

RANDOM Insights

BY MICHAEL HEBRON, PGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL

NEW INSIGHTS NORMALLY CHANGE ONES IDEAS AND points of view. I would like to share a few of the many insights I've gained over time about learning and playing golf. Most of the food for thought that is put forward here was gained from respected research into the nature of how mankind is designed to learn, and the accepted principals of applying force.

Playing golf, requires influencing the distance and direction of ball flight. Learning to play golf is learning what to do with a golf club to accurately apply force to the ball for the shot we are about to play. Some golfers get lost in ideas about moving their body, and overlook that the ball flight laws are for the golf club's shaft, head and face.

Some of what follows may seem counterintuitive, but it has been said that a closed mind is very expensive. Reading on with an open mind will add value to the content of this article. I have found that the insights given here have helped many golfers make progress in unexpected ways. Perhaps these insights will cause readers to rethink some of their ideas, I know I have.

Concerns and questions about a lack of progress, poor outcomes, or bad habits, tend to be personal in nature. Why am I not learning? Why is my child not passing? Perhaps if these concerns focused more on the structure and design of approaches to learning (than on personal concerns), students would experience progress more often than not.

One key to learning anything, even golf, is that approaches to educating students must be "human centered," causing students to believe, "Yes, I can learn this!" At the end of some classes and lessons students have learned, "I can't read," or "I can't do math," or "I can't play golf." When approaches to learning are just a reaction to a poor outcome, and not a proactive learning experience, there is little progress. I have found approaches to learning must speak to the student's emotions first, and then to subject matter information.

What emotion is more important to speak to than students' own belief in themselves as they experience the ups and downs of a learning curve that all students go through. It is always the approach to learning (its structure and design) that has the greatest influence on return on investment. Many golfers are spending time, and not investing time when working on their golf games. They

spend time fixing but are not investing time learning. I have come to recognize there is a difference.

This article is written from the view that information geared for helping students is not as valuable as information that helps students help themselves. To draw out what individuals are capable of is the goal.

How does one move from not knowing to knowing? That is the real question behind every other question and concern when students are not learning in schools, business training, or sports instruction. Answer: Learning, through self-discovery, self-organization, and self-development, has been a very powerful approach for millions of years.

INSIGHTS:

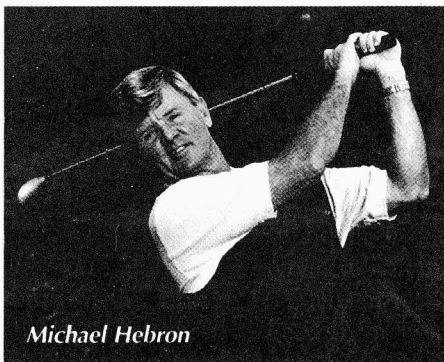
Long practice sessions become more efficient learning environments when they are separated into several short time spans under ever changing environments. By taking one element (tempo, or alignment, or size of swing, or sequence of motion, etc.) and training with it under several different conditions (on the green, in bunkers, tee shots, iron play, etc.), our ability to learn that element is enhanced.

During a round of golf, make no judgments of results after your swing. Happy or neutral are the choices. Emotions help to store memories of results. So pick and chose with care what you have emotions about.

The most useful swing model is the shot at hand, not pictures of some expert player, or "how to" directions from well meaning friends. The shot we are about to play determines the golfers alignment, weight distribution, ball location, size of swing, the club to be used, and how the club's shaft, head, and face should be aligned through impact. It helps to recognize that a golf club has three components (shaft, head, and face), each with an alignment requirement for the shot at hand. Learning acceptable alignments for the club, I have found to be more valuable than focusing on the body.

Sound studies show that tensile forces (pulling forces), that are going down plane into the right leg and ground start the downswing. There are no pushing forces of note in an efficient down swing. At the start of a downswing, the clubhead is at 2 mph.

There is more body weight on the right foot just prior to impact than on the left foot during the efficient application of force to a golf ball.



The left arm of a golfer using a swing that is producing efficient force stops accelerating for an instant during impact. When the clubhead impacts the ball, it slows down a little more than 20 percent. It is a transfer of energy out to the clubhead that slows down the arms and hands before impact. A touring professional's hands reach a velocity of 15 mph, and their hips a much slower 3 to 6 mph. Hips are responsible for only 10 to 15 percent of clubhead speed. The shoulders travel three or four times faster than the hips during an efficient application of force in the downswing. Studies by Bob Bush and others at True Temper revealed that up to 70 percent of the golf swing's force comes from the right shoulder. A golfer's body mass contributes only one percent to the force produced in efficient golf swings. (Note: Some small golfers hit the ball a long way).

All golf shots have two elements: their distance and their direction. On the green, distance is the more important element. Hitting putts of different lengths for 5 or 10 minutes is a more effective learning approach than hitting the same putt over and over. Golfers who want to learn to improve their results when putting, should create games on the green that will train their feel for speed and distance. Another word for feel is memory. When we have the feel of something, we have the ability to remember what to do.

When approaches for improving golf are geared only for technical improvement, there seems to be a lack of consistency and little growth as a golfer. The emotional, social, mental, and physical conditioning elements of a golfer and the game have to be addressed. Also a master of anything was first a master of learning. Golfers who want to see progress must enhance their learning potential. The nature of learning must be taken into consideration before any approach to learning will be efficient.

Mankind's brain is designed to first learn, and then teach (and adjust). On the other hand, some approaches to learning try to teach with the hope students will learn. Example: When we learn we have lost our balance, we then teach ourselves to regain balance. Golfers who want to see improvement may want to first learn what the ball does when the shaft of the club travels through impact before the clubface, and learn how the ball reacts when the clubface impacts the ball before the shaft passes the ball. Then golfers could move on to teach themselves what they want to do with the club for the shot at hand.

Our brain is concerned with "what" to do more than "how" to do something. By focusing on what to do, the

how-to is being learned through the trails and feedback of self-organization, self-development, and self-discovery. Learning from first hand experience is the kind of learning that lasts. Note: Good golfers and good cooks do not have golf instruction or cookbooks in their head, they have first-hand experience.

Self-learning is not new, but its value can be overlooked because of the volume and variety of all the "how-to" directions that are available from previous experts. Self-organization has been at the heart of change for billions of years. I have found that working with PGA or LPGA Tour players is overrated in the media. It's not very difficult. It's similar to teaching honors classes in schools.

These players have years of experience, are physically talented, and take the time to train. Tiger Woods, "A good teacher helps you learn to teach yourself."

Golf is a game to be played not a subject to be taught. Our brain learns by doing, observing the outcome, and adjusting as we see fit based on our past experiences. Golfers should learn the alignment requirements of a golf club alignment through impact for the shot at hand, then do, observe, and adjust to learn your own swing model. Learning

environments support a journey of invention, where inspiration turns into innovation. It's been said that in business, market forces have more influence than regulations. In golf, its environment (ball, club, field of play) has more influence over what a golfer should be learning, than someone's "how-to" directions.

During training sessions, simulate playing golf in context. The range is not golf. Dr. Bob Cristence, "Traditional golf practice does not advance training."

Suggestion: Play the course on the range. Picture a hole, hit a tee shot, and then imagine what your next club should be. Do this for several holes.

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