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By reading this, you assert that you are a golfer who wants to finally take their game to the next level and leave the world of frustration, meaningless practice, and prolonged improvement behind, and develop an understanding as to what it will take to do so.



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About the Author



Scott has taught approximately 10,000 lessons to 300 different students and helped his students win Club Championships, shoot career rounds and redefine their goals to levels his students would not have thought possible. Scott's passion has also led him to work with golf's governing bodies to help bring new golfers and juniors to the game and help them to experience the joy and sense of accomplishment he feels when hitting a successful golf shot. More importantly though, Scott continues to learn the latest techniques and cutting edge technologies in golf instruction that will not only improve his coaching strategies but also his students' learning curve.

Scott's philosophy is simple, to develop each individual's athletic fundamentals within their golf swing. Golf is a sport, but too often people forget that. Scott hopes that each of his students can feel like they would over a golf shot as if they were shooting a basket or throwing a ball. Many athletes in these sports do not think about mechanics and just perform, which is Scott's goal with golf. After that, Scott takes a holistic approach to the game working with students on their Full Swing, Short Game, Mental Game, Physical Fitness, Club Fitting and Practice routines.

"Scott is my golf "professor" who rebuilt my entire swing from scratch and it's really working! Keeps it so simple without over-teaching and never did I feel frustrated throughout the process."

-Ed L. - Client

Introduction

Golf is a game of many different theories, technologies and equipment along with many other elements that I could list for pages upon pages. Anyone that knows me as a person, knows I enjoy the more simple things in life. That may explain why I chose a profession revolving around a game where the only objective is to get an object in a hole, some hundreds of yards away, as quickly as possible. It does not matter how I do it, I could putt the ball if I wanted to if that meant I would shoot a lower score. This game is great because I love that there are multiple ways to achieve the same goal and only the method that gives you the lowest score is the correct method for you.

There are certain emotions and ideals that you must be willing to display and deal with to be able to take your game to the next level. Most of the golfers that I speak with who struggle to make improvements fail to fully incorporate these ideas into the learning process. The ones that I improve, most of them first hand while coaching them, are able to incorporate the following ideals into their learning process. If you are looking for that one tip to help you hit the ball 20 yards farther or learn to hit a knock down punch shot, you won't find that from reading this report.

What you will find is the path that will guide you to shooting your best scores of your life and finally reaching and redefining your golfing goals. Get ready to truly understand the pieces you are missing that hold you back.

"I wanted to say thank you so much for getting me excited about the game again! Today's lesson really helped a ton. I'm looking forward to working with you and making it to the LPGA:)"

— Danelle G. - 2006 Miss Michigan

Acknowledgments

I want to take this opportunity to all the people who have encouraged and inspired me to chase my dream...

My family who has watched me start from a young junior golfer to playing professional golf tournaments to now sharing my passion with others to enjoy this great game. To all my mentors and fellow professionals who have allowed me to ask questions, share ideas and help develop my overall philosophies about teaching. To my friends, who always boost my confidence anytime that we go to play.

And finally to all of my students, who have put their faith in my abilities to coach 'em up and through much trial and error, make mistakes that have allowed me to learn and improve as a coach.

What You Truly Must Understand to Improve

Simplicity

"If you can't explain it to a six year old, you don't understand it yourself."

— Albert Einstein

The most beautiful thing about the game of golf is that it is simple. Get the ball in the hole in as few strokes as possible. That's it. There is no opponent trying to outsmart you, no defense showing blitz only to drop into zone coverage, no offense that is setting a double screen along the baseline. The ball is not even moving, it sits there motionless waiting for us to strike it. Hitters in baseball try to hit a ball moving 95 miles per hour followed by another one that has three feet of curve. ***Golf is simple, it requires us to take a motionless object and put it into motion towards a specific target. Simple right?***

It can't be that simple though right? My career as a player was haunted by the fact that I couldn't grasp the idea of how simple golf was. I am reminded of a lesson I took with my instructor a few years ago who was the three time teacher of the year in the state and someone whom I thought held all the answers. I went to him because I was having an issue with catching the ball slightly heavy and consistently second guessing my distance control with my irons. I was frustrated I couldn't make solid contact and let it get to me on the golf course. When I played, I would almost brag about how inconsistent my contact was to show everyone the problem I was having. I was focused on everything I was doing wrong to cause me to not make solid contact.

So I headed to the lesson and when my instructor walked up to me on the lesson tee, he gave me his usual greeting and asked me "What's going on with your game?" I told him all about how I can't hit the ball solid and I'm catching everything slightly heavy and have no faith in my distances because I think my body is all out of sorts and the club is doing this and this and this. At this point he stopped me. He asked me "Scott, what happens when we catch the ball fat?" I responded with the obvious answer, which was that hitting the ball fat means we are hitting the ground before making contact with the golf ball. He nodded and said "Then

don't do that." I sat there waiting for more of an explanation but none followed. He repeated it again and then told me to hit a golf ball. I pulled a golf ball over thinking to myself "I'm paying a lot of money to be told 'don't do that?' This is dumb; everyone knows not to hit the ground before the ball." I set up, made a swing and striped a 7 iron with a slight draw right at my target. It was that magic feeling that everyone feels after hitting a solid golf shot where the ball explodes off the clubface with an effortless motion. I pulled another ball over and he repeated "we are having a problem with hitting the ball fat, and we know what a fat shot is, then don't do that." Again I hit another solid shot that felt just as good as the first. Lesson over. Simple.

My ball striking improved and my confidence returned in my golf game. This was an eye opening point in my playing career which was soon cut short by illness but more importantly it has been a revelation to how learning should take place in this game. I didn't need any swing training aids or elaborate drill to work on for hours to get better. I needed some basic analysis of what the problem was and then a logical solution to the problem. From there it was practice to make me feel more confident and to train my natural ability to take over once again when making a swing. Then I could return to what really matters, lowering my score.

What I experienced is maybe the most important reason to take a lesson ever. I had begun to think about the problem with my golf swing by examining every little nook and cranny of it to see what I could find. I wanted the result to be something really complicated to fix so I could feel like a big time professional whose swing problems were way beyond those of a beginning golfer. What I really needed was a fresh perspective from a qualified person to tell me my swing wasn't a complete disaster. ***Golf doesn't need to be complicated in the way we learn the game.***

More times than not, when my students come to me who have been playing for a while and recite a laundry list of things that are wrong with their golf swings. There is almost a sense of pride in how badly they have screwed up their swing and how much work they are going to have to put in to fix it. After their first lesson with me, I can see they are almost

underwhelmed with the amount of information they have received to go and work on their game. It's not a great feeling to send people off like that, but when they come back excited and energized about their game and ready to learn more, that is when it pays off.



Again, golf is simple; There are no mysteries as to why the golf ball does what it does when you make a golf swing. The golf ball reacts to one thing, what the club head is telling it to do at impact. There is proper technique to learn in a golf swing and I want to convey the best ways to learn, retain and transfer whatever techniques you learn to the golf course so you can shoot better scores. Too often though, the fact that golf is a sport and sport requires a certain amount of reaction over thinking to be successful gets lost.

As you continue through this book and on your journey to learning and playing this great game, remember one thing: ***golf is simple.***

Faith

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

-Martin Luther King Jr.

I truly believe that I am more than just a golf coach. Maybe I'm just being self-serving to make myself believe that I will truly make a difference with my life in this world. But I believe that the biggest thing that people can learn from me is to have some faith.

I am writing this because I have been in your shoes!

I was once an aspiring competitive golfer who was looking to play golf at a very high level, and to do this, this meant I had to put myself out there to either succeed or fail. I also had to admit that I was not as good as I thought and I needed help to be able to achieve my goals. ***Asking for help is a humbling experience, you are going to feel awkward during this process of learning. That is OK and in fact normal.***

You have come to me for help, hopefully because you heard that I am really good at helping people, but you also realized that this is a journey you will be unable to complete on your own. You have put your faith in me to help you get better at golf.

I want to help you learn from my experiences, and if there is one thing that I hope you don't have to learn the hard way is that everything is easier if you have help. Sometimes it can be more rewarding to achieve things on our own, but ask yourself if the price is worth the reward. Don't be afraid to put a little faith in others to help you get where you want to be.

Expectations

"I'm not in this world to live up to your expectations and you're not in this world to live up to mine."

—Bruce Lee

In my career currently, I have taught approximately 10,000 golf lessons to golfers of varying abilities, goals and backgrounds. Every single one of these students during their first lesson I have asked "If you get one thing out of taking golf lessons from me, what would that one thing be?" The number one answer by a landslide is "I would like to be more consistent." Well this is where the most important but also the most difficult part of my job begins, first I must find out what the student's definition of "consistent" is. Then the next part is to tell you that you probably are not going to be achieving it anytime soon.

It sounds harsh I know but expectations are one of the biggest killers of a player's ability to improve in golf. When I am asking a student what their definition of consistency is, it usually comes back to statistics that they see PGA Tour or LPGA Tour players maintain on television and they feel they should be able to achieve.

Here are a couple of statistics to help everyone understand what they are up against when trying to reach an "elite" level of playing this game:

- When participating in an activity, it usually takes up to 14 years to reach an elite level of mastery of that particular skill.
- ***For every hour that you practice a skill incorrectly, it takes 3 hours to undo that skill and then relearn it the correct way.***

Why do I tell you these statistics? So you can understand that unless you are willing to practice like a tour player, don't expect tour player results. ***Unrealistic expectations are one of the biggest reasons that people fail while learning to play golf and why in the last few years, golf has seen a 20 percent decline in participation.***

Golfers have tried to pick up the game and improve but in the end get frustrated and fail. Golf coaches fail to prepare their students for the journey they are about to embark on. Golf, although simple, is not easy. And like everything else, you do not just pick up a golf club and become an immediate expert. There are epic peaks and valleys and our goals are to have the peaks go higher than the valleys go low.

I know this all sounds very harsh at the moment and that taking up the game of golf and trying to improve is an impossible journey. That is not at all what I am hoping to convey to you. What I want to convey is that you need to look at what you are truly capable of achieving in your desired time frame and develop a realistic expectation of how you would like your game to improve. It is important to do this because with realistic expectations you can achieve success which is the drug that keeps us motivated to continue climbing towards the top of the golfing mountain. If the expectations we set are unrealistic for where the current state of our game is, then we will never reach our goals and will not enjoy the process.

Team

"It takes a lot of people to make a winning team. Everybody's contribution is important."

— Gary David Goldberg

Golf is the greatest game in the world in my opinion. There is no other game that tests an athlete's physical, mental and emotional skills during the course of a round, a hole or even a single shot. Golf is an individual sport and at times, it sure can remind you of that fact. A lot of golfers I see, especially dedicated junior golfers, tend to practice and prepare their games almost in a state of solitude. Usually they will set up their equipment at the end of the range, put their headphones in their ears and go into a zone of working on improving their game.

While it is true that when it comes to performing, it is all on the individual athlete to deliver with a quality shot. Golfers who truly reach their potential and become better as golfers, the incorporation of the proper team and support system is imperative. When you watch the best players in the world, the amount of competitive players that have a shot at winning each week is at an all time high. What is the one common thing that you see with all of these players? They all have some sort of team and support system around them. Whether you look at wives who are caddies, a great coach, friendship with other players on tour, fitness professionals and sports psychiatrists, there is no shortage of people who are looking out for the interest of the individual player. With the help of this support system, the golfer will have some level of comfort out on the golf course to know that it is not completely their fault when they make a bad swing, and they can also share the joy of success. ***For most of us, we cannot afford a team like that of a tour pro but that doesn't mean we can't have the proper support needed to play our best golf. ,***

There are two essential elements of a team that you should look to have. The first is a coach who not only has the ability to give you correct technical advice (which is a really small part of golf success), but a coach who knows how to challenge you to compete and reach goals. This should come through analyzing the current state of your golf game, identifying

your goals, and then planning how you hope to achieve them (something that will be discussed in the next chapter).

The next element is someone to compete and practice with some opponents. This is the most important component of your team when learning golf and becoming a better golfer. Think about any of the times you watch television on golf, especially major championships, the top teachers who coach many different touring professionals, have their students hitting balls in the same area. Part of the reason for this is so they can visit with each student with ease. But they also understand how much these guys are competitors, and when they see good shots, they want to duplicate and then exceed the shots that are being hit. I taught for years one on one lessons, and what I would commonly see is students who would get better, but at a rate that I felt was not as fast as it could be, and then many of the students would not practice enough because of varying reasons. I made the switch to coaching programs where I would get groups of 6 students of similar skill levels to take lessons, practice and play on the course together. Some of the results I got from this group of students would be a decrease in 10 shots in three months! This healthy competition from practicing with like skill levels, can help keep you motivated to improve.

Another very important aspect of this is that you get to practice hitting golf shots around other people. We talked about faith earlier, and how it can be tough to put yourself out on a limb to ask for help. It can be embarrassing to show your current golf game to an expert and see what they are going to say about it. What can be even harder, is taking your game out in front of complete strangers and performing at the level you say it's going to perform at.

When I worked in a one on one situation with my students, I would frequently get my students on the golf course to help them perform on the course. Many times, when just the two of us would play, they would perform well and implement the changes we were trying to make. When they return from a round of golf where they may be playing with two or three other people, usually it would be a disaster. If you are able to put a team of other golfers

(especially ones you play with), you will reduce any tension you may feel from playing with other people, which will allow you to perform on the course better.

Golf is an individual sport, but it is played in an environment where there are a lot of outside factors that can place pressure on us to perform. Start developing the team around yourself to help you deal with these pressures and you will start to have more fun on the golf course.

Practice

"I've always considered myself to be just average talent and what I have is a ridiculous insane obsessiveness for practice and preparation."

-Will Smith

One of the most common phrases that athletes will hear from a coach is that "practice makes perfect" and if they try to be a little bit more accurate in their statement, they will say "perfect practice makes perfect." I would disagree with both statements when it comes to practice.

The idea of practice is not lost on about 95 percent of the students I teach. They know that this may take some work to get their goals accomplished. However, 99 percent of the students I teach have no idea how much practice will be required or what the process of practice is like. Their usual routine is to show up at the driving range once a week with the largest size bucket of practice balls, proceed to hit them with maybe a drill swing or two they read from a magazine in between shots, then throw in a few minutes of chipping from one or two locations and some practice putts and then call it a day.

Before I criticize this style of practice, I want to say that this is a big plus over someone who does not practice at all. Making some effort to hit shots correctly every week is at least somewhat productive as I believe that at the very worst a golfer can work on their hand-eye coordination of putting the club on the ball. ***However, it is not the most efficient method of practicing which for most of us who have only so many hours to practice golf, is a critical hurdle to overcome.***

Through the next couple of paragraphs, I will take you through the process to develop an effective practice plan that will help you improve your golf game in the most efficient manner possible.

1. Record Your Stats

This is easily the number one issue that limits any golfer from being able to improve their golf game. You must track your game so you can understand what your strengths and weaknesses are. If you don't know what your weaknesses are, then how would you ever know what you need to practice? This is very valuable when you only have an hour to practice after work and can work on one or two areas of your game.

Tracking stats can be very easy, it can be something as simple as your score, how many greens in regulation and fairways you hit, and the number of putts you take during a given round. For a more complete picture, I have my students use my own excel spreadsheets I've created.

If you don't know what your strengths and weaknesses are, then you are spinning your wheels to some degree with your practice time.

2. Develop Your Practice Game Plan

John Wooden is arguably the greatest coach of all time with his record setting UCLA Bruins teams that won seven consecutive National Championships and 10 of 12. During this stretch, Coach Wooden was notorious for his regimented and planned out practice routines. Every practice he planned out to the minute and even included a designated time to learn how to tie your shoes properly. Now you don't achieve the feats that the Bruins did without having some extremely talented players on your roster, but the plan that Coach Wooden put into place helped the kids learn discipline, patience and a sense for the process that would make them a better basketball player.

Transfer this over to the golf world to look at one of the strongest competitors the game has ever seen, Tiger Woods. Tiger's greatest strength during his major championship

victories was always that he has an unmatched work ethic and mental discipline, along with some ridiculous golf skills. When you look at his practice, ***Tiger has the day laid out from start to finish dictating when he is going to workout, eat, be on the range working on full swing, short game practice, putting, playing golf holes and leisure time. Not only does he know what he is going to work on, but he dictates what time he will do this each day and for how long.***

There is a common theme, to be great you must be focused on what you need to do to improve. Developing a practice game plan for the day will help make sure you keep focused throughout your valuable practice time so you know what you are going to work on and how much time to devote to each area. This small step will go along way to helping you improve your golf game quicker.

3. Execution

This is the time to get to it. The part of the game that Ben Hogan referred to as "Digging it out of the dirt." You have evaluated your existing game, developed your game plan, but without execution, all of that work is for nothing. There is not a whole lot that can be said specifically about this part because each golfer learns differently and responds to different stimulation. There are only a few rules that I have that must be followed during the execution stage.

I. Pick a Target - If you don't know what you are trying to hit, how do you know that you missed it?

II. Feedback - Whether this be through a drill, a training aid, alignment aid, desired ball flight, every swing you make needs to have feedback present. Feedback is anything that lets you know that you made a correct or incorrect movement. This can be anything from an alignment rod on the ground at your feet to a towel under your arm to keep your arms

connected. If you cannot make a swing and have a way to determine if the swing was good or bad, then you are wasting your time.

4. Review

After your practice session, you need to take the time to evaluate your practice time to see if you met your goals for the day. It is OK to not hit your goals for the day, but you must know if you did or didn't. If you were unable to accomplish something for the day, that means you just carry it over into your next practice session. Again, this is a process, and just like Rome wasn't built in a day, your golf swing won't become PGA Tour caliber in just one practice session. Just be honest about your game and take it as it comes.

5. Example Practice Plan

The following would be an example of a practice plan that I have implemented for one of my students:

- **Record Your Stats** – After reviewing this student's particular stats on his GOGI profile and seeing some swings in person, we started to see that the student had a problem with driving the golf ball. He missed the ball in all directions and would not make solid contact, sometimes hitting the neck of the driver where the shaft connects to the club head.
- **Develop Your Practice Game Plan** – After getting on the same page that making solid contact with the driver was a priority, we developed a practice plan that included a few drills and spending a week hitting shots no more than 80 yards with the driver (about 25% effort).
- **Execution** – The student went to work on trying to execute the practice plan. He had feedback of using foot powder on the face of the golf club to show where he was making contact. When I occasionally checked in on him, he was executing the practice plan to perfection.

- **Review** – After seeing the student make center contact with the driver with slow speed swings, we could change the goals to start increasing speed and work on some more intricate parts of driving the golf ball.



Transfer

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

- Muhammad Ali-

Have you ever played a round of golf where you uttered the phrase afterward “I hit the ball so good on the range yesterday but was awful today!” Welcome to the club of people who are trying to improve their golf game or improve at any skill. We see it all the time in sports, where an athlete fails to perform a skill that they routinely perform in practice. There's quite an unpleasant term we give to this phenomenon, choking. ***What I see however is not a failure on the golfers part to perform a skill that is the main problem, but I see it as the golfer was never prepared to perform in the first place.***

There are a lot of elements that go into getting yourself game ready, and we talked about a few of them in the practice chapter, but there is one aspect that I feel deserves special attention, and that is the idea of transfer.

Think about any other sport that you may play or have played growing up. The one that I'm going to use as an example is basketball. When I was growing up and learning to play basketball, our practices would spend some time learning a fundamental of the game or conditioning ourselves, but then at the end of practice there almost always would be a game or scrimmage that would take place. This was the opportunity to try out our new skills against live opponents in a game simulated situation to see how well we have developed our skills.

Now think about how you learn to play golf. We head to the driving range with a basket of golf balls and regardless of whether or not we are working on drills or using training aids, we know that if we miss a shot we can just try it again with the next ball. In golf, if you miss a shot, you end up behind a tree or in the water hazard and it would be a really bad thing if you got the opportunity to try a shot again. If you do not incorporate conditions similar to playing a round of golf into your practice, then there is no chance you are adequately prepared to

perform when it matters. In fact, if you do succeed under pressure, it would be more luck than performing up to your abilities.

There is definitely a challenge though to simulating playing conditions in golf because unless you are a member at a country club and have plenty of time to play rounds of golf experimenting, then it can be quite costly to go out and practice playing golf. So what can we do on the range to help with this? The following lists a few things that I find the most effective:

- **Practice with friends and compete** - This is the number one thing you can do on the range, whether you try to play closest to the pin or have a long drive contest, there is always pressure to try and beat your friends.
- **Play golf on the range** - This one is easy, but also requires quite a bit of discipline. If you think about how you play golf, you typically start a hole off with a driver or fairway wood. You then get in the golf car and ride to your golf ball and then wait a few minutes before it is your turn to hit. The process repeats all the way til the ball is holed. So on the range, I challenge you to do the same thing. Hit your first shot with your driver and pick out a fairway. After you hit the shot, regardless of the result, go ahead and take a walk up and down the range tee and get a drink of water. When you get back, pick a club that you think you would have to hit based on the drive you hit. Hit the second shot and go ahead and do the same thing, maybe watch a few other people hit some shots. Then if you hit the target you picked for the second shot, then you would be putting. If the putting green is close by, grab your putter and go over and pick a hole and hit the putt. Once the ball is holed, head back to the range to repeat the process. Like I said, it takes a lot of discipline, but if you want to perform on the course, you need to practice like you are on the course.

Don't just practice your chipping or pitching, practice getting up and down - Why do you work on your short game? Because you want to get the ball up and down. There are two parts to the equation, the chip or pitch, then the putt. Many people love to set down a pile of practice balls and hit chip or pitch after chip or pitch, but they never see their scores get lower

because they don't get the ball into the hole any faster. Conversely, they might practice making 100 three footers in a row, but don't practice getting the ball into that three foot circle in the first place. Practice both skills together. ***Remember, golf is a culmination of all your skills to shoot the lowest score possible, so if you are not practicing putting those skills together in an environment close to what you will experience on the golf course, then you have no chance to transfer the skills from the range to the course.***

Failure

"We are all failures- at least the best of us are."

—J.M. Barrie

Failure is a topic that I addressed in the chapter on expectations. Although it is my intent to put a positive spin on the game of golf that I love so much, I find the area of failure fascinating as a golf coach and when I watch a scenario where someone has failed.

My college degree is in the field of Sociology which I chose because of my enjoyment of looking at societies as a whole and what their perspectives are on certain issues. Our society has put such an emphasis on pointing out failure as a disappointing experience. After big games the media spends nearly as much time covering the losing team instead of the winning team and with the questioning in the media, we want to draw every reaction out of the individual or team that failed to see how bad they feel about it.

There is one thing that I want my students to learn from their time playing golf because I feel it is an important life lesson: you should be proud of the fact that you failed, because it means you tried. The world is littered with people who have never failed because they never put themselves in a situation to fail. As a child on my desk in my bedroom, I used to keep a quote taped to it from the greatest basketball player of them all Michael Jordan, and it read "I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying." This came particularly in handy at one of the defining moments of my life entering high school.

As a young golfer growing up, as soon as I found out that high school golf existed, I made it my goal to make the team. I spent years playing and practicing in the summer at my hometown golf course and when the day finally came, I remember being so nervous that I could barely talk before the first round of our tryouts. All I could think about is how much of a waste all of my work would be if I failed to make the team. With my fear of failure at the forefront of my mind, I went out and shot a round that put me outside of even making the junior varsity team. I was distraught after the round as it all seemed like a blur. I remember

the coach, who had seen me play in local tournaments, asked me what happened in my round and I could not give him an answer. The real answer in hindsight was that I didn't focus on my game at all but only focused on how much I didn't want to fail. I had to go home that evening and have a mental session that reminded myself of why I spent all those hours practicing and playing the game growing up. It wasn't because I was afraid to miss the high school team, it was because I truly enjoyed the game and the process of trying to improve.

With my thoughts refocused, I headed to the second day of tryouts determined to hit the best shot I could possibly hit for the given situation. No longer thinking about failing, I played good enough to make the team and then shortly after that, earn a spot on the varsity where I never left.

Just remember, there is one certainty in not only golf but life, you are going to fail. You can choose to look at failure as a disappointment, or as an opportunity to improve. How you want to look at it is up to you.

Success

"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome."

- Booker T. Washington

Success is the ultimate goal in not only golf but life. Whatever you may want to do in your life, you want to be successful at it. Even if you say you don't want to achieve anything or meet any real high expectations, if you are able to do that, then you were successful. More commonly, success is viewed as someone who is able to excel in a field or activity. In golf, it is someone who is able to achieve their goals.

Without a goal or benchmark, there is no real way to define whether or not you are accomplishing anything with your golf game, and that leads to an idea that many golfers are familiar with, plateauing or frustration. If you do not have any idea what you are trying to achieve then you are going along with no direction. If there is no direction then you will just be lost in a land of going through the motions of being a golfer and in a year or two or your entire life, you will be the same golfer that you were when you started.

There is a certain way I like to set goals with my students so they can experience success, the first is to set a long term goal, such as being able to shoot even par. Depending on where the student is at in their golf game development, this goal be a one year goal or a 10 year goal. Typically the long term goal is something that will happen beyond the one year mark. You can have multiple long term goals, but I like to see my students put a time frame on each individual one. The goal from there is to start making intermediate or short term goals that we can work to achieve throughout the year to achieve the long term goals that we have set. For example, with my competitive players, I use an advanced metrics spreadsheet to track their games so we can see what areas they are struggling with so we can turn those areas into a strength.

It is very important to set these intermediate and more visible goals because you need to experience success in this game because sometimes it can seem like it comes few and far

between. There needs to be a reward for all the time that you put in to practicing and playing this game to get better. Reaching these goals while climbing the ladder to your ultimate goal will help you recognize your improvement so you can feel some sense of accomplishment.

With success though comes a bad quality, complacency. There are plenty of stories of golfers at all levels, professional to high handicapper who finally reached a level they had not reached before and thought they had mastered the game.

Swing Concepts You Must Understand

I am not an instructor who has a long checklist of swing keys and positions that must be met in the golf swing by all my students. The golf swing can be a very individualistic movement that has a lot to do with the individual student's physical abilities, swing characteristics and preferences. Because we are all different people, it would be naive and in my opinion, incorrect to try and get people to have swings that mimic other golfers entirely.

My teaching philosophy is one that is based upon using some of the top technology to research the swings of top level players and amateurs to look for characteristics that would define what makes their golf swings successful. Despite all the research, there are a certain (and small) set of golf skills that everyone must practice to improve their golf game and quite honestly, not enough time is spent by amateur golfers on these fundamentals when practicing. If you watch an elite level player, pay attention to how much time they spend on these specific fundamentals and compare them to how much time you spend on them, and you may find improvement much quicker than you think.

Alignment

"I think for a lot of amateurs, their alignment is always out."

- Karrie Webb

Easily the most overlooked swing concept of struggling golfers is alignment. And the worst part is that it may be the easiest part of your golf swing to fix. Alignment has a direct impact on every other aspect of your golf swing including your swing path, club face angle, sequence and rhythm and everything else you may have heard or read about in any other instruction media.

Alignment is not a brand new concept in golf and it is something that is a requirement on every shot. There are not many technical ideas in golf that can say that. Why is it a requirement? Well not matter what, your body will be set in some sort of alignment before you make your swing. It may not be a good alignment, but it will be in some sort of alignment.

What is good alignment though? Here are the following things that will be in alignment for a player that has a good setup. Conversely, they are what will be out of alignment, almost guaranteed, for a bad golfer:

Club Face – The club face rests directly behind the golf ball and if you were to draw a straight line from the target back through the golf ball and the club face, it would be perpendicular to the club face. For the expert player the club face may be slightly open to this line because the club rests behind the ball, and during the golf swing the club face will rotate to square by the time it reaches the golf ball.

Most amateur golfers will set up with a club face closed to the left because they want to stop the ball from starting to the right and then slicing. This however does not help fix that problem because it restricts the club face from rotating closed in the swing and usually rotates back open. This can also be caused by our second alignment checkpoint.

Feet, hips, shoulders – Incorrect alignment of the golfers body is a major issue with almost all golfers, from experts to amateurs. If you go to a professional tournament and walk up and

down the driving range, you will see almost every golfer has some sort of alignment aid lying on the ground for not only the club but their body alignments. If your body is out of alignment, you will need to make some sort of compensation during your swing to try and get the ball to go towards your target.

The most common alignment fault I see is where the feet and hips usually point to the right of the target and then the shoulders and club try to correct and aim left of the target. This leads to the classic over-the-top slice golf swing as the golfer tries to pull the club back to the left and they cut across the golf ball. A great setup will have the club, feet, hips and shoulders all in parallel lines to each other. Now because our body is at the end of the club which can be more than 3 feet away from the ball, we need to be comfortable with the idea that our body will be aimed left of the target. This allows the club face to be aimed directly at our target.

Below is a picture of one of my professional student's alignments at setup. You can clearly see the club face is pointed at the target in the circle, while his body is aligned parallel left.



Now getting a setup that looks like the expert golfer doesn't happen overnight, and quite honestly, it takes a really long time to get good at it. Then once you think you have your alignment down, it starts to become an issue without you ever knowing. Because of this, when we practice we must always work on our alignment even when we are working on other things.

Drill: Create a Practice Station

- ***First and most importantly, PICK A TARGET! It is amazing how often people hit golf balls without picking a target. To paraphrase a famous saying “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.” You must have a target to be able to practice aligning yourself to it.***
- ***Place a golf club in front of your golf ball directly in line with your target. Then place another golf club on the same line directly behind your golf ball.***
- ***Finally, take an alignment marker or driveway marker and place it in the ground directly in front of your target line.***
- ***Take your setup to the golf ball and pay attention to get your club face perpendicular to the rods on the ground, and your feet, hips and shoulders parallel to them.***
- ***Take a look at your target and the rod that is sticking up from the ground. This is what it looks like to have good alignment to the target. Usually the target looks well to the right of where the golfer would normally aim. Again, your body is aligned parallel left of the target so it looks like it is aiming left because it is aiming left. We need the club face and target line to be lined up at the target***

Club Face and Club Path

"At the end of the day, you're responsible for yourself and your actions and that's all you can control.

So rather than be frustrated with what you can't control, try to fix the things you can."

- Kevin Garnett

As I already explained earlier in the book, golf is really simple. We are sending the golf ball towards our target by making a swing with the club. There are many different ways to accomplish this goal. Take a look at the PGA, LPGA, Champions and European Tours. Every week you will see a myriad of swing styles that are contending amongst the best players in the world. Why are they competing? Because all expert players have a complete mastery of controlling their club face angle at impact and the corresponding path of the club.

So what are the elements of being able to control the golf ball and ultimately become an expert at hitting it towards our target? Remember it's very simple:

Club Face Angle: The club face rotates throughout a golf swing and through the impact zone. This is a requirement because the golf club is built on an inclined plane which makes it impossible to stop the club face from rotating in an efficient golf swing. The angle the club face is at when it collides with the golf ball is the angle the golf ball will start on. So if your golf ball is starting to the right of your target, then the face is open, and if it starts left that means it is closed (assuming a right handed player and center of the club face hit).

Club Path: The path the club travels into the golf ball controls the spin that you put on the golf ball. Most golfers swing with a club path that is too far left which causes an ugly left to right slice (assuming a right handed player). It is generally seen that a swing path that travels to the right or out to the golf ball is the most efficient way to swing the golf club and will maximize distance.

Club Face Relative to Path: *The combination of both the club path and the face angle*

ultimately control where the golf ball is going.

Remember the golf ball starts on the angle the club face is pointing, but the curve is a result of the side spin that is put on the golf ball. If the club path is traveling to the right of the club face angle, it will impart right to left spin on the ball causing a draw or a hook. If the club path is traveling to the left of the club face angle, it causes a fade or slice. Understanding this concept is the most crucial element to becoming a good golfer. We take time to align ourselves well and swing the club with good rhythm so it is easier to control the club face and path at impact. ***Unfortunately, we are human and every day you will feel different, so this drill must be performed frequently to allow your body to refine the feeling of controlling the club.***

Drill: Club Face and Path Control

- ***Take a driveway marker and place it in front of your target line, just as you would in creating an alignment station.***
- ***Place a pool noodle over the alignment rod.***
- ***Hit a few practice shots paying attention to where the golf ball starts in relation to the pool noodle and then which direction it curves.***
- ***Your first goal is to try and hit the pool noodle 5 times with ½ and ¾ shots then moving into full shots.***
- ***Then attempt to hit 5 shots starting to the right and left of the pool noodle. After completing this task, attempt to add curving the golf ball by trying to start the ball to one side of the pool noodle and have it curve to the other side.***

Using this drill will calibrate your control of the golf club into impact and make it easier to control your golf ball and diagnose any shot that you hit that did not have the desired result.

Sequence and Rhythm

"A golf swing is extreme coordination. It's about maintaining balance, equilibrium. It's about executing very difficult rhythms with a panache and a feeling in the context of very strict time. So, everything about the swing is about some guideline and some grid and the elegant way that you negotiate your way through that grid."

-Wynton Marsalis

Golf is a game that in the past 20 years has grown leaps and bounds in the area of science and technology. It is almost commonplace for an instructor to have access to 3D motion measurement technology, radar ball and club tracking technology, force plates and many more gadgets to go along with the traditional video camera analysis that is commonplace amongst a lesson.

One of my many mentors is Mike Malaska, 2011 PGA "Teacher of the Year," who was infamous for saying "Golf Instruction is getting more complicated, and I'm not sure why, our goal is to get the ball into the hole which hasn't changed." I do agree there is merit to using technology in golf instruction, and I use some of the items listed above in lessons myself. But since the implementation of all this technology, we think that golfers should be getting better, yet research through the National Golf Foundation has found that the national handicap is not lowering. As a coach, that means one of two things, either golfers are not working on their games, which when I go to a driving range around Chicago on a weekend, I see that is not true. Or collectively as coaches, we are getting it wrong.

As I will mention numerous times if you take lessons from me, golf is a sport. I cannot think of a single sport where you can mechanically execute a motion in a step-by-step fashion and be successful. The most successful shooters in basketball do not operate by thinking about squaring their body, bending their knees, tucking their elbow in, ball in front of their nose, jump, extend their arm, flick their wrists, release the ball, follow through and hold their finish. All in a matter of less than a second. There is no way that an NBA player could play the game with this type of thinking, if they did they would get the ball stolen or blocked every

single time. ***Athletic movements must be executed by performing a sequence of events in a particular rhythm.***

The better you are at a particular sport or athletic movement, the better you are able to perform the necessary sequence of events at a better and more repeatable rhythm. Think about all the swings you see on the PGA Tour past and present. Lee Trevino, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Seve Ballesteros, Juli Inkster, Annika Sorenstam are some of the greatest and most consistent golfers of all time. Jim Furyk, Phil Mickleson, Keegan Bradley, Fred Couples, Dustin Johnson, Zach Johnson, In-Bee Park, and Paula Creamer are some of the most consistent golfers in the world currently. All of these golfers have swings that have defining characteristics that set them apart from what the “model” swing looks like. But when you watch them from event to event, the one thing you will notice is that they have a very consistent rhythm and they repeat their golf swings (sequence of events) from day to day.

So if you are not working on your rhythm especially in the middle of your golf season, then you are doing yourself a disservice to your game. Usually something as easy as a timing and rhythm issue turns into trying to break down your entire golf game to find the missing puzzle. Remember the first chapter, golf is simple, take the easy road instead of the hard one when you can, because it's not always available.

Fun

"Just play. Have fun. Enjoy the game"

-Michael Jordan

I want you to ask yourself one very important question and think very carefully about it.

Why do you play golf?

This may be the most important question I ask anyone that comes to get better at their golf game. In my mind there is only one correct answer to this question. You should play golf for one reason, because it is fun. Now there are a bunch of different goals that players can have such as trying to play college golf, break 100 for the first time, or to be able to go play with clients. But if you don't have fun trying to reach these goals, then you will never achieve them.



Golf is a game, and although I wholeheartedly believe that golf can have a positive affect on your life, it should never have a negative effect on your life. If it does, then you need to take a look at other aspects of your life, because I promise you, if you are out playing golf throwing clubs, cursing or not being social, you're not going to want to play anymore, and nobody is going to want to play with you.

Let me be clear, frustration and anger will always be part of the game. The important part is how do you deal with these negative emotions to get back to having fun and enjoying the game? Below is a drill that I use with every golfer who struggles to have fun:

Drill: Post-Shot Routine

Pre-shot routines are something that are very common in the golfing world. Many golfers have heard something about how important it is to get yourself prepared to hit the shot that you are currently faced with. Almost as important however is having a post-shot

routine. Similar to when we practice, we want to be able to analyze and then adjust to what is going on in our games, we need to do the same on the golf course.

Try this the next time you go out and play, if you hit a golf shot with a less than desired result, feel free to get mad and frustrated all you want up until the point you head back to the golf car or you put the club you used back in your bag. During this time though, make sure to include in your rant a moment to think about what went wrong with the shot. Once you get in the car though or put the club back in your bag it is over. You are back to having fun playing golf and looking to hit the next shot to the best of your ability.

You will find out two things about yourself: First, you will improve your game because you will start realizing what you did wrong during your stroke. Secondly, you will start to get less mad during your game because there will be a reason for what just happened. When golf no longer is fun, usually it is because someone does not know what to do to get any better, but that can usually be figured out with some logical thinking.

Remember golf is a game.

Most likely you are not a professional golfer, and if you are, remember how lucky you are to be one, and just enjoy it. For the rest of us, enjoy the challenge of being able to compete and try and improve.

As I mentioned earlier, I fell in love with this game at an early age because of what it has taught me about being a person. It is because of that I will always play, teach and encourage others to join me. It is my hope that with the help of these lessons, you will find the same passion and joy that I have.

