

Are You Trying Too Hard To Get Everything Right?

A perfectionist came across an injured hawk huddling for safety in a doorway. He picked it up and examined it.

“Oh dear, you poor thing,” he exclaimed. “What sort of a bird are you? You’re not quite right.”

He took a pair of scissors and removed the ugly curve in its upper beak so it sat neat and even on top of the lower one. Then he clipped and trimmed its swept-back wings so they were straight. Finally he took his nail clippers to the hawk’s talons and cut them right back to the toes.

“There,” he said, admiring his handiwork. “Now you look much more like a bird ought to look.”

Primary source: Sandra Maitri.

General source: Sufi tradition

I remember watching Lee Trevino practicing for the Piccadilly World Matchplay Championship at Wentworth in the late 1960s. His alignment was well to the left of the target, he had a ‘strong’ or ‘hookers’ grip, took the club back outside the line, looped it back on the inside and hit the most delightful low fades you’ve ever seen. Every shot was sweetly struck and the ball would invariably finish close to the target.

I was fortunate as a youngster to have caddied for, and a year later played with, the famous South African player Bobby Locke at the East Berks GC. He aimed further to the right than Trevino aimed to the left, had a ‘weak’ or ‘slicers’ grip, took the club miles inside on the back swing, came down on the outside of his back swing but, due to his exceptionally closed stance, still well on the inside of the ball to target line, and hit the most amazingly high hooks. Even his pitches moved several yards from right to left in the air.

These two champions had completely opposite methods but both controlled the ball as if it were on a piece of string. They also putted the way they played the full shots and were both wonderful putters.

In Bobby Locke’s case I doubt that there has ever been anyone better on the greens. He beat Sam Snead twelve times out of fourteen in exhibition matches and, in two and a half years on the American Tour, competed in fifty nine tournaments winning eleven times and finishing in the top three an incredible thirty times. Coming from South Africa, he was not popular in the States and was once interviewed after another winning performance. He was asked about his weak left hand grip, much talked about and criticised by the other pros. “Master,” he replied (he called everyone Master), “that’s no problem. I take the cheques with my right hand!”

Trevino was a truly great player who had superb rhythm. He won 29 tournaments on the PGA Tour and 2 British Opens, 2 US Opens and 2 USPGA's. He was famous for his sense of humour and incessant talking on the golf course. He once played with Tony Jacklin and was reported to reply to Jacklin's comment about not wishing to talk too much by saying "that's ok, Tony. I can do the talking for both of us!"

"Papwa" Sewsunker Sewgolum was a right-handed black South African who played to the very highest level at a time when apartheid was at its height. Sewgolum, a former caddie, caused a stir in 1963 when he beat 103 white golfers to win the provincial Natal Open tournament at the Durban Country Club with his wrong-way-round grip (left hand beneath his right). He became a symbol of the boycott movement in sport when pictures of him receiving his trophy outdoors in the rain were published across the world. Due to apartheid he was not allowed to enter the clubhouse. In 1965 he beat Gary Player to win the title for the second time. He also won the Dutch Open in 1959, 1960 and 1964. He was the winner of a number of non-white golfing championships in South Africa.

Let's imagine that Lee, Bobby and "Papwa" went to have lessons as kids. How easy would it have been to say to all three of them that they must sort out their technical anomalies? "Come on lads, let's get you square to the target line with good grips and correct swing planes. You'll never play good golf like that!" How much damage might have been done?

Just as in the quote about the hawk and the perfectionist they may well have looked good but would they have been able to achieve the same excellence with methods that weren't faithful to some innate and natural instincts?

In modern times, just look at Jim Furyk and you would have to say the same thing. But what a wonderful player he is, although I have heard it said that he has a swing that only his mother could like! I would disagree in that he has great rhythm, balance and coordination and hits the ball both sweetly and with superb control.

So, faced with such a wide variety of 'methods' what can we find that they all respect? What can we find in ALL good golfers?

My major ambition has been to find swing basics that every golf teacher or coach could agree with and, furthermore, that every good golfer's swing reflects. We know that every top player has his own grip, his own posture and his own swing plane characteristics. Gary Player once said, "For every fundamental in golf I'll show you a superstar, and I don't use the word lightly, who doesn't do it!"

So, let me give you the six basics which I believe all good golfers display and that you would do well to base your golf around:

TURNING
WEIGHT SHIFT
RYTHM
BALANCE

COORDINATION RELAXATION

Over the next few articles I will be giving you my opinion as to how you can develop these simple basics and how some major misconceptions make it nigh on impossible to achieve them on a regular basis. Hopefully, you won't fall into the trap of trying to look perfect but will have the tools to tap into your natural potential to find your most effective swing.

Positive Impact Golf coaches don't fall into the trap of imposing unnatural and uncomfortable techniques on our clients yet we still achieve astounding success. For more information visit www.positiveimpactgolf.co.uk.

Note:

This article is based on a section of Brian's forthcoming book "Positive Impact Golf." If you would like more information on its publication please email him at kgbook@positiveimpactgolf.co.uk