

## **PGAs of Europe teaching and coaching conference 2014\_Martin Hejger**

I had recently attended the PGA of Europe teaching and coaching conference on behalf of the Polska PGA. A very informative and interesting couple of days. We kicked off proceedings with a talk about coaching and what is the definition of a good coach.

**“A Coach” is someone who moves a person from one place to another.**

**“Coaching” The activity or environment where the move takes place.**

A coach should be at the heart of all programmes. A person that creates relationships. Whether its relationships between golfers or between golfers and the golf club the golf coach should be at the heart of all interactions.

The higher the quality of the golf coach the higher the experience for the golfer. In essence the coach is a people person and we as coaches need to be able to fix a slice or to have a simple chat with someone about the day to day things and also be a role model for the younger golfers, all golfers come to think of it.

If we put the assets of a good coach into point form.

- Open “growth” mind set (Failure is part of the process)
- A desire to learn.
- Understanding people’s needs.
- Treat everyone as an individual.
- Ability to get the best out of pupils.
- Be engaging.
- Self-motivated and able to motivate.
- Be curious “Why” Don’t settle for an answer just because someone said so.
- Be self-aware.
- Develop connections.

### **Serial winning coaches**

Next we move onto the definition of a Serial winning coach. Coaches that constantly win with different players or teams, Such as:

- Butch Harmon
- Jose Murinio
- David Leadbetter

What is it that these coaches do that makes them consistent winners? What are their character traits?

Firstly they see themselves as life coaches' not just sports coaches with a high moral stance such as honesty and integrity. Interestingly there is no work life balance for them. Their work is their life and their life is their work you could say that they are fanatical about what they do.

Having self-doubt is a good thing: The more self-aware we are the more we can improve. This would explain why a top level player could not be a top level coach at the same time. A top level player does not question himself or doubt himself but a serial winning coach is always asking questions of themselves and others.

**A Thirst for knowledge** is one of the common traits of a serial winning coach!

Personality wise a serial winning coach is:

- High energy
- Open
- Agreeable
- Has a high work ethic
- Emotionally stable
- Positive/generally happy
- Confident but not arrogant
- Leads by example

Athletes of the serial winning coaches were asked what traits they noticed.

- Positive approach
- Compassion
- Open minded
- Self-aware
- High work ethic
- Persuasion power / motivational

Also important for the athletes were social ability, credibility, skill level and knowledge base.

### **Coaching and how people learn.**

Recent research into how people learn and acquire knowledge is changing coaching in a big way. Progressive coaching is more about "controlled chaos". This means the more varied you can make your lessons the better. This keeps the student interested and challenged.

Standing on the range and making your student get the perfect wrist hinge in the backswing for an hour is as useful at improving their golf as hopping on one leg for an hour.

We as coaches have to help our students to **“PLAY”** better golf, practice to play and play to practice. Of course teaching the complete beginner how to hold the club and address the ball will require a certain amount of time on the driving range but this should be kept to a minimum. As soon as we can we should be out on the golf course or chipping green setting challenges with different shots and different clubs.

Not all of us have access to such things but even if all you have is a driving range or a field for that matter try to use your imagination as a coach to create a varied and challenging lesson. Hit the ball over something or under something, stop the ball short of something or hit it past something. This is how the brain learns. We as coaches have to allow our student to figure things out for themselves. I’m not saying don’t give them any guidance at all but you will be surprised at how the brain can figure things out even with novice golfers.

A certain part of our coaching is dictated by what our students expect from a lesson. The usual thing they expect is they pay for an hour of you barking instruction at them. This is not effective for them or you! Challenge yourself to Taylor your lesson to the student and keep it fun, this will keep you and them awake.

### **Talent identification**

Identifying biological variables is almost impossible. With all our knowledge and science it is impossible to tell if one student is going to be more successful than another. As I’m sure all of you and I have been asked by parents is my child is going to “make it”

We as golf coaches are not fortune tellers but we can identify and supply certain conditions that will maximise the chance that a student will make it but as the old saying goes” we can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”

Great players most probably were good at an early age but good young players don’t always become great players. There are just too many variables to guarantee success. The best chance a young athlete has is to fall in love with their chosen sport, to completely devote themselves to their sport. If this does not come from them then we can almost guarantee that they will not “Make it”. I say almost because of athletes like the tennis player Andre Agassi who hated his sport but still made it to the very top. This very thing underlines the fact that no one knows 100% who will make it or who will not.

Talent could be defined as the ability and willingness to work hard at something!

### **Working with elite golfers. Those who have won a major championship. Chuck Kook.**

We all know that Tiger Woods is without a coach at the moment. Imagine if you will that you receive a phone call from the man himself. How do you help a golfer who has achieved so much?

Chuck kook gave a very interesting talk on this. For those of you that don’t know who he is here is a list below of golfers he has worked with and some he still does.

#### Professionals

- Payne Stewart
- Tom Kite
- Corey Pavin

- Ben Crenshaw
- Mark Brooks
- Jason Dufner
- Keegan Bradley
- Luke Donald

#### Amateurs

- Michako Hattori, US Amateur Champion
- Silvia Cavallieri, US & British Amateur Champion
- Page Dunlap, NCAA Champion
- Heather Bowie, NCAA Champion
- Charlotta Sorenstam NCAA Champion

Needless to say a very experienced coach.

The teaching paradigm.

- Assess
- Teach
- Coach
- Reassess

#### **Assess**

On course observation.

Practice observation.

Questionnaire.

Define the player's weakness and attack it first.

#### **Teach**

Introduce new movements and concepts.

#### **Coach**

Help the player adapt to new movements and concepts.

#### **Reassess**

Reassess to see if the student's weaknesses are diminished.

If so, reassess to determine the next biggest weakness.

Repeat the process.

When a great player comes to see him for advice the first thing he does is assess his ability. Sure he is a very accomplished player but he has weaknesses like everybody. Chuck tends to look at statistics, the PGA tour is full of stats and it is not difficult to identify a weakness.

Chuck told us a story about Payne Stewart. Payne came to see him before he won any of his majors. Payne was a multiple winner on the PGA tour but his dream was to win a major. Chuck did his assessment and discovered that Payne was very weak at scrambling or getting up and down.

As it turned out Payne had ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) Payne was very good at difficult up and downs but terrible at simple chip and runs. His ADHD made him concentrate on the difficult shots such as a downhill flop over a bunker to a tight pin and loose interest in a simple chip and run.

Chuck used a great drill to cure this. He drew a circle on the green 3 feet around the hole then handed a towel to Payne and asked him to place it on the green where he thought the ball should land in order for it to stop in the 3 foot circle. With some trial and error Payne started to get it and started to chip the ball landing on the towel and finishing in the circle. They did this for a month almost every day.

Payne played the 1989 USPGA and won hitting only 60% of greens in regulation. He spoke to Chuck and told him when it came to getting up and down all he saw was the towel. Payne was more focused on what he wanted the ball to do rather than how to do it. I have used this with near beginners and it always produces results. Trust the brain to figure it out!

Payne went on to win the US Opens before his untimely death in a plane crash.

Below is a list of drills that Chuck uses on a regular basis.

### **Putting**

Clock drill. Place 3 tees on four sides of the hole like a compass N,S,E,W. place the tees at 6 feet 7 feet and 8 feet. The player must hole all balls in succession from all stations. If they miss they start again from the beginning. You can tailor this to shorter distances and your pupil's needs.

Tee inserted into the back edge of the cup. For short putts get the student to hit the tee in the back of the cup. For downhill fast putts get the student to hole the putt without hitting the tee.

Gate Drill. On breaking putts place two tee's together a little wider than a ball at around about the apex of the break and get the student to put through the gate and hole the putt.

Tee in the way. On breaking putts place a tee directly in front of the hole and get the student to hole putts left or right of the tee depending on the break.

### **Chipping**

Like with Payne Stewart mark a 3 foot circle around the hole and get the student to place a towel on the green where they think the ball should land in order for the ball to stop in the circle. This can be tailored to your student, the circle can be made bigger.

### **Full swing drills**

Closed stance drill. Get your student to address the ball normally and then pull the right foot back (Right handed golfer) Hips and feet become closed to the target line. This can help students release the hands through the shot. This can also help keep the arms connected to the body.

Long Drive from half backswing. Get your student to make a short backswing making sure the shaft of the club does not go above parallel to the ground. Then get them to hit the ball as far as possible from this position. This is great to get the body to move and rotate through the ball.

Flat footed knock down. Get your student to address the ball normally and place the ball back in the stance. Then get them to hit balls keeping both feet flat on the ground. This will help them get the hands to get in front of the club head at impact and develop lag.