

TEACHING THE MIND

by

JOHN JOSEPH GALE
HEAD PROFESSIONAL
TATNUCK COUNTRY CLUB
1222 PLEASANT STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01602

THESIS

Presented to the Professional Golfer's
Association of America
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for

MASTER PROFESSIONAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

CHAPTER

I. PREPARING YOUR MIND 4

II. CONCENTRATION AND EMOTIONS 6

III. RELAXATION AND VISUALIZATION 9

IV. SELF TALK 12

V. TRUST VS. THE FEAR OF FAILURE 15

VI. PRE-SHOT ROUTINE 18

VII. FROM RANGE TO COURSE 20

VIII. HELPING YOURSELF 23

IX. EVALUATING PROGRESS 25

X. QUESTIONING GOOD PLAYERS 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY 29

INTRODUCTION

From the time you hit your first golf shots or play your first round, the mental side of your golf game begins to form. For most, it becomes a hindrance to progress rather than a positive assist.

In recent years, a large number of instructional books and audio programs on the mental game have been introduced to assist golfers of all levels. The ability to ready your mind for golf by controlling your emotions, improving your concentration, visualizing your shots positively, and using self talk as a reinforcement are just some of the methods available to improve your mental outlook, which leads to improving your game.

After researching some instructional manuals, I became interested in the mental side of golf and decided to incorporate it as a theme for my Master Professional Thesis. In "Teaching the Mind," I will attempt to show golfers methods to improve the neglected side of their game.

I. PREPARING YOUR MIND

Since the game first began, golfers have been bombarded with instruction on how to swing the club. The avenues from which this instruction comes are many and varied, including word of mouth from fellow golfers, lessons from golf professionals, articles in golf publications, books, and now even in video form. For the most part, this instruction started and stopped with the body, the physical part of the game, and never ventured into the mind, the mental part of the game. Golfers of all ability levels need to turn to the mind to reach their full potential in golf.

"Teaching the Mind" will show you how to stop interfering with yourself by decreasing some of the mental obstacles of doubt, fear, and frustration that you are faced with. The game of golf is a unique sport because the pace of play allows you a great deal of time for negative thoughts. It becomes your job to relax the mind and prepare it for total concentration on the upcoming shot. All golfers have lost their rhythm by allowing frustration to take over when the group in front seems to be holding them up on every shot. Unfortunately, golf forgives no shots, so the pressure is constant. This is the reason that you must decrease the amount of critical analysis to first gain control of your mind in order to gain control of your body. The tennis player, who needs only one point to win the final set and match, is allowed to mis-hit one serve and still have another chance. The golfer standing on the eighteenth tee with an opportunity to win a big tournament knows that he has only one chance to safely drive the ball in the fairway.

In "The New Golf Mind" by Dr. Gary Wiren and Dr. Richard Coop, the authors describe the right and left hemispheres of the brain.¹ The left side, or Analyzer, is the thinking cap that acquires and learns the moves of the golf swing while the right side, or Integrator, allows us to execute the swing using its intuitive powers of feel and the ability to create vivid images. Many golfers, who fail to use the Integrator, must act without images and become too mechanical. A quote from Dick Aultman, Golf Digest Editor, emphasizes this point: "The golfer who stands at the ball as rigid as a statue usually becomes a monumental failure"²

In preparing your mind, you must be yourself. You have your own personality with which you are comfortable. Use your personality to increase your level of confidence. Swings of great golfers can be mimicked with success, but to copy a player's pre-shot routine might not fit because of dissimilar personalities. The mind must evaluate what is happening rather than allow the pressure to take over. Your personal mental flexibility will enable you to play your best all the time. Learn not to worry about factors that you have no control over, such as a bad bounce or landing in a divot or an unraked bunker. To prepare your mind for golf you must be committed. Committed to learn the fundamentals of the game, committed to be yourself and let your mind help you, and committed to improvement. Remember, no one can make you feel inferior but you.

¹Richard Coop and Gary Wiren, The New Golf Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), pp. 8-16.

²Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 146.

II. CONCENTRATION AND EMOTIONS

Bob Jones, the late great golfer, once said that one needs "a mental attitude toward the game which will enable him to get everything possible out of his own capability."³ You must have total concentration on your task, be aware of the conditions concerning that task, and control of all your emotions to complete that task. By definition, concentration is the flow of conscious energy that makes it possible to be aware of what is going on around you. Awareness is defined as the internal energy that makes it possible to see through your eyes, hear through your ears, feel your feelings, think your thoughts, and understand what you understand. To have concentration and awareness on the golf course, you need to focus your mind on the job at hand in a non-judgemental manner. You must be aware of the conditions--namely; lie, stance, wind, temperature, out of bounds, and so forth; but you must look at them neither positively nor negatively. A negative judgement can obscure the visualization process, which may cause doubt and tightening, while a positive judgement may make you too casual, which might result in failure to recognize all the details. Keep your mind receptive rather than becoming entrenched in the trying mode. How many times at the nineteenth hole have you heard a fifteen handicapper telling his tale of only needing bogies on the last two holes to break eighty? "On seventeen, thinking about those O.B. stakes on the right, I played safe with an iron, but pulled it into the trees on the left." Trusting in his

³Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game Of Golf (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 26.

pre-shot routine rather than trying to play it safe, the golfer could have continued on his career round.

Your emotions are normally a direct descendant of your personality and attitudes. Sam Snead, the all-time record holder in terms of number of wins on the P.G.A. Tour, states that "good golfing temperament falls between taking it with a grin or shrug and throwing a fit."⁴ Your personality allows you to sketch a portrait of yourself as a golfer, which is commonly called your self-concept. How you see yourself or respect your ability as a golfer makes you a better player or potentially may get in your way. It is up to you to decide to use your personality and inner emotions to like yourself for what you do and accomplish on the course. When energy and emotions are under control, the transfer from the left side of the brain, the data center, to the right side of the brain, the shot creator, becomes smoother. As the emotional level gets too high, tension begins to set in. This tension can result in inhibiting your swing muscles and may activate other muscles at the wrong time. All of us have felt the tension build up while in the dentist's chair when the "fear of the unknown" increases the pressure of our grip. The same tension occurs when you grip your clubs under pressure. A consistent pre-round routine and pre-shot routine can help control the arousal level of your emotions and can block out other distractions. Remember that a relaxed mind can visualize better.

Concentration in golf is needed only for a small part of the total time that you are on the course. The golf swing itself takes only about two seconds. Therefore, if you are out on the course for four hours and take

⁴Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 23.

ninety shots to complete your round, only three minutes of the four hours have been used. In Charles Hogan's "5 Days to Golfing Excellence," the broad to narrow concentration levels are discussed.⁵ The golfer has a broad concentration level as he compiles the data for the shot at hand. Then he begins to narrow it as he goes into his pre-shot routine, further narrows it as he builds his images for the upcoming shot, and reaches the top concentration level for the strike. In gearing up for these levels of concentration, you must learn to control your self talk by talking about only what you want to attain, relax by using imagery of previous successes, control your movements in your pre-shot routine, and isolate yourself within your own personality, in your own groove.

⁵Charles Hogan, 5 Days to Golfing Excellence (Lake Oswego, Oregon: Merl Miller & Associates, 1986), pp. 121-125.

III. RELAXATION AND VISUALIZATION

In golf, the mind must be alert and focused, yet not tense, which is called relaxed concentration. Instinctively, the human being tightens up when confronted with the unknown, a common occurrence during a round of golf. You must learn to have the flexibility to respond in the manner necessary for each situation that you are confronted with to retain this relaxed mental state. Television announcers are always mentioning that a player has failed to win before. Most players feel that if they have "been there" and lost, winning will be much easier the second time around.

Because golf is a score-oriented game, it is difficult to hit the shots just for the fun of the particular situation and to look at them without any concern for the results. If you could look at the situation, allow yourself to pick out the target, convince yourself without any doubt that the ball is already there, you would have a better chance to play at your peak performance level.

Because relaxation and visualization go hand in hand, being relaxed can improve your ability to visualize the shot, and proper imagery can set your mind in a relaxed position. Your mind's eye visualizes by seeing the desired line and shape of the upcoming shot, imagining the swing necessary for that shot, and mimicking the strongest parts of swings of other players. Your visualizing ability improves through experience and self-confidence. All golfers have found themselves in the woods with only a tiny opening to escape trouble, yet hit exceptional shots. Why? The image becomes very clear, and the mind focuses on the shot at hand. This is the

type of imagery that you should be using on all shots. Relaxing or removing tension from your body can be improved by:

1. setting up a pre-round routine of warm-up drills, practice shots, chips, and putts to help the transition from off-course to on-course;
2. establishing a consistent pre-shot routine to be ready for each shot; and
3. creating a rehearsal-swing routine on less than full shots that tend to produce nervousness.

Imagery is a thought, and you must select images that are to your advantage for positive results. Images can be made using any of your senses: kinesthetic, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, or visual. Images normally precede any internal or external dialogue and are better directors of your skills than any self talk can be. A proper image needs a beginning--the strike of the shot; a middle--the flight of the shot; and an end--the destination or the target.

Imagery is the key to success, if you can see and feel the final product before any action takes place. To reach peak performance you must practice your imagery. The most efficient practice is a blend between the mental and physical parts of the game. The exact percentages depend totally on the individual, but the mental preparation of individual shots, particular holes, and entire golf courses is very important to all golfers. The two steps of visualization are (1) to look at the images formed from gathering information about the shot and (2) then to form the picture of the shot in response to that information. The quality of your shots is directly controlled by the quality of your images, so you must learn to be mentally

interlocked with the target and physically relaxed. When you evaluate yourself through negative self talk, the images in your mind become clouded and your self concept, performance, and attitudes can only go down.

IV. SELF TALK

"Don't hit it right, remember those O.B. stakes"; "hit it hard enough to get it over that tree"; and "don't chilly-dip it in that bunker" are perfect examples of negative self talk. These are exactly the kinds of phrases that you do not want to hear and do not need to hear while preparing to hit an important shot, but what can you do to eliminate them?

To control self talk, eliminate the self put-downs, phrases that normally occur after a bad shot or bad putt; learn to put golf in its proper perspective--it is not the entire world; accept the bad bounces and poor lies; and use positive self talk to reach your goals. Learn to be realistic, not critical, to think positively, not negatively. When a negative experience occurs, learn to evaluate it, store it, learn from it, and then forget that experience.

As was mentioned earlier, you need to gather all the necessary data on the upcoming shot and then transfer that information into a vivid image that connects you to the target. When self talk shifts your attention from the target back to yourself, you get in trouble. You begin reacting to your self talk rather than reacting to the target. Important factors to keep in mind about self talk are:

1. it tends to separate you from the target;
2. your own awareness is of value but is not part of the target image;
3. the golf course is target-oriented; and
4. you must feel and be part of that target.

These four factors point to one thing. When close to the strike, the word "I" leaves the vocabulary and is replaced with the word "target."

Your self talk must be in the form of an affirmation, which is a

positive image that can guide your visualization. Simple phrases such as "I am a good putter" can create positive feedback and good images as you tour the course. For full effect it is important that these cues are kept in the present tense, are positive, and are in golf-appropriate language. Two types of cues are necessary. Kine cues refer to body movements that help you produce the proper swing for that situation, and chunker cues are solid, analytical words that convey swing descriptions. An example of a kine cue would be a flatter-feeling shoulder turn to produce a sweeping hook to escape trouble, while a chunker cue would be the cue word "inside" to establish the inside plane for that sweeping hook. As part of your pre-shot routine, place these phrases in a proper sequence to lead yourself into the shot. Your final cue should center around the target to produce the best images.

Without knowing it, your self talk can set up barriers in your mind that can restrict you. Telling someone your handicap sets up a score expectation in your mind that may make you complacent and make it difficult to get to the next ability level. A score expectation can get you out of the one-shot-at-a-time mentality. Remember:

PERFORMANCE = POTENTIAL - INTERFERENCE.

Another method of describing positive self-talk is the "be your own best coach" or "be your own best friend" principle. Learn to focus on successes you had in the past and learn to drive yourself hard on the practice tee and green, but learn to be your own best friend on the course. To produce positive self-talk, learn to step outside yourself and become a disinterested observer, to find out what type of reinforcement you need rather than what you feel like giving. In "Golfing Out of Your Mind,"

Robert Rotella and Richard Coop tell the story of an L.P.G.A. player who decided to leave the tour for a time but returned as a caddy for a friend. Her friend began to play some of the finest golf of her career and credited her caddy for always saying the right thing at the right time. Rotella and Coop then told the caddy to try the same words on herself--namely, to be her own best friend.⁶ Learning to help yourself can lead you to being your own best friend on the course.

⁶Richard Coop and Robert Rotella, Golfing Out Of Your Mind (Charlottesville, Va.: Creative Media productions, 1985), p. 4.

V. TRUST VS. THE FEAR OF FAILURE

From the time you are old enough to understand, you are bombarded with the maxim, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." You come to believe that not to try produces failure. In golf, this belief can only produce trouble.

The less you try at golf, the more fluid the golf swing you can produce, and the easier it will become to exhibit coordination and timing. Golf is one of the few sports in which trying too hard can affect you. The basketball player who is having a poor night shooting can buckle down on defense and try harder on that end of the floor. Unfortunately, the golfer cannot do this. Trying extra hard to produce indicates for the golfer a lack of trust, which results in increased physical tension, negative self talk, and poor imagery. The late and famous golfer Harry Vardon once said that "trying to do in three what should normally require four often ends up taking five."⁷

By definition, doubt is the lack of certainty about the truth or reliability of something. Doubt to the golfer is the difference between what a man is capable of and what he accomplishes. Proper coaching from inside yourself can increase your natural faith and trust. The fear of failure can be defeated by associating an upcoming task with something that has proven very easy. In W. Timothy Gallwey's "The Inner Game of Golf," the author compares an upcoming ten-foot putt with picking the ball out of the hole, a thought that does not relate to failure. You can produce a vivid image of a full shot by imagining throwing your ball to a target far down

⁷Richard Coop and Gary Wren, The New Golf Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 140.

the fairway. These "associations with the easy" will create less tension and less trying, increase your awareness of what your goals are, and build trust in yourself.⁸ To the golfer trust is letting it go or letting it happen. Your greatest obstacle in developing trust is your over concern about results.

The fear of failure is inherent to the game of golf. Because of the small margin of error, some failure is inevitable, but you cannot be fearful of it. At times, the apparent unfairness of golf--namely, bad bounces, bad lies, or sudden wind changes--can provoke doubt in your mind, but you must learn that bad luck is only part of the game. What you must control is the continual feedback from past experiences that can dampen your trust. Tom Watson illustrated this point by saying that "the person I fear most in the last two rounds is myself."⁹

In "The Modern Fundamentals of Golf" by A. S. Barnes, Ben Hogan stated that in 1946 he found his attitude changed when he changed from a self doubter to a positive thinker. He began to play well all of the time when he realized that perfection was not possible or probable, and his overall shot-making took on a new dimension.¹⁰ You can learn from this that a perfectionist has trouble in golf mainly with visualization. A perfectionist should limit his criticism over the bad shots and improve his confidence by enjoying the good shots. The perfectionist may make his goals

⁸W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Golf (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 51-54.

⁹Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 155.

¹⁰Richard Coop and Robert Rotella, Golfing Out Of Your Mind (Charlottesville, Va.: Creative Media Productions, 1985), p. 3.

too severe. The golfer who imagines a razor-thin line from the ball to the hole on the putting green may not be leaving enough room for error, and his expectations are virtually impossible to keep.

Making mental changes in your game can feel as uncomfortable as making physical swing changes. To check on your areas of self doubt, play a few holes, come in, and analyze the holes. Restructure your thoughts and images prior to good and bad shots in an effort to improve your thinking. You should have constructive, positive, and realistic goals for your game to increase your trust. Fear is a have-to or make-it-happen method, while desire is a want-to or let-it-happen way to play better golf.

VI. PRE-SHOT ROUTINE

Organizing yourself prior to a shot can be vital in the mental process. The pre-shot routine consists of (1) gathering information concerning the upcoming shot; (2) rehearsing the execution of that shot mentally--the approach to and positioning at the ball, your alignment, and aim; (3) drawing a final target image; and (4) starting the swing with your personal cue. The pre-shot routine should be a part of every golfer's game, but it should be patterned individually to fit your personality and pace of play. The pre-shot routine of a quick Lanny Wadkins will vary tremendously from that of a deliberate Jack Nicklaus.

In your pre-shot analysis, the information is gathered and processed until the body is ready to make the swing; then the conscious side of your brain is put on hold while the intuitive side executes the shot. In "Golf In The Kingdom" by Michael Murphy, the author calls this "giving up voluntary control at the perfect moment."¹¹ Swing cues along with visualization are necessary to produce the fluid swing motion. When verbal and visual cues fail, kinesthetic cues, which allow the golfer to feel the various positions of the swing, can be used effectively.

The pre-shot routine can be more important to the average golfer than to the professional. Without the grooved swing of the touring professional, the amateur is more susceptible to doubt and insecurity. A patterned pre-shot routine can reduce the chances of negative thoughts that produce tension and indecision. On less than full shots, a rehearsal swing routine is an excellent addition to your pre-shot routine. The addition of an extra

¹¹Michael Murphy, Golf In The Kingdom (New York: Del Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 138.

practice swing to acquire a feel for the upcoming shot can draw a vivid positive image. A possible chip shot routine could be to make one practice swing too long for the situation, one too short, and one just right to increase your kinesthetic awareness.

A good pre-shot routine has both a mental and a physical side to it. To perfect the routine, you must practice it. The proper practice session in golf is a blend of hitting full shots, chipping, putting, creating and perfecting a pre-shot routine, and working on imagery. The consistent pre-shot routine can be invaluable in a pressure situation to control rhythm and have a positive mental picture.

VII. FROM RANGE TO COURSE

Do any of these quotes sound familiar? "I don't understand it--I hit every drive perfect on the range this morning." "I made my last ten four-footers in a row on the putting green." "Gee, your practice swing looks so smooth." These quotes are perfect examples of a player who is having trouble bringing his game from the range to the course. In the words of touring professional Charles Coody, "If you're not prepared, somewhere in the quiz there are going to be some questions you can't answer."¹²

On the range, practice should be limited to one new idea at a time. Practicing in this manner can improve your ability to trust the new move and build valuable images. Another reliable practice routine is to concentrate on one club, preferably a mid-iron, so the ability to hit many different shots--high, low, draws, fades, and so forth--can be developed. The feel of various positions necessary to hit these shots, and the imagery of them, can be experienced and stored for future use. Scheduling practice sessions at regular intervals, even if you cannot find the time to venture out on the course, is mandatory for improvement. A solid half hour of practice with a limited number of balls and good concentration along with positive mental imagery can work wonders for your game. A key to practicing visualization is to savor all those good shots on the range and take those moves to the course.

To make the practice range work more realistic, imagine hitting some shots under game conditions. Set up a practice game between yourself and a

¹²Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 151.

fellow golfer, so that each of you must hit a particular type of shot. This competition will make the practice range more like the course.

Work on shots that you tend to run into on your home course. This practice produces good imagery, just as if you had been there. Each course seems to have a few holes that always have your "number." When the situation permits go out on the course and play these nemesis holes with three or four balls, then head to the range and recreate those shots that prove to be the problem. Playing a course for the first time can prove hazardous to your score, but the fear of the unknown can be lessened if you look at each hole or each shot and relive it as an experience from a course that you are familiar with.

The value of the pre-shot routine has been preached earlier in this paper, but another important factor from the range to the course is the pre-round routine. Time should be set aside for this preparation period. Begin with a few simple loosening-up exercises before hitting some full shots, practice putting, and some short chips. A target is not necessary for any of these shots in order to keep good imagery from scheduled workouts. The purpose of this pre-round routine is to develop a feel for your swing and the various positions of the club. A few moments for mentally reviewing your pre-shot routine, and even a few swings with your eyes closed to further develop feel, are a great conclusion to your pre-round routine.

Students of the game need to learn the art of taking instruction. Initially, the objectives of the instruction and the goals based on your ability level must be agreed upon between the student and golf professional. The student must plan on being an active learner by working on the new move, being comfortable with the instructor's style, and being

willing to pay the price of practice, but must understand that improvement may take time. Once you have practiced hard, learned your swing, and built vivid images, you should begin to feel a sense of control over your game and the course. Learn to take what the course gives you and not be bothered by the outside influences of bad breaks.

VIII. HELPING YOURSELF

To accomplish the programs outlined in the earlier chapters, you must start by trusting yourself and building a strong self image. To do this, learn to control your self talk, begin good mental and physical habits rather than simply stopping bad ones, and use imaginative yet realistic visualization in your efforts. Unfortunately, there is not a magical skeleton key that unlocks all of the shots necessary to play good golf, but there are a number of different keys that you must work on individually.

In his audio program, "Subconscious Golf," Ed Grant describes the golfer's "comfort zone," a scoring range that he performs most comfortably in.¹³ Biofeedback from your subconscious mind often occurs when you get out of the comfort zone. Whether it is the chance to shoot a career round, make a third birdie in a row, or for a poor chipper to chip up close again, your mind and self talk tell you that you should not be there. Controlling that self talk by believing in your self image and using your pre-shot routine regardless of the situation will improve your consistency under pressure. All golfers have problems when the gallery appears. Whether it is driving from a crowded first tee, playing through a slow group, being waved on at a par three hole, or playing with better golfers, the tendency to quicken the pace of play occurs. The ability to play your own game by being your own best coach can block out these fears. Another self image problem can be the "he can do it, and so can I" syndrome. Trying to match the distance of one of your fellow golfers is another method of getting out of your personal rhythm and routine. Be yourself on the golf course.

¹³Ed Grant, Subconscious Golf (Tempe, Arizona: Subconscious Golf, Inc., 1985), p. 3.

The time between shots, a problem unique to golf, can be a hazardous period. The golfer must find a way to divert his mind from golf between shots. Touring professional Johnny Miller states that the key to real concentration is to "focus in at a given time and then come out again."¹⁴ Former Women's Open champion Jan Stephenson calls each shot a "mini-tournament in itself."¹⁵ These illustrations highlight the fact that diversion, such as simple conversation with fellow players or enjoying the elements of nature around you, can be the perfect break between the periods of intense concentration.

To truly improve your game, you must show dedication, self sacrifice, commitment, and self discipline. To mentally change, you must be willing to take the chance to make the necessary changes on the course.

¹⁴Richard Coop and Gary Wiren, The New Golf Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 62.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 63.

IX. EVALUATING PROGRESS

Golf, by its nature, is a results-oriented game. Therefore, being non-judgemental in your evaluation of your progress is difficult. You must set up a time schedule of goals to be reached during a period of at least one golf season. Intermediate goals along the way can quench your thirst for results, but to expect immediate improvement is often impossible and very frustrating. Evaluating your physical progress is normally quite simple, but you must go inside yourself to evaluate your mental style. From Johnny Miller comes the idea that "the difference between shooting a 63 and a 73 might even be just between the ears. It's such a fine line that it's almost scary."¹⁶

As you show signs of improving your self concept, you need to hear the recognition from others to build up that self image. The lack of equitable competition can deter your progress. If you are continually the high handicapper in your foursome, you might play your finest round ever and no one would notice. This lack of recognition will not allow your self image to grow properly. Post-shot debriefing is an excellent evaluation process, because you have an opportunity to reinforce your mind with the favorable results and to dismiss the unfavorable results after studying and recording them. This process leaves you mentally fresh for the next shot. Be sure to evaluate only the golf shot and not the golfer.

Scoring barriers, which can be another block in improvement levels, are a function of your self concept. Psychologist Peter Cranford states that a "good round of golf is like a string of pearls. Each shot is a precious

¹⁶ Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 76.

pearl that takes your full attention to create, and only one pearl can be added at a time."¹⁷ If all golfers could adopt this one-shot-at-a-time mentality, progress would become easier. At the opposite end of the golf spectrum is a slump. Once a few bad shots, bad holes, or a bad round happens, the golfer assumes he is in a slump. Negative thoughts and negative imagery tend to keep you in the slump. It is up to you, the golfer, to realize that your mind and negative self talk have created and fueled this slump, so control of self talk and recalling your positive images can get you back on track.

Setting up a journal to record your shot making ability, namely, fairways and greens in regulation and number of putts, along with reworking your mental images and swing cues, can assist you in charting your progress. Evaluating the progress of the pieces can make the whole improve.

¹⁷Richard Coop and Gary Wiren, The New Golf Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 114.

X. QUESTIONING GOOD PLAYERS

The experience of top players will illustrate some of the material presented earlier in this text. The recap of almost every P.G.A. Tour event can find quotes of positive thinking as an assist in winning the tournament.

In the audio program, "Golfing Out Of Your Mind" by Rotella and Coop, Tom Watson was asked his thought after a poor first round. Watson stated that, "how I played today has nothing to do with tomorrow." Watson was then asked what he thought after a great first round. Watson responded that he was "playing great and will continue on this roll the next day."¹⁸ This is an example of attitudinal flexibility that is necessary to play good golf. When Tom Kite first went out on the Tour, he asked his teacher, Harvey Penick, for some last-minute advice. Penick told him to "go to dinner with good putters."¹⁹ By this, Penick was telling Kite to associate with positive thinkers.

Reinforcing yourself positively is the basis of being your own best coach. Curtis Strange recalls that, while a student at Wake Forest, he hit a one-iron to within seven feet on the eighteenth hole to enable Wake Forest to win the N.C.A.A. Championship. Strange recalls that he "hit the best possible shot for the team." A short time later, in his first attempt to qualify for the P.G.A. Tour, Strange pulled a six-iron approach into a bunker on the final hole, which resulted in bogey, and he missed qualifying by a single stroke. In this instance, Strange recalls saying, "Don't miss

¹⁸Richard Coop and Robert Rotella, Golfing Out Of Your Mind (Charlottesville, Va.: Creative Media Productions, 1985), p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 3.

this, it will cost you."²⁰ These two shots were perfect examples of positive and negative reinforcement through self talk. Learn to keep things in perspective on the course. Walter Hagen noted that before every round he would remind himself that he would make six bad shots that day. By doing this, the bad shots would not take him by surprise or affect his ability to score.²¹

The proper display of emotion is a difficult factor to describe or understand. Showing no emotion may cause a player to burn out early. Former U.S. Open Champion Johnny Miller feels that he has "an emotional tachometer" that he controls in order to not reach the red line, while five-time British Open Champion Tom Watson, calls his control of emotions an "inner calm," and "Mr. 59," Al Geiberger, calls it "controlled enthusiasm."²²

The value of a positive, well-paced pre-shot routine was illustrated by Jack Nicklaus in "Cool Under Pressure," a Golf Digest article concerning the 1966 British Open. While playing his approach shot to the seventy-second hole, Nicklaus "resisted the tendency to play too quickly under pressure and gave himself extra thinking time when his adrenaline was gushing hardest."²³ This relaxed approach helped him win his first British Open. In Sports Illustrated, after the 1986 P.G.A. Championship, Greg Norman said

²⁰Richard Coop and Gary Wiren, The New Golf Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 104.

²¹Ibid., pp. 128-129.

²²Ibid., pp. 135, 146.

²³Jack Nicklaus, "Cool Under Pressure," Golf Digest, Sept. 1986, pp. 44-45.

that "every time you lose, you think that life's unfair. You think of the bad breaks. But when you are winning and playing well you still get those bad breaks, but you overcome them. It just depends how strong your mind is."²⁴ Norman, as all golfers should, understands that a positive mental approach can brighten even the darkest day.

In conclusion, "Teaching The Mind" attempted to show many avenues of mental preparation for the game of golf. In "5 Days to Golfing Excellence" Chuck Hogan states that the golf swing is focused on self, while golf is focused on ball to target.²⁵ By this, Hogan makes the point that the swing is taught as an act and golf should be taught as a reaction that covers the physical and mental sides of this great game. A key to success in the mental game is to see and feel the accomplishment of the goal before the action takes place.

Finally, two great golfers sum up "Teaching The Mind." From the late Lawson Little comes the statement, "I say this without any reservation, whatsoever. It is impossible to out play an opponent you can't out-think."²⁶ Current Senior Tour star Chi Chi Rodriguez says, "I try to have peace of mind. If you have that, you are a mental millionaire. It doesn't cost you a thing."²⁷

²⁴ Barry McDermott, "Stormin' Norman," Sports Illustrated, Aug. 1986, p. 72-84.

²⁵ Charles Hogan, 5 Days To Golfing Excellence (Lake Oswego, Oregon: Merl Miller & Associates, 1986), p. 4.

²⁶ Bob Chieger and Pat Sullivan, Inside Golf (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 23.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bunker, Linda and Robert Rotella. Mind Mastery For Winning Golf. Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1981.
- Chieger, Bob and Pat Sullivan. Inside Golf. New York: Atheneum, 1985.
- Coop, Richard. "The Art of Instruction Taking". Golf Illustrated, Feb. 1987, pp. 16-19.
- Coop, Richard and Robert Rotella. Golfing Out of Your Mind. Charlottesville, Va.: Creative Media Productions, 1985.
- Coop, Richard and Gary Wiren. The New Golf Mind. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1978.
- Gallwey, Timothy W. The Inner Game Of Golf. New York: Random House, 1981.
- Grant, Ed. Subconscious Golf. Tempe, Arizona: Subconscious Golf, Inc., 1985.
- Hogan, Charles. 5 Days To Golfing Excellence. Lake Oswego, Oregon: Merl Miller & Associates, 1986.
- Hogan, Charles. "Who Are You?" Golf, Yearbook, 1987, pp. 46-48.
- Lucius, Jim. "Better Golf-Less Practice". The Golf Club, Aug. 1986, pp. 68-69.
- McDermott, Barry. "Stormin' Norman". Sports Illustrated, Aug. 1986, pp. 72-84.
- Murphy, Michael, Golf In The Kingdom. New York: Del Publishing Co., Inc., 1972.
- Nicklaus, Jack. "My Most Memorable Shots In The Majors." Golf Digest, Sept. 1986, pp. 44-45.
- Rotella, Robert. "Succeeding Outside Your Comfort Zone". Golf Digest, Sept. 1986, p. 51.