



REACHING GOALS THROUGH

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

What would be the ultimate determination of whether a student gained help from lessons or not? Better scores? Better ball striking? More distance? More enjoyment out of playing golf? These would all be good indicators of progress and should be considered accurate criteria in which to judge progress. However, are they accomplished by just focusing on each one? Usually not! Typically, they are the result of other objectives that have been accomplished or...we can call them a by-product.

Let me give an example: Let's say that Mike says during our initial lesson that he wants to get more distance. After explaining to him that club head speed is the largest determining factor of how far a ball is hit...he asks if he just needs to swing harder? That's a reasonable question, given his desire to get more distance. Indeed, that may be the only thing that he needs to do. Not very likely though!

The vast majority of the time, a golfer will gain more distance simply by creating a more efficient swing. This calls for better positioning of the club during the swing. Better club positioning is accomplished by better synchronization of the torso, legs, arms and hands. After explaining these facts to Mike, we examine his torso, leg, arm and hand positions through the use of videotape. We see that although he has a nice backswing, he has a significant reduction of the radius at the top (hands too close to the head at the top of the back swing). Ideally, the right arm (right handed golfer) would be at roughly a 90-degree angle.

This error at the top is causing other elements to get out of position and translates into lower club head speed at impact. He now has a basic understanding of cause and effect regarding his dilemma. It would be beneficial to summarize the situation for him and explain a more efficient way of addressing the problem.



“Mike, you will on occasion, hit the ball further by swinging harder. However, if we can lengthen the radius at the top, this will load resistance into the correct muscles and you will give other elements the predisposition to move into correct paths and thereby achieve greater club head speed at impact while...actually exerting less effort than you used to.

A little side note...it is always fun to see the look on a student's face after they catch on to an epiphany that seems to startle them.

Now Mike, we need to work on an assignment that will help you to achieve the objective of creating a larger radius. I give him a few exercises and drills that will train his muscles to get into the correct position at the top. We also practice the correct position several times while he keeps his eyes on the ball, (enhancing feel) so that he develops the feel of the correct position while at the top.

I want to ask him at this time, what he would need to think, in order to get the club and his body into the same position at the top. He tells me that the new position at the top, feels kind of like carrying a pizza as a waiter would with his right arm. “In fact”...he says, “it feels like it would be a big family size pizza, instead of a personal pan that I could carry close to my ear.”

Excellent...now he has a vivid picture in his mind to remind his muscles which position to get into at the top. He is now going to work on a positional objective instead of just directing his attention towards hitting the ball farther. The positional objective is to create a larger radius. This will in turn, create more club head speed at impact, which will help him to get more distance, which is the long-term goal. I tell him that during the next few weeks, we will measure his radius from time to time so that he can see whether he is progressing or not.

Now let's project this situation ahead a few days or so. Mike is out hitting balls and happens to notice that he is not striking the ball very well. He has hit several of them fat and a few off of the neck. This is very distracting as he is trying to lengthen his radius. The thought of going back to his old swing starts to permeate his mind. Oops...he thinks to himself, I was



starting to lose focus of my objective, which is NOT ball striking right now...it is getting used to a larger radius.

He remembers that he needs to stay focused on the immediate objective of the correct position at the top rather than losing focus on that and becoming distracted by his desire to hit the ball cleanly right now. In fact...his success depends upon his ability to stay focused on the positional objective while dealing with numerous ball-striking distractions that are going to invade his mind.

To help him with this objective, I tell him that when we have our next lesson, we will videotape his swing while he is hitting balls. What we'll be checking for is the position at the top that was described earlier. If he is in the correct position, regardless of how he is striking the ball, he will have completed the assignment and can consider himself to be successful...at least as far as this particular assignment is considered. We can then go on to any other adjustments that need to be made following the better position at the top.

If you are working with a golf pro, be willing to trust him/her and focus on accomplishing the task at hand. Achieve enough positional objectives and you will find that the long-term goals will be reached simply as a result of focusing on the short-term objectives.

Good golfing!

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