



WHY LESSONS CAN BE SO CONFUSING

How many times have you heard this; "I went to this guy that was supposed to be a great teacher but... he just made me hit the ball worse than before I went to him. If you haven't heard a friend say something like that yet, you most likely will sooner or later.

I was hitting balls on the range one day and overheard one fellow telling his friend, "I went to Jake Putt, (name substituted) and he is supposed to be one of the best teachers in the state. All he did was wreck my game for about two months until I finally straightened it out myself".

Later, I had a chance to talk with this fellow and I asked him if he'd be willing to share with me what it was that the instructor had told him that wrecked his game so badly. That was all the catalyst he needed...to go on a tirade about what the instructor had told him and how it cost him a lot of money over the next few weeks in the game he plays with "The Boys"!

Ah...now it was obvious why he was so disturbed. He had been losing money in his regular game to "The Boys" and he felt like the \$75.00 or so that he paid to the instructor didn't do him any good and it also cost him untold money with "The Boys". He also went on to say that he would be a complete idiot if he ever considered taking a lesson again. By the way, he had no idea that I was a teaching professional. Now, this brings up some questions... are his thoughts justified?

Even though it is in my nature... as a teaching pro, to defend the pro's side, I want to look at it from the side of the irritated golfer. Did the pro really cause his game to suffer? Yes, it would seem so, since he was unable to go out and play at least as good as he usually did. "The Boys" stomped on him a few times before he could get his game back in order. Not only did he pay \$75.00 for a lesson, he also lost quite a lot of money to those guys and... he had to go through a few weeks of frustrating practice and repetition of his old habits before he could resurrect his game to the point that it was before.



Do you blame this guy for having an attitude such as he had? I don't! Who do you know that takes pleasure in spending money on something that is going to make them suffer? Don't we all expect to get some kind of value for the money we spend?

Honestly, this kind of thing happens quite frequently. However, we should consider whether that person is being accurate or not. Did the instructor just confuse him and cause him to hit the ball much worse? Could be! Was it the instructor's fault or... was it that the person was just losing focus and being stubborn? Either one of those or both could be the case.

When a person is seeking help for something...they are not satisfied with the status quo. The person that takes a lesson is seeking help and does want to improve or else why would they be taking lessons?

So, where does the problem lie? Mostly, I would say that it lies in the communication between the teacher and the student. It is the responsibility of the teacher to find out as much as he/she can about the student's golf history.

Does the student have any physical limitations?

What kind of goals has this person set...if any?

How much time is this person willing and reasonably able to put into practice?

Does this person relate better to instruction through words, visualization or feel?

Are they disciplined in their time spent in practice?

Do they have any subscriptions to golfing publications?

Do they watch the Golf Channel?

What is their opinion of their athletic ability?

Have they played other sports?

Do they consider themselves to be patient?

Have they had any bad or embarrassing experiences related to golf in the past that has been burnt into their mind?



You might be surprised to see some of the responses I get on that last question. These are general questions that I like to ask students before the very first lesson!

All of these questions and others are very helpful in determining what kind of approach I am going to take with the students that I teach. Hypothetically speaking, I could have ten students that have identical swing faults and yet, what I give them to work on, could be completely different from each other. My decisions would be based upon where I feel they are coming from and where they want to go. Quite often, unless it is something very fundamental, I won't tell two people to work on the same thing if one of them has much higher goals and far more patience...even if they have virtually the same swing fault.

If a person has decided to get lessons, it is of the utmost importance that this person finds a pro that can get on the same level as he/she is. It isn't too uncommon to hear a pro being a little too technical with students that have no comprehension of what they are talking about. Then there are times that the pro either hasn't the understanding and/or the patience to give explanations as to why the student needs to work on such and such in their swing.

In either case, the student will go home frustrated and feeling that their investment was a waste. For those of you seeking help with your game and have decided to get lessons. If I may, I would like to give a few suggestions as to how you can save yourself from getting into a situation that becomes an exercise in futility.

Do your best to get references and then call some of the people on the list to see what they think of the pro. Ask fellow golfers that seem to have a good handle on the game, if they can suggest someone locally. Call your local **PGA Section** and ask who the top teachers in the area are. I wouldn't stop there however. A call to the **USGTF** office in Florida can be of help because they can give you the names of good teachers in your area. There are many good teachers that are not affiliated with the PGA, USGTF or any



other group for that matter. That's why it would behoove you to ask around as much as you can.

When you do finally find a pro with whom you can work, ask if they would object to you asking for the reasons why they will be giving you a particular aspect of your swing to work on. Not that you don't trust their judgment but...just so you can understand more about the golf swing. Personally, I enjoy teaching others about the physics of the swing and also about how muscle groups work together. If the pro has a passion for their work, they will usually welcome any questions that you may have.

Next... try to give the pro a decent chance to help you. If you expect to hit the ball great after one lesson or two...you might become very unhappy with the pro and give up. In order to change habits that might have been ingrained into your swing through many thousands of swings...you have to make hundreds or in some cases, thousands of repetitions with the CORRECT motions.

Try to think of the teaching professional as a golf swing surgeon. You wouldn't be doing yourself any favors if you jump off the operating table just after he cut you open and found where the problems lie. You might be thinking "Come on now, he doesn't really cut me open"! Oh yeah, just let him start to make changes to your swing and see if it doesn't feel like you've been cut open.

Let me add... most people that do not improve struggle because they do not do their drills and exercises at home as often as they should. Improving at golf is exactly like other things...you'll get out of it what you put into it! Let each area in your swing that is inefficient become a hurdle. Get over one hurdle and go to the next one. Please don't try to get over so many hurdles at one time that you lose focus of the primary hurdle. If you have made the commitment to take lessons, let your golf pro guide you through the building or...rebuilding process and do your best to trust their judgment.

In closing, some people are of such makeup that they won't benefit from lessons. However, the vast majority of people would raise the potential they have to get into the nineties, the eighties, the seventies or even the sixties by



taking a series of lessons or two and finding out where their particular weaknesses lie.

In the process, you will learn how to troubleshoot your game even when the pro is not around to give you hints. That gives you a very nice feeling of satisfaction and will prove to you that you can do it if you'll focus, be disciplined with your practice time and enjoy the learning experience. Have fun with your golf...after all, that is why we play this great game!

Good golfing!

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