY
#1 PUTTER IN GOLF.®



IF IT LOOKED LIKE OTHER PUTTERS

IT MIGHT PERFORM JUST AS POORLY

Introducing the Sabertooth™ Putter. Massive MOI to minimize twisting and maximize stability throughout your stroke. White Hot XG® multi-layer insert for refined response. Radical shape designed to shut down the cookie-cutter competition.

www.odysseygolf.com



Pitching Lesson

When you're close to the green and are faced with a short pitch to a tight hole location, there are a variety of ways to play the shot. And thus, a variety of ways to mess it up!

If your lie is perfect, you can open the club-face of your sand or lob wedge and hit a high risk/high reward flop shot, as I have chosen. Or you can make a normal pitch swing with your pitching wedge or 9-iron, without trying to hit the ball super-high. You might not get close to the hole that way, but at least it reduces your chances of a fat or thin shot. This is where it's critical to refer back to our earlier checklist.

Once you can handle decisions like these throughout your round, you will see your confidence soar and your scores go down!

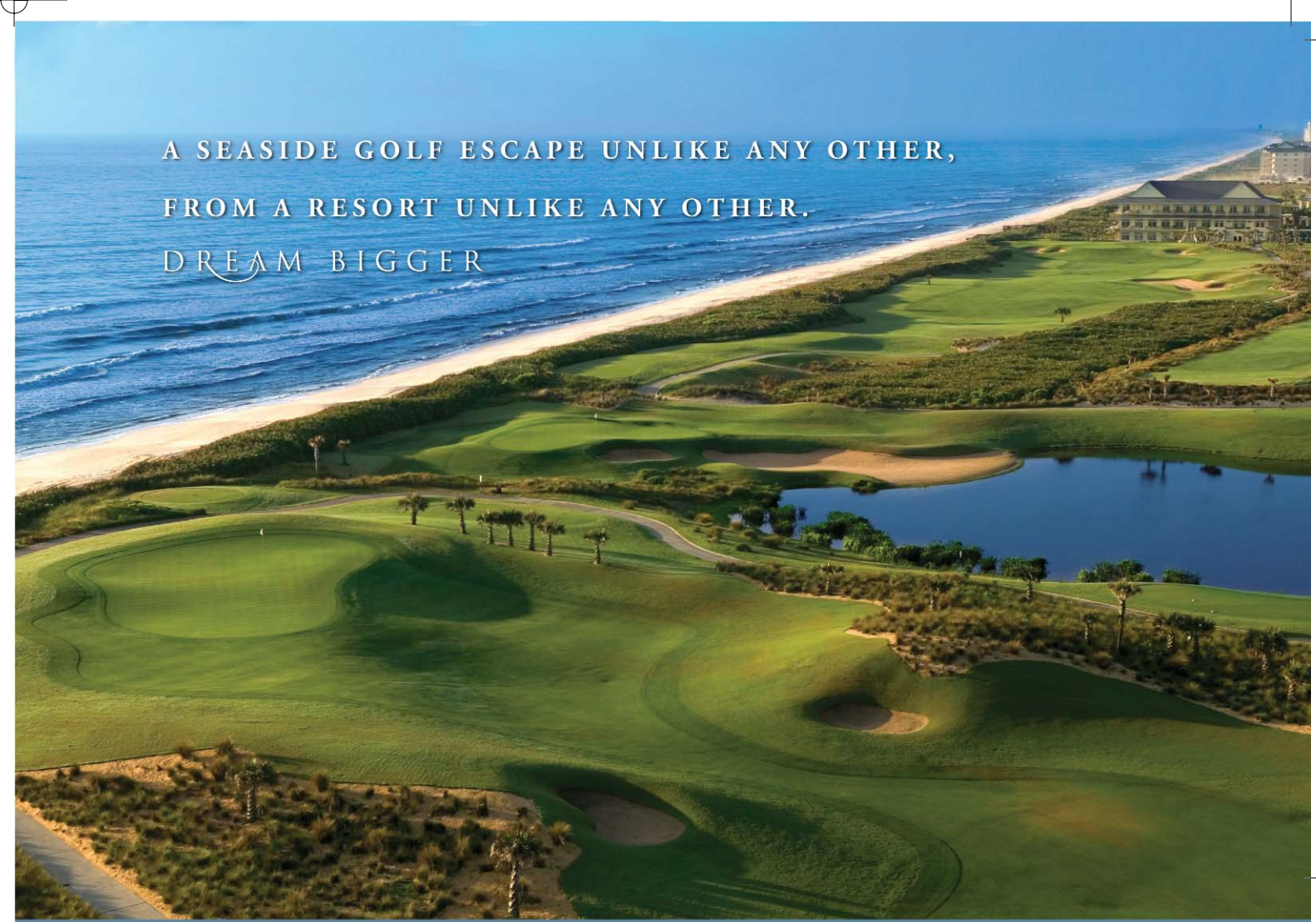


Cheryl Anderson was the 2007 Met PGA Teacher of the Year.



Go for broke if the lie is perfect...

Maybe your ball rolled just off the fairway grass into the first cut, and it's sitting up perfectly on a tuft of grass (left). If so, and if the rest of the factors from our earlier checklist are in your favor, then you have a green light to play the aggressive, high pitch shot. Otherwise, go the safer route with the medium-height pitch.



A SEASIDE GOLF ESCAPE UNLIKE ANY OTHER,
FROM A RESORT UNLIKE ANY OTHER.
DREAM BIGGER

PREMIER GOLF PACKAGES AVAILABLE FROM \$350 PER PERSON/NIGHT*
INCLUDES NIGHTLY ACCOMMODATIONS, GOLF AND BREAKFAST



- Ocean view suites with private balconies
- Signature golf courses by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson
- Multi-level pool pavilion
- Luxurious full-service spa
- Oceanfront fine dining
- Spacious multi-room accommodations

Ginn Hammock BeachSM Resort is Northeast Florida's premier, luxury destination, just south of historic St. Augustine in Palm Coast, Florida.



For more information or to book a reservation,
call 866-497-1450 or visit GinnHammockBeach.com.

*Plus service charge & some taxes. Rate based on double occupancy in an ocean front Lodge room or quad occupancy in a three bedroom ocean view suite. Two-night minimum length of stay. Lower rates available in alternative lodging units. Subject to availability. Valid through 12/24/08. ©2008 Ginn Hospitality, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Ginn Hammock Beach Resort and the Ginn Hammock Beach Resort logo are the property of Ginn-HA Hammock Beach Ltd., L.L.P. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.