

Online Appendix for “Peer Effects in the Workplace: Evidence from Random Groupings in Professional Golf Tournaments”

Introduction to Golf

The objective in golf is to take the fewest number of strokes on each hole to hit a 1.7-inch golf ball into a 4.25-inch cup. The player with the lowest total number of strokes over all holes is the winner. Golf holes typically are between 150 and 600 yards in length, and they often have ‘hazards’ (e.g. sand traps, water hazards, out-of-bounds areas, and tall trees) that require skill and strategy to avoid. The cup is placed on an area of shorter grass called the ‘green’. The grass is cut shorter on the green so that the ball rolls smoothly when it is struck. Such rolling shots are called ‘putts’.

The first shot on each hole is the tee shot. All players hit their tee shot from the same tee area. This is the only shot where the player is allowed to place the ball on a wooden tee which holds the ball slightly above the ground. There is an area between the tee area and the green called the ‘fairway’ where the grass is cut short (though longer than the grass on the green). On either side of the fairway is longer grass called the ‘rough’. It is easier to hit the ball when it is sitting on shorter grass.

There are three types of holes: par-3 holes, par-4 holes, and par-5 holes. The par indicates the number of strokes in which the hole is expected to be completed. On a par-3 hole, the typical strategy is to attempt to hit the tee shot directly onto the green. For a par-4 hole, the typical strategy is to reach the green in two shots. For a par-5 hole, the typical strategy is to reach the green in three shots.*

Inside the cup is a 7 foot flagstick called the ‘pin’. The pin allows the players to see from a distance where the cup is on the putting green. Often the cup is placed near the edge of the green and near hazards (e.g. sand traps and water hazards), creating a risk-reward trade-off: if a player wants to try to hit his approach shot near the cup, he increases the chance that he hits into a hazard.

Many golf shots present similar risk-reward trade-offs. For example, on a par-4 a player

*A combination of better golf technology and more athletic golfers, however, has transformed most par-5 holes on the PGA Tour into ‘long par 4-holes’ where a majority of the golfers can reach the putting green in one approach shot.

might want to hit a driver (which is the golf club that allows the player to hit the ball the farthest, but which is the most difficult to control) to leave himself the shortest approach shot into the putting green (since players have more control and accuracy over shorter approach shots). However, it is harder to hit the tee shot onto the fairway with a driver, and tee shots that miss the fairway and land in the rough leave more difficult approach shots.