

# Golf – Strategy in Practice

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*From fairways to boardrooms: lessons in competition*

*By Reinout Schotman*



In 2018, I picked up golf. During the Covid-19 lockdown, I set myself a personal challenge: to compete in the senior division of my club championships in 2022 — and not just to participate, but to test whether deliberate practice and strategic thinking could close the gap with much more experienced players.

Most of my competitors had been playing for decades. That gave them valuable experience, but also some predictable weaknesses: limited fitness, shorter driving distance, weak course management, restricted shot variety, and little or no structured training. In short, no clear plan. Historic winning scores suggested the bar was not as high as the handicaps implied.

So I prepared differently. I trained with a clear plan — focusing on endurance, strength, and precision. My intention was to turn length, resilience and smart course management into an advantage. Not to play their game better, but to shape the game around my own strengths.

In the 2022 championships, in my first true competitive test, that approach paid off. I advanced to the match play final and defeated the former club champion with composure. In stroke play, I managed to stay steady under pressure, finishing with a course record and a commanding margin of 13 strokes over the rest of the field — an exceptional gap in golf.



*Participating in the Dutch Open of the European Tour — a completely different game, for which I was ill prepared.*

For me, the real win was not the trophy. It was the proof that strategy principles apply far beyond the boardroom: success is not about trying harder, but about defining the game, tilting the conditions, and then executing with discipline.

As Bruce Henderson said: true strategy is not playing harder within the rules — it is altering the conditions to your advantage. The same principle holds true in business: organizations win not by pushing harder, but by reframing the game to their strengths.

In my consulting work, I help leadership teams and businesses do exactly that: define their playing field, identify where they can tilt the conditions, and execute with discipline. Strategy is not theory — it is practice. And the same principles that won me golf championships can help organizations build enduring advantage.