

intermediategolf

Dream team

FOLLOW THESE 5 STEPS WHEN PICKING YOUR BEST PARTNER FOR COMPETITIVE EVENTS. BY ERIC LOHMAN AND SCOTT HEYN, PGA

If you play enough golf and like to compete, it's inevitable you'll play some partner golf.

Just like in the Ryder or Presidents cups, picking and playing with the right partner can make all of the difference. There is a trick to selecting and playing well with a partner — not everyone is cut out for it, but if you and your partner are a good fit, success will follow.

We team up around 10 times per year playing in Southern California PGA Section and Metro Chapter (encompassing Los Angeles and Orange counties) events. We've won events on each circuit for the last four years, making us one of the most successful partnerships in Southern California competitive golf.

Here are five tips we can offer for picking the right partner:

1) Pick someone you can connect with to make it personal and fun. We have similar backgrounds in golf, both athletically and professionally, as well as personally (similar age, duration of marriage and we each have two daughters). A round of golf, let alone a competitive round, can take a while, and mixing in conversation will take away from the stress and potential boredom of a full round.

2) Play to your strengths and stick with them. Scott is a long hitter, a birdie machine and a



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Heyn (left) and Lohman have teamed to win multiple SPCGA tournaments.

streaky putter. Eric is a more methodical, conservative player who plays as fast as he talks. He also is a more technically sound putter. Therefore, Eric always tees off first and putts last. Eric is more likely to lay up, while Scott will go for the green. When this system is working, it's a winning combination.

3) Make sure your partner is a good fit for multiple formats. Throughout the year, we play in a variety of team formats, including four-ball, scramble and alternate-shot. We play together in each of these formats. It's important to have a conversation before each round and talk through the strategy of the day. In a scramble, we may try to get the first one in the fairway and then be aggressive on the second drive. In an

alternate shot, the goal is to hit fairways and greens, so we will tee off with less than a driver more often and try to avoid big numbers. In four-ball match play, we will feed off of each other's shots and try to be more aggressive or conservative depending on where the first ball is placed.

4) Support your teammate. Make sure they know they're not alone. Don't give up and be encouraging. Since we know our strengths and weaknesses, mistakes or wayward shots don't rattle us.

5) Your partner will feed off of your energy. Even if you aren't having a great day, you can still support your partner whether it's by reading a putt, getting yardages, acting like a swing coach, or being a seasoned caddie. Until the final putt is holed, you can still make a difference. **SG**