

# THE GOLFING SELF



# THE GOLFING SELF

*PREPARE YOUR MIND TO PLAY YOUR BEST*

BY

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**Books by Bob Jones**  
*Better Recreational Golf*  
*Better Recreational Golf (Left-hander's Edition)*

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True living calmness is the condition of our mind that sees all things clearly.

—*Koichi Tohei*

Intuition has to lead knowledge, but it can't be out there on its own. If it's on its own, you're going to flounder sooner or later.

—*Bill Evans*



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## PREFACE

To anyone who has played more than a few rounds of golf, it is no secret that you play your best when your mind is clear, and not concerned about technique or the outcome of the shot. This is true regardless of your level of golfing skill. The importance of that fact is evident in the many books on the market right now that tell you what to do to acquire mental focus and maintain it during a round of golf. In the world of professional golf, many Tour players consider a sports psychologist to be as important a part of their entourage as their swing coach.

When I started playing golf over fifty years ago, there were no sports psychologists. Your mind was a given. Some people “had it” and the rest of us didn’t. Instruction books might have had a chapter on the mental game, but it merely said, in essence, that you have to think your way around the course and you should stay composed no matter what happens. Those are good ideas, but there was no instruction on how to do that. And there were certainly no books devoted entirely to the mental game. Stay calm and use your head, is about all the farther that mental game instruction went.

We know now that the mind is not a given. Your mind is infinite. It can, through disciplined training, learn to do anything you want it to.

We tend to think that having an intellectual understanding of a mental accomplishment is one step away from being able to achieve it. Not so. It takes just as much attention, and just as much time, to train your mind as it does to train your

body. All that training, if done, would result in a combined mental and physical package of performance that would be far more productive than we could expect from physical training alone.

For over thirty years, I have been training a discipline called Mind and Body Coordination. One of its goals is to teach a person how to concentrate and how to maintain that concentration, regardless of the circumstances. I play once a week, go to the range once or twice a week, and play in single digits. By using the mental techniques I have acquired and am still improving on, I score much better than that amount of play and practice would suggest. My scores are low because I get the most out of what I know how to do, which I accomplish by keeping my mind in the proper condition for every shot, and for the round as a whole.

The fundamental question of this book is how to be mentally prepared to select and hit the right shot, and to maintain that ability for the duration of the round. The techniques presented in this book, which show you how to do that, are proven, reliable, and are available to you any time you want them.

Golf books and videos abound with mental game advice. Most of them are good at letting you know what to do, but this book is different because it also explains how to do those things.

Part I presents a method of mental training which is based on the basic ways that our mind operates. Concentration and confidence, two natural outcomes of this method, have chapters of their own. The way you use your mind on the golf course is a reflection of how you use it every day. The final chapter of the opening part of the book shows you ways to develop your mind along these lines in daily life, so your mental strength is available whenever you need it, on the course or off.

Once your mind begins growing in this new way, you still need to learn how to apply it specifically to golf to

realize its full benefit. Part II talks about how to apply these new mental skills to develop an overall framework for your play of the game, as well as applying them to specific situations on the course. First, a six-part cycle of golf is presented, which guides you through the mental aspects of a golf shot, enabling you to maintain your concentration and avoid the traps which will break it.

Two chapters that follow contain suggestions for applying your mental skills to the fairway game and the greens game (short game and putting). Finally, there are suggestions for how to think about the game in general so you can play each hole with a plan and the round with an overall strategy, rather than playing shots one by one in the hope that it will all work out; not the best way to shoot good scores.

I believe everyone who takes up golf can become a good player. If you are willing to devote your time, you can train your mind to get the most out of your technique and acquire the potential to play your best golf every time out. What more could we ask for than that?



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# PART I

## THE METHOD

One of the earliest lines that made Yogi Berra, the New York Yankees' Hall of Fame catcher, famous as a commentator on life is what he said when his manager told him that he couldn't just go up to the plate and swing; he had to be thinking up there. Berra said, "Aargh! How can you think and hit at the same time?" This was long before anybody even thought of putting the words sports and psychologist together, but Berra knew how it worked. You did all of your thinking ahead of time, if you were going to think at all. When it was time to perform, well, you just performed.

Nowadays it's common knowledge that controlling the mental aspects of a sport is a major determinant of success. The state of one's mind can interfere with the body performing its best, or keep the way clear for carefully developed skills to freely emerge.

Mental tricks and on-the-spot relaxation techniques that typify mental game advice might work for a while, but those devices can lose their effectiveness over time. Golfers need a mental approach that is based on the natural ways the human mind operates, so that it never ceases to be effective.

We'll start by examining the workings of the mind in regard to playing golf. From there you'll learn an exercise that explains how to train your mind so you can use its full powers as you play. Next, we'll go over the related issues of concentration, the means by which the method is applied, and confidence, which flows naturally from sustained concentration. Finally, I present recommendations for a practical way to develop your ability to call upon this skill at will and have it continue for as long as you wish.

What you are about to read is practical. To understand it fully, you must try it. I believe that if you practice these lessons for your mind as much as you practice any other part of golf, you will become a better player and get more enjoyment from this grand game.

# 1

## CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SELF

Raymond Floyd tells of a shot he played in the 1992 Masters tournament on the 14th hole, trailing the leader by two strokes. He had misplayed his 8-iron approach to the green and left his ball in the worst possible spot—in front of a bank, with the pin on a downslope just 10 feet from the crest of the bank. The only way to get the ball close was to slam it into the bank, letting the ball bounce off it, land atop the crest, and bite as it fed down the slope to the pin. This is not a shot you can rehearse, or figure out logically just the right way to hit it. Floyd described himself as just staring at what he was facing for the longest time, “letting my senses take in all the variables, letting my body feel the shot.” Trusting what his body felt, he hit the ball into the bank, from where it popped into the air and rolled down the slope, into the hole.

Though recreational golfers don’t play at this rarified level, every shot we hit still deserves our full attention. Little of our practice is devoted to giving our shots this attention, however, but rather to the mechanics of hitting the ball. While the quality of our shot does depend on our skill with a

golf club, the condition of our mind determines how much of that skill will be applied. In the thirty to forty seconds needed for planning a shot and hitting it, less than two seconds is devoted to swinging the club. All the rest is purely mental activity. Since our mind must not betray us as we swing at the ball, we could say that the entire procedure is mental. The rest of this chapter describes just how the mind should be used when playing golf. When someone says they are of two minds on a subject, they are telling the truth. The trick is in knowing which mind to follow.

## *Consciousness*

Inside our head lies our brain, a major function of which is to receive external information and process it, in order to direct and coordinate activity of the individual. While the receipt of information is automatic, for example, if we open our eyes it takes no effort on our part to see, how we respond to what we see is governed by an attribute called consciousness.

The nature of our conscious mind can be described in several ways. If we asked people of sound and wakeful mind if they were conscious, they would, of course, say yes. But if we asked them what they meant by that, we might not get the same answer. The word can be used in the phrase, “conscious of,” meaning to be aware of, or to perceive. While driving, we can be conscious that the car ahead of us has suddenly slowed down. We can be conscious of the fact that we need to turn right at the next intersection.

We can also mean the adverb, “consciously,” meaning to do something with intent or with purpose or after due consideration or reflection. “She consciously put her purse on the chair” means she put it there deliberately, instead of somewhere else, that she had a firm reason for putting it there, and not that she could have put it anywhere and it just ended up on the chair. Another way of describing this meaning is that

we were thinking about what we were doing instead of acting reflexively or by habit.

We can be self-conscious, as in focusing our thoughts inward to become keenly aware of exactly what we are doing. This might be because we are doing something new and want to be sure we get it right. We attentively monitor our every move against a model as we proceed. Or, we could be guarding against making a mistake, preventing ourselves from doing something wrong.

Finally, being conscious can simply mean that we are awake, that we are not asleep or under anesthesia. We can respond appropriately to the information that our senses take in. The most common meaning of “conscious” is this last one. We are awake, perceiving the world, with our mental processes fully engaged. All the activities that we ascribe to our mental world are available to us in full degree. We believe that we need to be conscious (awake) to carry them out, and that they will be carried out consciously (with deliberation and reflection). Tests, however, have shown many things we believe to be conscious mental acts do not require the conscious mind at all.

We do not need consciousness to learn.<sup>1</sup> At first, we need to pay careful attention to what we are doing, but after a while such thinking actually impedes further progress. Consciousness is not needed for thinking. Our senses can evaluate a matter and come to a conclusion without our having to deliberate first. Deciding which of two objects is heavier would be an example. Once we pick up the second object, the answer is immediately clear without reflection.

Nor do we need consciousness to reason. Logic, the very definition of reasoning, is seldom involved in day-to-day decision-making. We generally come to our conclusions, based on the store of our knowledge and experiences, before we are aware of what it is we are deciding. Logic comes later if we need to justify what we have thought, said, or done.

Consciousness just can't keep up with the speed at which our mind operates.

There is more that to be said about what consciousness is not, but the point is that while we often think that everything we do is based on conscious thought, very little of it is. Most of the things we do in the course of our day are automatic. It is estimated that we receive 11 million bits of information per second through our five senses. Experiments have shown that the conscious mind evaluates only 40 of those 11 million bits, every second.<sup>2</sup> Our conscious mind does not come close to using all of the information that our senses make available to us. It might be picking out in some way what is the most important, but the rest of that information does not go by unused.

The more skilled we are at a task, the less the conscious mind is involved. In many cases, the intrusion of the conscious mind into what we are doing could actually hinder, not assist, our effort. Say you're a skilled pianist, able to sight-read through a complicated score. You would give little thought to where to put your fingers on the keyboard. Your training and experience would guide your fingers to the right places without error as you played. Thinking about where your fingers should go would bring your playing to a halt. Only if the music presented you with new patterns would you need to slow down and get the conscious mind involved in figuring out where your fingers should go. Once those patterns were assimilated, you would just go back to letting your hands and fingers do the playing, without the involvement of your conscious mind.

When we watch athletic competition, we enjoy watching athletes play the games that we play, but at a much higher level. The moments we remember, and are most awed by, are the moments of pure athleticism when an athlete completes a play that required athletic talent possessed by only a very few, and accomplishes it with no time for consideration. It could be a tennis player making a miraculous return while

out of position, a baseball player making a twisting grab and throw in the field, or a basketball player making a blind pass on a fast break. Conscious consideration of what to do never had a chance to enter in, yet the athlete made a play that was more far difficult than the routine ones that are practiced day after day.

Golf is a slower game. There is more time for the conscious mind to play a role in athletic execution. But just as in these faster-paced games, there are moments when the conscious mind is not needed. Using the example of the pianist again, one might wish to review the score before playing it, but once the performance begins, the fingers would require no explicit direction. In golf, one might wish to take a practice swing, but once the swing is learned, it needs no conscious monitoring when hitting the ball.

None of this is to say conscious mental activity has no role in golf. It does, even if it isn't the role we think. One function of the conscious mind is to create the "I," the sense of self that is separate from the mind and the body; an observer of mental and physical activity and at times the instigator and director of it.

This conception of consciousness and its byproduct is not universally accepted, though. Even the notion of the mind and body having separate existences has not been firmly established. If we were to take the stance that both the mind and body are real, how does the intangible mind interact with the tangible body? If it is the mind that is fundamental, how is there a consistent physical world? If the physical world is fundamental, how is consciousness explained? By adding to all that the question of whether the "I" is a third entity which stands apart from the other two, or even exists at all, perhaps being merely an illusion, we could sink into a hopeless muddle.

We will instead proceed from the common impression we all seem to have, that we have a mind and a body, which are of quite different composition, and there is an "I," a sense of

being unique and separate from everything else in the world outside our physical boundary.

## *Our two selves*

It is with this concept of the self, the “I,” that we can build the foundation of an approach to the mental side of playing sports. We have not just one self. There are two.

One self is centered on the individual acting in the world. This is the everyday self which was referred to previously. This self is entirely self-referential. It concerns itself with gaining and losing, having and lacking, comfort and suffering, and so forth. The primary consideration of this self is how conditions in the world, the individual’s actions, and the actions of others, will affect the individual for better or for worse. In Japanese Buddhism this self is called *shoga*, or the personal ego, the personal mind, one’s private self. Literally, the smaller self.

At work, you might be part of a team project, but your main concerns might be in getting your ideas accepted, having a role that seems appropriate to you in carrying out the plan, or in getting due credit for your contribution. This is the smaller self in action.

The effects of the smaller self on playing golf are probably familiar to you. Can I hit this fairway? Can I get this putt close? Can I avoid the pond on the right? Because the smaller self is isolated from the world around it, the player’s skill and experience is being matched against the course and the elements. It’s you against the world, you against the golf course. This is a lonely feeling. Left to yourself, it is easy to lose confidence in your abilities, spending mental effort worrying about what will go wrong instead of how to make something go right. You can miss noticing things about the course that could guide you to playing better and wiser shots, and be distracted by things that have no relevance to what you want to do.

The way around these problems lies in the second self. This self is expansive. It is a broader self which includes the world around it and is thus in harmony with that world, not distinct from it, and not opposing or struggling against it. This self is not concerned about the personal goals of success or failure, but rather sees the world as it is and acts in accordance with it. Boundaries between the individual and the world fall away. This self is called *taiga*, the absolute ego, the universal mind. Literally, the greater self.

There is still an observer, but it is no longer an “I.” The referent switches from the “I” to the universal. The self now looks outward, being informed by the world. It acts in ways that are in accord with the ongoing development of the surrounding world. The greater self shows us not how to get what we desire, but leads us to what we need, which is often better than what our smaller self, acting more through our desires, thought would be best.

At work, the team project is seen as a way not only to advance yourself, but the organization and all of your partners on the team. You gain by everyone and everything gaining as well. This is the greater self at work.

The greater self allows us to see things clearly in every sense. In golf, when planning a shot, we need to match up what the course is giving us with our playing skills. Not everyone would play the same shot from the same place in the same conditions. Everyone can play the right shot for themselves by the mind, acting through the greater self, letting what is seen and felt create an impression that merges with the golfer’s implicit knowledge of what he or she can do. When that happens, the golfer knows, really knows, that the selected shot is the right one, and can thus hit it with absolute confidence. That is all we ask of the mental game, all we need ask.

The greater self also helps you avoid negative thinking. We all know how powerful a negative thought is; one negative remark can overwhelm ten positive ones. There are things

in life to be truly afraid of, but hitting a golf ball into a pond is not one of them. Yet the prospect can tie us up in knots. When negativity enters our mind, we try to resist it, try to fight against it. This effort will seldom be successful. Even when it is, the payoff is short-lived and the result is seldom entirely satisfactory. We'll end up tired because of the struggle and never sure that what we gained was worth the trouble. I think there's a better way. Let's place our mind where negative thoughts do not have a chance to enter, in the greater self. The greater self frees us from personal concerns. We see the world as a place full of opportunity, where we can find a way to achieve the things that are important to us if we only look.

The greater self can be explained in a general way, but to be fully understood it needs to be experienced. To use a simple example, I could lecture all day on what chocolate tastes like, but you would never know what I was trying to tell you until I gave you a piece of chocolate to put on your tongue. As soon as that happened, all my words would be unnecessary. Similarly, reading about the greater self sets a context, but does not allow you to experience it, no matter how carefully and precisely I could craft an exposition. In the next chapter, I will describe an exercise which will offer you the experience of the greater self and teach you how to enjoy it as part of your everyday life.

### *The mind leads the body*

Before we move on, we must understand the relation of the mind to the body. Whenever we act, or watch someone else act, the first thing we see is the movement of the body. It is easy to assume that action begins with the body, and from there, assume that training the body develops skilled actions. The mind, or mental activity, is, however, the generator of the body's action. Whatever the body did, the activity began when the mind gave the orders.

It is not, though, the conscious mind that gives the orders. Try this experiment: put out your forefinger as if you were pointing at something. Hold it there for a while, then at any time, flick it downward one time, quickly, as if you were pressing a button or flicking a switch. Wait a while and do it again. Pay attention to what is happening in your mind just before you flick your finger. You would probably report that the instant before you flicked it, the idea appeared in your head to do so. The time interval would be too short to measure on your own, as it is nearly instantaneous, but you are aware of it.

Actually, there were things going on in your brain long before that awareness hit you. In a series of experiments made in the 1960s, Hans H. Kornhuber, a German neurophysiologist, and his assistant, Lüder Deecke, studied the link between voluntary hand movements and electrical patterns in the brain. What they found was astonishing. Brain activity, which they called readiness potential, began, on average, almost one full second before the movement described above was performed.<sup>3</sup>

They were not studying reactive movement, which begins much quicker, but conscious movement initiated by test subjects on their own timing. Almost one second before subjects moved their finger, related brain activity had already begun. The average time from the onset of this activity to the movement of the finger was 0.8 seconds. Some subjects took as long as 1.5 seconds.

Most of this preparation time happens in a way that we are totally unaware of. When you were observing your own mind, the moment when the mental feeling to move your finger became evident might have been about 0.1 seconds before you moved it. That is far short of the actual time interval in which the associated brain activity occurs. Whatever the body does, mental activity begins first, before we are conscious of it. Since the conscious mind is not involved at the start, inserting it into the middle of an activity can potentially disrupt it.

There is also a broader sense in which the mind leads the body. Every human being has a mind and body that are meant to work together as a unit. It could be said that we play golf one hundred percent with the mind and one hundred percent with the body, at the same time. It is not the case, however, that the mind and the body are separate entities that we train in their own way and hope work together when it counts. The fact is that the condition of the mind controls the condition of the body.<sup>4</sup>

The body will support what the mind ordains. People have accomplished amazing physical feats under the influence of a determined mind, such as in stories of one person lifting a car so another person can be pulled out from underneath it. Yet when the crisis is over, the person who lifted the car cannot even budge it. Doctors are beginning to understand that the condition of a patient's mind can affect their recovery from illness or injury. It can even prevent a person from falling into ill health to begin with.

In general, a positive and vigorous mind leads to a body that feels light and energized, to a feeling that says, "I can." A mind full of worry creates a body that feels heavy and moves only with effort and uncertainty. This is a mind that says, "I cannot."

In golf, as in life, your mind must be prepared before you start if you wish to do your best. By following the natural order of human activity, you will be able to perform to your maximum capabilities.

## 2

### THE MOVING MIND

Several years ago, I was in the middle of the fairway, about 190 yards from the green. I had a slightly downhill lie, and wind was blowing from right to left. The pin was on the left side of a large green. Instead of trying to figure out the shot logically, I just looked downrange and waited for a solution to come to me. The impression I took in from these conditions linked up with my shot-making knowledge in a subconscious way, and told me in a few seconds what to do: take out your 19-degree hybrid and aim at the right edge of the green.

Without second-guessing or doing any conscious analyzing, I played the shot. The ball took off on a line a little further right than I had intended, but got carried back to the left. It landed on the green and released leftward, ending up about 20 feet from the pin. Following the most satisfying shot of that golfing season, I took two putts for my par.

#### *The unbroken flow of moments*

The world we live in is characterized by change. Every day we wake up a bit different than we were yesterday. Each

passing moment gives us a new world to live in. We do not live in the same world we lived in yesterday, one minute ago, or even one second ago. The nature of the world is change. To be one with that world, your mind needs to be in tune with the present moment, not with the moment before this one, nor the moment to come. The concept of the present moment is necessarily dynamic. As soon as this moment arrives, it departs and a new one takes its place. The present moment is continually being renewed. It cannot be held on to, for as soon as you try, you are operating in the past. That moment is now part of the world as it was, not as it is now. To live wholly in the world, the mind must be moving along with the movement of the world. In other words, live with what can be called a “moving mind.”

Most of the time, changes are so slight that they are imperceptible. You might say, “I can stand beside my golf ball for as long as you want me to, and it’s still going to be 174 yards from the green, on a downhill lie, with a pin on the left next to a bunker. None of that is going to change.” I would agree with you, but that is only one way to interpret what you’re seeing. You are not projecting a golf shot into a still image, like a painting or a photograph. You are hitting the ball into an environment that is changing in subtle ways which are noticeable if your perception changes with it. The course ahead of you will accept many different shots. By allowing your perception of the course to change moment by moment, you’ll find the shot you need to hit.

As each moment comes, the golf course tells you its story, creating an impression with you. As another moment comes, a new story is told, creating a new impression, continuing on until the right choice presents itself clearly. I found the hybrid shot in a crosswind when I stopped trying to figure it out logically, and let the course reach into my thinking and put the shot together for me.

When your mind is moving, impressions get created in your mind that permeate themselves into your body. The physical

execution of the shot will be in accord with, and a physical expression of, your mental feeling of the shot. The physical feeling you are experiencing is the mental feeling made material. Wherever you are, there is a positive shot you can hit. Looking with a moving mind is the way to find it.

### *Attaining a moving mind*

To turn this idea into a working reality, the mind must be taught how to move. The best exercises I know of for this purpose are two related meditations called *Ki No Toitsuho* (unification) and *Ki No Kakudaiho* (expansion).<sup>5</sup> They are designed to get your mind moving and keep it moving for extended periods of time. The more you practice them, the longer you can maintain your connection to the movement of the world around you. Here is how they work.

Sit on the edge of a chair, not resting against the seat back. Your torso is upright, and your shoulders are relaxed. Close your eyes gently and think of the infinite universe. Above you, below you, and to the sides, it is infinite in all directions. Imagine condensing that infinite universe to yourself. From there condense it to something infinitely small. Continue that feeling of movement getting smaller, and smaller, and smaller, continuing without limit.

After about twenty seconds, change your meditation to expansion. From the infinitely small, expand your feeling to yourself, then to the infinite universe. Continue on, infinitely bigger, bigger, bigger. Let this feeling continue getting bigger even when you cannot conceive of something larger than before. After another twenty seconds or so, switch back to the unification meditation. Keep alternating the two meditations in that rhythm.

Once your mind has crossed the boundary of your understanding, whichever meditation you are performing, is where the value of the meditation lies. Your mind is then in a space that it might never have been in before. You might not

comprehend what it is feeling, but that is all right. These meditations are designed to help your mind grow. This is the point in the exercise when that growth occurs. The longer you can keep your mind in this new place, the more mental growth you'll achieve. The way to preserve the feeling of the moving mind once the meditation has passed beyond your understanding is to trust that the feeling continues. Your mind is in new territory. Let trust take over. Learning what that kind of trust is, and how it affects the exercise, occurs through experience and practice.

When you start the moving mind meditation, the feeling of movement will be clear. That will be the only thing in your mind. However, thoughts of what you did today, what you might do tomorrow, what happened ten years ago, might dance across the stage of your mind's theater. Pay no attention to them and they will go away. Let your moving mind continue. Let your mind settle into a state where the feeling of movement is all there is. The longer this feeling goes on uninterrupted, the deeper your concentration will be, and the more benefit you'll get from it. Physically, you might find your body relaxing. Your shoulders will relax, your face will relax. All tension will melt away and you'll be led to a feeling of great calmness.

It is important to understand what this calmness is. It is a relaxed state, mentally and physically. Many people, however, think that to be relaxed is to be weak. It is true that a mind and body that have no energy are weak and have no power, even though there is a feeling of relaxation in the sense that there is no mental or physical tension. But lack of tension alone does not define true relaxation. The meditation exercises teach your mind to move, and to move rapidly. From this rapid movement comes real power. The stability of a spinning top, or the calm power in the eye of a hurricane are examples of the power of rapid movement. A body governed by a moving mind feels relaxed, but possesses the potential for powerful movement at any moment. It is resistant to any disturbance that might come along.

The two meditations I have just described create an intangible mental sensation that does not suggest by itself whether you are doing the exercises correctly or not. Here is one way to find out, a way which at the same time demonstrates to you the true power of real relaxation. As you sit, another person who lifts up gently on your forearm should not be able to move it if your meditation is correct. If your forearm comes up easily, your mind has stopped. The reason this test works is that the mind leads the body. When the mind is moving rapidly, it is calm and stable and that stability is reflected in the body. A body that can be disturbed by this test is a reflection of a mind that lacks stability and can thus also be disturbed.

I would suggest you practice this meditation in two ways. The first way is to hold a formal practice session at the same time every day, in a place where you won't be interrupted. By practicing at the same time every day, you guarantee that you'll get it done. For how long should a formal practice session last? A few minutes might be enough at first. With dedicated practice, you can extend your meditation for a longer time. It is important to continue the exercise only for as long as your meditation is correct. The moment you know your mind has wandered and the feeling has been lost, you are practicing the opposite of what you want to learn. It's best then to start over and proceed the right way. Trying to correct yourself as you go won't work.

The second way to practice the meditation, and this is not a substitute for a formal, daily session, is to do it whenever it strikes you to. The meditation takes only a few seconds to get started. Practice when you're stopped in traffic at a red light, when you're waiting for your e-mail to download, when you're about to leave the house for work, for a few seconds before you walk into a meeting room. Once your mind is up to speed, just let it continue and go about your business. Practice anytime you have a few moments when you're not doing anything else, as often as you like. Do the meditation from

time to time to get comfortable with it in any environment, and to feel more and more comfortable with the process. Doing your meditation in many different times and places in your daily life is one way to make the feeling your own.

The reason for doing the exercise throughout the day, in different environments and under different conditions, is that you have one mind, not two. Remember that the mind you use on the golf course is the same one you use in your daily life. Few people who are easily agitated in daily life can be cool on the course. By training your mind to deal with the rigors of your life away from golf, you bring to the course a mental strength that you can trust because it has been put to the test in circumstances far more important than any golf shot, and has been proven to work.

Your meditation must be continually renewed. It is not something you can “get,” and that’s it, like riding a bicycle. Without regular maintenance, its effects fade, causing you to fall back into old habits. Daily practice, even for a few minutes, is the key to letting this meditation affect your life, and your golf, in a positive way. Just as you exercise your body every day for it to be at its best, so do you exercise your mind.

Do not wait until you attain a certain level of technical skill before starting to play golf with a moving mind. Start learning this mental skill now, regardless of the level at which you play. You’ll get more satisfaction out of a round of golf if you can say, when the round is over, that you did your best. You’ll find that to be more important to you than shooting a particular score. The way to play your best is to play with a moving mind. And if you play that way, those low scores will start happening.

# 3

## CONCENTRATION

Joyce Wethered, an English golfer whose heyday was in the 1920s, and is regarded as one of the best female golfers of all time, was on the green and putting in the 1920 English Open when a train came roaring by. (Golf courses in those days were built next to rail lines to make it easy to get to the course, since few people had cars.) The story goes, as an example of her superior power of concentration, that she was so wrapped up in her putt that she never noticed the train.

But let's think about this for a moment. Trains make lots of noise. When one goes by and it's less than 100 feet away, it's loud, and you hear it. If, however, you're truly concentrating with a moving mind, the noise won't bother you. You won't pay attention to it because it's irrelevant to what you're trying to accomplish. That's what happened to her. When your mind is moving, your power of perception increases. You notice more things. Along with that, though, comes filtering out information that is not relevant to your task at hand. Your moving mind attends to whatever is important and the rest gets discarded.

We all know what it means to concentrate. We “bear down,” “zero in.” We force our mind to pay attention to one thing and fight to exclude distractions. We are taught from an early age that trying hard and concentrating are the same thing. We continue to concentrate in this way not because it works, but because it is what we were taught. We have learned that since the body must do hard work to achieve results, so must the mind. We are also aware that we seldom concentrate in this way, because, quite frankly, most of us avoid hard work if we can.

This is all a misunderstanding of what it means to concentrate. There are many other misunderstandings. Concentration is the easiest thing in the world to do. It’s nothing more than being able to maintain a moving mind without pause.

### *Myths regarding concentration*

Before discussing the meaning of concentration and its relation to the moving mind, we should consider some misconceptions that have become common knowledge, especially in the world of sports, but which actually prevent you from concentrating. These misconceptions, these myths, must be understood for what they are because we have heard them so often; they must be dispelled in order for the proper conception of concentration to take hold.

#### *Myth: Concentration is a trance-like state.*

Concentration might become trance-like if its focus is a fixed object or image. But this is not how you want to live, focusing on one thing only, blind and deaf to the rest of the world around you. Things around you shouldn’t disappear from your awareness. Being walled off from everyday experience and sensations could even be dangerous. When you do the moving mind exercise, this isn’t at all how you feel. It probably feels pretty ordinary, not at all trance-like. You

become aware of more things, not fewer. Concentration with a moving mind is a relaxed state of mind, which opens you up to the world around you, letting you take in whatever is relevant to your task, from whatever source. You do not close down when you concentrate. On the contrary, you open yourself up.

*Myth: Concentration is exhausting, hard work.*

This is true if you believe that concentration means to focus on one thing to the exclusion of all else, generally by sheer force of will. That's not concentration, though. It's trying to think of one thing and also trying not to think of another thing, at the same time. What you're really doing is going back and forth rapidly between the two thoughts. If you continue that effort for long, it will be exhausting. And as soon as you eliminate one unwanted thought, there's another in its place. By mentally bracing yourself against the onslaught, little mental energy is left over for what you actually do want to accomplish.

Go into the kitchen and turn on the tap in the sink. Let the water flow. As long as the tap is turned on, the water flows without effort. Nothing extra needs to be added to keep the water flowing, nor does the water have to be forced out of the faucet. It just flows. Concentration is the same way. Start it, and let it go by itself.

*Myth: Concentrating for an entire round is impossible.*

Exerting significant mental effort for four hours at a stretch is hard work. I doubt anybody could do it or would want to. Concentration, however, is nothing more than getting your mind moving and letting it continue for the duration of the round. This way of concentrating is entirely effortless.

There's a story told about Tom Kite playing with several college golfers. Their shot-making skills were not much different than Kite's, but he was, at the time, the leading money winner in professional golf, while they were competing

for a spot on their college golf team. The difference? Kite told them he noticed that once or twice during the round they would lose their focus, but he never did.

Golf's masters maintain their concentration in their own way. Ben Hogan kept to himself for the entire time. Lee Trevino bantered with the gallery every chance he had. They both won because their concentration never faltered. You might never play golf as well as they did, but there's no reason why you can't learn to concentrate as well, or even better, than they did.

*Myth: You should only concentrate when it's time to hit a shot.*

Think of how many shots you hit over the course of a round that require concentration—every shot you hit except maybe a six-inch putt. This myth tells you to start concentrating, and then stop. Get to the next shot, start again, hit it, and stop. Fully activate your mind, turn it on from zero, over and over again, eighty or ninety times per round, then stop it eighty or ninety times per round. If you tried concentrating this way, probably by the fifth time, there would be nothing left of your ability to get started again.

Our mind operates the way we teach it to. Whatever we do with our mind is a teaching. We either teach it to be moving, or not. The one that we teach our mind most often is the one it will learn how to do, and come to regard as its normal way of functioning. It is the way the mind will respond in critical moments.

If, out of every five minutes of golf, your mind spends forty seconds with a moving mind, and four minutes and twenty seconds being dissociated from this movement, which one will it learn? After a time, the moving state will be perceived as an aberration, and be rejected. But if you calmly maintain your concentration throughout the round, you never have to change a thing. There's no starting and stopping. Just switch from thinking about your shot, to hitting it, to walking up to

the ball again, over and over until the round is finished, in the same state of mind. Even though your physical activities keep changing, the way you use your mind stays the same.

*Myth: There's nothing to concentrate on between shots, anyway.*

Remember that we are not simply concentrating on this shot or that shot, and when it's over, stop until there's something else to concentrate on again. We're concentrating on the moving mind so we can be in accord with the ongoing process of change that takes place in the world around us, change that is happening continuously. What we happen to be doing or observing at any particular moment is incidental. If we want to apply the moving mind to something, it certainly could be the shot we're hitting, but it could also be the conversation we're having with a playing partner between shots, the changing beauty of the course as we walk along it, or the fine weather.

*Myth: A pre-shot routine that you do not deviate from helps you to concentrate.*

The idea here is that a physical activity can act as a trigger for your mind to engage itself to bring its total concentration to the shot. Leading sports psychologists and tournament professionals recommend them. It might be touching your golf bag, hitching up the waistband of your pants, à la Arnold Palmer, or tapping your toe with your club. Whatever you come up with, it's a signal that now is the time for your mind to come into focus.

These things do work, yet I don't think you should use them, for two reasons. One, this trick creates a dependency that is useless anywhere else in your life. If you have a conflict at home or at work, are you going to go get your 6-iron, tap your toe with it, and then deal with the situation? Two, you're getting the mind-body order backwards. It is the mind that leads the body, not the other way around. If you want to have

the ability to concentrate at will, learn how to calm your mind directly. Relying on a physical cue makes it that much longer before you have learned to do it all with your mind, which is the strongest way.

This is not to say that pre-shot routines are useless. You should have one for every kind of shot, that acts as a “pre-flight check” to make sure that your setup is correct and that you are in a position to put your best swing on the ball. The one you have for a full swing will be different from the one you use before chipping. What you do before you putt will be different, too. But in all of them, the mind must be concentrating ahead of the physical routine.

*Myth: Use a swing thought to help your mind concentrate on the shot you’re hitting.*

Using a swing thought while you’re swinging at the ball is the fundamental mistake of the mental game. This is none other than allowing the conscious mind to intrude into a process that should be left to the moving mind. Swing thoughts, those technical reminders that you like to give yourself, are fine as long as you attend to them in your practice swing. When you’re over the ball, they can cause your mind to stop so worry can start flooding in. Swing thoughts do help you concentrate, but on the wrong thing at this moment. It’s best to avoid them altogether.

*Myth: Your concentration doesn’t have to be as sharp for routine shots as it does for the important ones.*

That would be fine if you knew which shots were routine and which were important. But how can you know that in advance? We seldom know which were the important shots until the hole has been played or the round is concluded.

This myth also says that doing less than your best is all right most of the time. What about doing your best all the time? More than once, I have put my drive in the center of the fairway and ended up with a double bogey. Every shot is

important, and requires your complete attention. Besides, if you give your best to each shot, then you never have to figure out which shot is important and which one is not. That eliminates a major source of self-induced pressure.

Good results come from a good beginning. The time to start concentrating is before you walk onto the first tee. It would be even better to start before you begin your pre-round warm-up. Start before you leave home, if you like. Waiting until you think it's important is too late, because there is a certain amount of mental inertia involved. In order to get your mind moving you have to step out of the frame of mind you're in now and start up another one. That can be difficult to do when the thoughts you wished to avoid have already taken control of your thinking. Don't wait. Begin concentrating on the moving mind early and continue throughout the round.

*Myth: Learn to concentrate by putting pressure on yourself during practice.*

This myth is saying that there's no way you can avoid pressure, so you might as well get used to playing with it. We all know that the only pressure you ever experience on the golf course is of your own making. No one is going to run at you and knock you down when you're trying to hit the ball. You won't lose your job if you miss this putt. But you create pressure because you want to do your best and there is only one chance to get it right.

Remember that whatever you do with your mind is a teaching. Sometimes you hear that practicing with self-talk such as, "This putt is to win the U. S. Open," or the like, is a good way to learn how to play under pressure. If you teach yourself to become pressured like this over a four-foot putt on the practice green, that is the response you'll have when you play. When you play, you're trying to eliminate pressure, not create it. It is much better to teach yourself on the practice green how to be calm as you're hitting that putt. The game

is hard enough as it is. There's no reason to make it harder. It's said that you should practice as you play. More accurately, you should practice as you wish to play—with a calm and unworried mind.

*Myth: Pros might not concentrate during the week, but when the game is on the line, their mind is ready.*

Can a person live one way for 98 percent of the week, but live the opposite way, successfully, for the other two percent? Probably not. What you teach your mind is what it will learn. Anyone who spends 164 hours a week not concentrating is learning exactly that—how not to concentrate. Then when the four hours come in which concentration is required, concentration will be impossible; your mind won't know what to do. The more time during the week you spend concentrating on what you are doing at the moment, with a moving mind, the more you'll have trained yourself to concentrate on demand.

*Myth: You develop your ability to concentrate on the practice tee and on the practice green.*

You develop your ability to concentrate by living with a moving mind in every part of your life. Your time on the practice tee is for learning how to apply your concentration to golf.

## *The meaning of concentration*

When I hit my best shots, I marvel at how easy it is to do. It's probably the same for you. That swing is no more difficult than the ones that lead to my poorer shots. So why don't we swing like that all the time? It's because we momentarily lose the flow of concentration, wanting to make sure something happens or that something else doesn't happen. That's all it is. The swing is there. If we can maintain our concentration, if we can keep our mind moving, there is no reason why the swing that gets repeated should not be our best swing.

Concentration is nothing more than getting your mind moving and not having it waver, to have that movement continue undisturbed. Extraneous thoughts won't interrupt you. Outside events get noticed but they do not distract you. The quicker your mind can come into focus, and the longer it can remain focused, the stronger your concentration.

Concentration is a feeling of movement that continues without end. It creates a mind that does not prejudge, and that takes in everything that is sensed without filtering. What this means in golf is that you look at the course with an open mind, letting the shot come to you.

Once your mind and body feel what to do, stick with it, because your mind has sensed that your decision is the correct one and is fully confident that it will lead you to the best result.



## 4

### CONFIDENCE

In the early 1990s, I was in Japan for a week-long training session in mind and body coordination. One of the exercises we were asked to do was called “cutting bamboo.” A stick of bamboo, about as thick as a man’s thumb and roughly three feet long, is suspended at each end inside two pieces of paper which have a vertical slit cut in them. The paper is suspended by two people holding a sharp kitchen knife that has been inserted into the top of the slit, blade side up. The weight of the bamboo pulls the paper against the knife’s blade edge. The slightest pressure against the stick of bamboo will pull on the paper, slicing the paper in two. The object of the exercise is to strike the bamboo with a wooden sword, flipping the bamboo out of the slit without the paper being cut.

Most people will try to hit the bamboo as hard and as quickly as they can. Because they are concentrating on the stick, all this does is create an impact that presses down on it, pulling the paper against the knife blades and sending the paper flying. Thinking of the desired outcome, successful or

not, won't do. What one needs to do instead is to forget about the stick and just swing the sword as if the stick weren't there.

Before we did this exercise, I had been through an intensive 90-minute class in mind and body coordination. When I stepped up to the bamboo, all that was in my mind was, "Swing the sword." The question of whether or not I could do it never came up. The notion of doubt, or possible failure, didn't exist. Neither did success. The only thing in my head was, "Swing the sword," which I did. The bamboo cracked loudly, flew out of the paper and bounced off the floor. The two holders stood, each one holding their knife, with the paper dangling from it in place.

The concentration we strive to acquire and maintain is not an end in itself. It is the necessary element in creating the absolute confidence we need when we plan our shot and, most of all, when we hit it. It is in that frame of mind that we give ourselves the best chance to succeed. The kind of confidence I'm talking about, though, is not the conscious confidence, the kind we talk ourselves into. I mean an unconscious confidence, one that we experience many times every day, but which goes by so unnoticed that it seems odd to call it confidence.

Let me give you an example from golf that I think you can relate to. There was once a time, maybe many times, when you went to the range, got your bucket, went to your mat, and began loosening up. When you felt you were ready, you took out a 9-iron or a wedge, put a ball in front of you, and hit it in a loosening-up way. You weren't trying to hit a golf shot. You were just making a warm-up swing at a golf ball. And what happened? You made beautiful contact and the ball went off straight and high, just like you intended to spend the whole bucket learning how to do.

The reason you struck this ball so well was that your mind was moving and your concentration was sharp. You had no expectations. Your point was to keep loosening up before you started practicing. Being free of any desire, and lacking

expectation, was what allowed you to hit as good a wedge shot as you can. What happened to the very next ball you hit? It was probably the kind of shot you're trying to learn not to hit. Why? Because now you have expectations.

Confidence is the feeling you have as the result of proper concentration. Performing with confidence means to continue your concentration as you hit your golf shot. Expectations, however, get in the way. It doesn't matter what that expectation is, either. Expecting a good shot or expecting a bad shot is the same thing. Both of them stop your mind, interrupt your concentration, and put you back on your own again. As in the example that opened this chapter, it's the difference between being concerned about what will happen to the bamboo, and just swinging the sword.

When your mind goes back to what you want, or what you should do to achieve it, it's focusing on self-referential thoughts that originate with the smaller self. You start thinking of success and failure. Do one, but not the other. Even if we would like to think of success by itself, we can't. Success is defined by failure; they are a matched pair. If there were no failure, the notion of success would have no meaning. So when we try to think of success, failure comes with it and usually wins out.

What we need to do in order to keep our mind focused on the right thing is to put it in a place where success and failure don't exist. You can do that by developing your mind, through the meditation exercises I gave you in the previous chapter, to the point where your concentration proceeds undisturbed. Interruptions are not shut out. There is just no place for them to get in.

I began the chapter by saying that concentration was not an end, but a means. Confidence, which is created by concentration, is a means, too. It is the means to getting what every golfer wants. If you were to ask recreational golfers what they want, most of them would say more distance. Distance is good. Seven-irons are easier to hit into greens than 5-irons.

Others would say they want to be more consistent. You would hear that they just want to hit the ball straight.

But what golfers really want, from beginner to pro, is control. They want to know they are in enough control of what they are doing that the shots they hit will end up close to where they intended. That's when a golfer receives the rewards that a solitary game offers. Every book, video, and live lesson is all designed to do just one thing: give the golfer more control. To get control of your body you have to have control of your mind. To get control of your mind you have to get your mind moving and let it continue (that's concentration). Then you can play with real confidence and you achieve control of your game.

Now it is true that concentration alone is not enough. You have to know what you're doing. There must be something that you are confident about. You could spend ten minutes on the practice green hitting four-foot putts and get pretty good at them. You need to put in that kind of practice routinely to be a good putter. But all that practice will not provide the unshakable confidence you need the next day when you have only one four-foot putt to hit instead of thirty. Overlay your present moving mind onto all the practice you bring forward from yesterday, and you'll have the confidence you need to sink the putt.

Lest you think I'm overselling this point, let's see how it leads right in to the Holy Grail of any sport's mental game, what athletes speak of in hushed tones, recall wistfully, and once they've been in it, stay up nights dreaming of entering once more, and that is, *The Zone*.

## *The Zone*

A golfer shoots a 59 in a competitive round. A basketball player pours in 59 points. A baseball pitcher throws a no-hitter. What you are likely to hear in the post-game interview is all they had to do was hit the shot/shoot the ball/throw the

pitch and there wasn't much more to it than that. As long as we've brought up baseball, let's not leave out batters, either. Some years ago I heard a hitter on a hot streak say the baseball looked as big as a beach ball and it just floated up to the plate.

Every one of these players had a quiet assurance that whatever they had to do was so easy. That's the zone. It's not the exclusive province of highly talented athletes. Anyone can get there. I would guess that you have paid the zone a visit a few times yourself.

Remember that 30-foot putt you looked at and knew at first glance it was going in? And it went in, didn't it? Maybe it was a tee shot you knew would split a tight fairway, and that's exactly what happened. The thoughts that normally plague your mind were gone. For a moment, hitting a golf ball where you wanted it to go had become as simple as buttering your breakfast toast. Your confidence was so great that the joy of performing became an end in itself. Results were immaterial, outside of your caring. Stop reading for a moment, and think of a few more shots like that you have hit. That was being in the zone.

Being in the zone is nothing more than playing with a moving mind. It seems special because it is so different from the way you usually play. If you practice developing your mind by doing the moving mind exercises, you can get there any time you want. Your mind is free. You can train it to do anything.

This ability is not acquired overnight, though. Like anything, it takes practice and continual application. Once learned, it is not only the key to good golf, but to a rich and satisfying life away from the golf course. By developing your application of the moving mind through your daily activities, as well as through golf, you'll learn that much quicker and see positive results that much faster.

To summarize the argument so far, your meditation gets your mind moving. Your concentration keeps it moving, and from that, confidence and control enter into your golf. Concentration is the key element. Learning how to sustain your moving mind is how all of this falls in place. The next chapter will show you how that's done.

## 5

# DEVELOPING THE METHOD

In Chapter 2, you learned two meditations that create a moving mind, and different ways to practice them. The strength of these meditations lies in their application. The best way to get value out of your practice of meditation is to develop ways of applying your moving mind to the activities and relationships in your daily life. This chapter will suggest a plan for doing that, starting small and moving to more challenging applications.

### *First steps*

If you were teaching someone how to putt, you would probably start off about a foot away from the hole. Putting from much farther than that would be discouraging, because the student would seldom see the ball go in. Success at every step along the way motivates the learner to keep going. In the same way, when learning a new mental skill, it is easier and more rewarding to apply it to easy things first, working up to harder things later.

Perhaps you open the front door every morning to pick up the newspaper. Get your mind moving first. Then open the door, pick up the newspaper, and close the door, all without your concentration stopping. One small task, one bit of skill practiced. Do you have a glass of orange juice with your breakfast? Break up that task however you want to: getting the carton out of the refrigerator, getting the glasses out of the cupboard, opening the carton, pouring the juice, and putting the carton back in the refrigerator. Do all that with a moving mind.

When you leave for work in the morning, you can make opening the door, stepping outside, closing the door again and locking it an application. Do the same with getting in your car and backing out of the driveway. There are innumerable little activities that you can apply a moving mind to.

We saw earlier that there are things we do every day that do not engage our conscious mind. They are things that are so familiar that we don't need to be constantly monitoring our actions. All of what I have suggested so far, you do automatically. There is no conscious thought involved. What we want to do now is learn how to do them with a moving mind. That will require conscious (deliberate) monitoring at first.

When you are learning something new, applying conscious effort to the new prevents old habits from taking over. In this case, your physical habits aren't changing, but your mental habits are. Monitor yourself doing these little tasks with a moving mind to make sure that it is truly moving as you perform and complete the task. When doing them with a moving mind becomes your new habit, you don't have to be so attentive any more.

I would recommend, at the start, working on only three or four of these tasks per day, so this project does not become obsessive. Having several of them related to morning activities sets a tone for the rest of the day. What better way to start out the day than with your mind focused at its peak? In time, this feeling will carry over into the working day.

Pick simple tasks that you normally perform automatically. The difference now is to make sure your mind is moving before you begin, and stays moving throughout. It is the mental process that is important, not the particular activity you use to learn it. Keep the tasks small and simple at first, and distinct. As you get used to the process, you could, for example, blend everything you do before you leave the house into one large early morning task. This will teach you to maintain your concentration for longer periods of time.

### *Intermediate steps*

So far we have started simply, with small tasks that involve only yourself. Most of what we do involves other people. While they give you the greatest rewards in life, they also present you with the greatest challenges. We can control how we pour a glass of orange juice, but we can't control what other people think, say, or do. Once we get past the greeting ritual ("Hi, John, how are you today?" "Fine, how are you?" "Just fine."), we have no idea what's going to come next. We have to be ready for anything. Here is where your ability to keep your mind moving is put to the test.

Start off easy. Start with people you get along well with—the people you live with. Every day you go through a morning greeting ritual with them, something along the lines of "Hi, how are you, did you sleep well?" and so forth. Your practice is to get your mind moving before you say one word or even look at them. Get your mind moving first, and then begin the interaction. I am guessing that you will see them in a whole new way. You'll greet them with new sincerity, and feel much closer to them emotionally than you did on previous mornings.

Here's an interpersonal challenge most of us could work on: other drivers. Slow drivers, drivers who cut in front of you, red light runners, tailgaters, people who can turn right on red but just sit there, you name it. I know this sounds funny, but I would guess there is something on the road that

really irritates you. When that something happens, you break your concentration. Fixing that is a relatively safe task, because you're separated from the other driver. You're in your car and they are in theirs.

Now you can't control what other drivers do, but you can control how you respond to them. Keep your mind moving. Let things go. Whatever some ninny in the other car does, let it go. You didn't get hit, you'll still get to where you're going. Don't look over at them and glare. No verbal emoting in the privacy of your own car. No wishing you were driving James Bond's Aston-Martin from *Goldfinger* with the machine guns mounted behind the front turn lights. Just keep driving as if nothing happened.

This is a manageable (hopefully) first step in learning how to have more complicated interactions with other people and keep your mind moving. The next steps are more serious and could perhaps be more difficult. There might be co-workers you don't always see eye-to-eye with. Maybe you have a difficult boss. Maybe there are people who are unintentionally annoying, but who annoy you nonetheless. You're not going to change these people, but you can change yourself. Ease into them, one person at a time.

If there is no one like this in your life, all the better. What you can do then is broaden your application of your moving mind to include one personal interaction after the other under your positive umbrella. Make good relationships better.

I know this is a golf book, and it seems like I'm getting far afield. I'm really not. Life is all one piece. The mind you use on the golf course is the one you use in daily life. Train your mind to do its best in daily life and it will be available to you when you play golf. There's really no other way.

### *Advanced steps*

Sorry, but there are no advanced steps. For as long as you live this will be a work in progress. There will always be new

things to apply your moving mind to. You can always do better at it in regard to the old things. Just keep working at it, and when, over time, things seem to be getting easier, you get more done with less effort, and people seem to be friendlier, the world didn't change. You did.



## PART II

### APPLYING THE METHOD

The moving mind is the gateway to seeing the golf course clearly, making your best decisions, and using your best swing more often, but it alone is not enough. You can bring a moving mind to golf only to the degree that you understand the game. A person who has developed a strong mind, but who has never been on a golf course, will be unable to appreciate the subtleties that influence a golfer's decision-making. What you do not know, you cannot see.

This section of the book describes how to solve two mental game problems. The first one is how to maintain a moving mind in the face of distractions unique to golf. The second one is how to perceive the context in which your next shot must be played. That involves reading the course and bringing that information to your skills in a way that keeps your moving mind focused on the right things.

To help you solve the first problem, you'll be introduced to the cycle of golf (Chapter 6), which is an overall framework for applying the moving mind to the rhythm of the game.

The cycle breaks the game down into six parts, which begins with standing beside the ball and considering the upcoming shot, and ends by walking toward your ball after the conclusion of the shot. Each part of the cycle places a different demand on your concentration. Learn what those demands are and how to meet them in such a way that your moving mind continues undisturbed.

To deal with the second problem, you will read specific suggestions for playing from the tee and the fairway (Chapter 7), and from around the green (Chapter 8), that put a moving mind into practice. In Chapter 9 there are suggestions for how to think about your game as a whole so that every stroke gets played within a coordinated and consistent manner that suits your playing style.

The point of these chapters is to make golf easier for you than it is now. Too often we lose strokes not because of faulty execution, but because we choose shots that give us more work to do instead of less. Every shot you hit should be an easy one, with the purpose of making the shots that follow easy as well. All of them will fit into a pre-planned journey to the hole. This part of the book shows you how to accomplish this.

## 6

# THE GOLFING CYCLE

The first step in applying a moving mind to golf is learning how to apply it to a golf shot. There are larger applications we will take on later, but here is where we start.

The process of hitting a shot can be broken down into six parts: Gathering, Deciding, Preparing, Hitting, Watching, and Walking. This is the cycle of golf. You stand over your ball to check your lie, the wind, aspects of the landing area, the lay of the course, and possible spots to hit the ball (Gathering). You distill all the information you have gathered and select the spot where you want to hit the ball, the shot you think will get it there, and the club you're going to use (Deciding). You go through your pre-shot routine and your setup—grip, stance, posture, and alignment (Preparing). Hitting is, of course, playing your stroke. As the ball takes off you watch where it goes and where it ends up (Watching). You walk up to the ball to play your next shot (Walking), and the cycle begins again.

## *Gathering and Deciding*

The first things you do before you play your stroke are to evaluate the course and decide which stroke you are going to play. Though these are distinct activities, Gathering leads so seamlessly into Deciding that it is best to talk about them together.

The challenge that a golf course architect presents to players is to find a way to get the ball into the hole while avoiding obstacles designed to retard that process. In this part of the golfing cycle, which is spent looking over the shot and deciding what to do, use the moving mind to see which shot to hit, rather than which mistakes to avoid. If you carry yourself through this part of the shot correctly, stepping up to the ball and hitting it is almost incidental.

The problem a golf shot presents to us is how to project an action into a defined space. We're doing something here that shows up over there. The question is, what should we do, and what is the easiest way to do it?

Imagine you're driving a car on the freeway and want to change lanes. You'll look for an opening nearby, or if there isn't one, you'll either speed up or slow down until you come to one. Then you just slide your car into the open space. As you were sizing up the road, and performing the maneuver, you weren't weighing pros and cons of different choices, or thinking about similar times in the past, or thinking at all in a rational or deliberative way. You just looked at the road, found a spot, and moved the car into it. It's about that simple.

Looking over your golf shot is the same. You look at the course to pick a spot where you want the ball to go, decide how you want to get the ball there, and play away. When your mind is moving, you see the elements of the course you have trained yourself to notice (Gathering), and find a shot within that context that you have trained yourself to hit (Deciding). The moving mind creates a wordless knowing, unaccompanied by an embedded or overlaid visual impression. You have

a strong impression that this shot fits into and is being invited into the scene that you're looking at.

How this works in practice differs with the type of shot. Those particulars will be explained in later chapters. The common element when you find the shot is a feeling of release, of the course opening up to you, of a small happiness in having discovered what you're going to do and knowing that you'll succeed. I call this the success reaction. It is sometimes accompanied by a tangible sensation, like a radiating glow, that you feel in your abdomen for a second or two. I know you're familiar with this sensation. It's the feeling accompanying the relief you might have had when the solution to a difficult problem suddenly emerged out of nowhere. You can, and should, sense the success reaction in some form before every shot you hit, if your mind is moving.

If you don't get this reaction, it might be that your mind is not moving. Otherwise, it is likely that you are looking for the wrong thing or in the wrong place. You could be looking at a green you shouldn't be hitting into, or a short shot that is too risky. Start over again with a shot you know you can hit any time and zero in from there. For example, if I'm hitting into a complicated green complex and not seeing a way to get on, I might find a bail-out area short of the green and mentally weave my way toward it looking for safer shots that are closer. If there is trouble in front of the green, I can look for a good place to hit short of it, or look for a safe place to hit to that's beyond the pin. Never concern yourself with what the bad choices might be. Put your mind on finding the one good choice and it will present itself to you.

In all, the Gathering and Deciding phase shouldn't take more than a few seconds once you get used to it. You'll see things fairly quickly and make good decisions without delay.

Before we move on, let me say a few words about visualization, because that seems to be another name for what we're doing here. Visualizing, literally "seeing" the shot, is the big thing these days. Some people say it's like going to the

movies, where they see the ball leaving the ground and flying or rolling to where they want it to go. This is projecting a shot you already know out to the course. Top-level golfers visualize quite differently. They talk about letting the shot come to them, and I think they mean literally that.

When my mind is moving, my next shot seems to emerge from where I want to hit the ball and come back toward me, being felt by my mind and body at the same time. I do not conceive a shot from inside myself and try to find a place on the course for it. I instead let a shot that is already there, waiting for me to find it, make itself known. I am positive you feel the same thing yourself on occasion.

The visualization I'm talking about is not related to seeing, as the word suggests. It's a feeling of knowledge that simultaneously enters the mind, the arms and hands, the torso, and the legs, co-equally, as if the intangible mind has taken physical form as well.

## *Preparing*

When you feel the success reaction come over you, move on as soon as possible to hitting the ball. The shot feeling that has been created can fade within eight to twelve seconds. Take a rehearsal swing if you want to, get into your set-up, taking care to aim yourself properly, while still riding on the shot feeling. There's no need to rush through this phase of the cycle, but get through it as efficiently as you can, and without delay.

## *Hitting*

It's possible to think of what has been done so far, Gathering, Deciding, and Preparing, all as getting ready for the big event, hitting the ball. We can think, "All right, I did my homework. Now it's time to hit," as if reflecting on the upcoming shot and then hitting it were separate matters. That's

a big mistake. The preparation cannot be separated from the playing. There must be continuity between them. Respect and attend to the common thread, the moving mind, especially now.

The golf cycle is all one thing, of which the physical activity of hitting the ball is a small part. The mind does not go through the six parts of the cycle one at a time, but stays focused, in an overarching way, on one process with six parts.

The instant just before you take the club away is the point where your concentration can be easily interrupted. Many people can maintain a calm mind while in a period of quiet reflection. The moment that action begins is an opportunity for unwanted distractions to enter your mind. Here is where your concentration must be the strongest.

What you should be moving toward is a point that Ben Hogan made clearly. Hogan, who many people think was the ultimate technical golfer, said that technical matters get worked out on the practice tee. When he was playing all he thought about was “trying to knock the damn ball in the hole.”

With the ball in front of you, the time for thinking about mechanics is over. That, like Hogan said, is what we do on the practice tee. When we step up to the ball to hit it, we have considered the variables, made our decision, and we feel the stroke in both our mind and body. Now we must take care to play the stroke based on that feeling, and not switch over to generic thoughts which interfere with that feeling.

The Hitting part of the golfing cycle is where confidence comes into play the most. All that you have done so far is now being put to the test: your evaluation of the course, your shot-making decision, and your practice at the range. Believe in this intuitive process. Trust that it, not a conscious, rational process that you might be using now, is what will lead to the results you want.

Professional golfers counsel us to trust our swing. I advise you to trust your mind as well; that is, keep your mind moving, because the shot you want to hit will come out of that.

In my early days of playing golf, before I had learned to trust, I would step up to a putt and at the last second, think, “You’re playing too much break,” and adjust my aim a little bit to the left. Sure enough, I would miss the putt to the left. If I had stayed with what my mind told me was right, the ball would have gone in the hole. Trust your judgment. It will be right far more often than last-second doubts.

So far, I’ve been talking about having your mind under control so that your concentration continues at all times. Though there’s nothing wrong with having that as your goal, the fact that we are human means there will be times we falter, no matter how strong our mind is. When you’re about to take the club away, intrusive thoughts, all different, can demand your attention. Not one of them has anything to do with hitting the ball to your target. If that happens to you, stop and step away. Just walk away from the ball and clear your mind, because there is no way you’ll hit the ball well otherwise.

You will lose your concentration occasionally. When that happens, correct yourself before you hit the ball. Let someone else in your group be the one who says, “Darn! I *knew* I shouldn’t have hit that shot.”

Speaking of intrusive thoughts, I would like to comment once more on swing thoughts, which you hear about all the time. Just before the club starts moving away from the ball is where many golfers like to insert a swing thought. Golf books and mental game tips in magazines encourage you to do just that. A swing thought could be anything which gives you the confidence that you’ll put a good stroke on the ball. I have to admit, if you find the right swing thought, it works wonders. The first time I broke 80, I found one that carried me around the course. I hit the ball great from start to finish. Unfortunately, I’ve never gotten it to work for me that way since.

Swing thoughts don’t last long. They change from day to day. They can lose their effectiveness even in the middle of a round. When you rely on them, golf is a continual search

for the next one. Johnny Miller talks about his WOOD swing thoughts—works only one day. Sometimes they last even less time than that. Have you ever been on the range and had a hot swing idea pop into your head, started doing it, and hit three or four great shots in a row, and then, back to normal? The magic can fade that fast.

My major objection, though, is that swing thoughts insert the conscious mind into a process where it doesn't belong. You have spent every moment up to now using a moving mind not only to find your shot, but also to feed the hitting of that shot into your body. You don't need any more help. You're at the peak of your readiness. You don't have to remind your body how to hit this shot. It already knows what to do.

## *Watching*

The watching phase is simple: once the ball has been struck, watch it until it comes to rest or is no longer visible.

After you hit the shot, being one with the unbroken flow of moments means you do not hold on to what is happening. You only watch the shot proceed. There is no second-guessing yourself; no judgment, good or bad, of what you have done. This precludes critical self-talk. One of the worst mental habits is to be self-critical. This is the moment where that all begins. Being able to control your mind, at this time, is one of golf's most positive mental skills.

Watch the ball and don't get ahead of yourself, especially if the shot doesn't turn out well. There's no telling what kind of a shot you will have next until you get up to the ball. More than once I have thought I hit into trouble, but when I got to the ball, found that I had a decent shot available after all. There have also been times when I thought all was well, but discovered when I got to the ball, that wasn't the case.

You can practice the Watching phase at the range. Whenever you hit a ball, watch all the way until it stops and make

no judgments about its quality. It's too easy to hit a clinker, then turn away and drag over another ball before the one you just hit has even landed. If that is your habit, change it. You'll turn away from your bad shots on the course, too, which puts you into a defeatist frame of mind that is hard to get out of.

It seems curious that watching the ball should be singled out as a distinct phase of the game, but psychologically, it's quite important. In the larger sense of the round as a whole, it is perhaps the most important one of all.

## ***Walking***

In the time you have between shots, you have two challenging mental tasks to accomplish. The first one is to let go of the shot you just hit. You have hit the ball and watched it come to rest. Everything about it is now in the past. Let the result go, good or bad, and start walking up to your ball for the next shot.

A recent profile of Phil Mickelson commented that he is "one of the best forgetters in the game. He has an amazing gift for being able to forget the last shot, last round, last tournament, and move forward."<sup>6</sup> In Part II, I'll be talking about the importance of remembering in becoming an effective golfer. Being able to forget is just as important, and here is where it happens.

The second thing you must do is keep your mind moving and in the present moment. This ensures your mind will be in that state when you finally get near the ball and start gathering for your next shot. If your habit is to let your mind stop and then start it up again when you get near the ball, you have created one more thing that needs to be done and which, because it is intangible, can easily be forgotten. The mental demand that a start/stop cycle of concentration places on you can also be exhausting after a while. You could stop trying altogether.

Even though your mind is moving, it still has to be paying attention to something. It could be the scenery of the course. Maybe you want to chat with your partner. You could start gathering for your next shot, too. You don't have to wait until you are standing next to your ball. As you walk down the fairway you could be checking the wind direction and intensity. Getting closer to the intended landing area for your next shot could reveal considerations not visible from farther away. What your mind attends to, though, is less important than keeping it moving between shots.

### *Mental statistics*

Golfers like to keep statistics. I hope you keep some of your own. The right ones tell us which shots we need to practice, and give us hints on what to improve. If you keep statistics, I suggest you keep a mental game statistic, too. Write down the number of times you were completely confident as you hit the shot. At the moment the club was coming into the ball, did you feel as confident as when you stepped up to hit it?

If you keep track of this, it's quite likely that you'll find clear patterns of ebbs and flows in your concentration during the round. Were you fine for the first three or four holes but could not keep it up after that? That might tell you that you can concentrate for only so long, and that you need more work on sustaining a moving mind. Or, do you start off scoring poorly but get better as the day goes on? This might be telling you that you tend to play golf with anxiety and can relax only when self-imposed pressure of playing well has been lifted.

There are many other patterns, each with their own explanation. Though the swing is complicated, and reproducing it accurately and correctly every time is more than we can ask of ourselves, the mind is simple and is under our control. There is no reason why you cannot bring its full powers to every shot.

## *Final thoughts*

The golfing cycle is one mental process, not six separate processes that you complete in succession. Even though golf leads us through different physical activities, they are conducted under the direction of just one encompassing mental activity. It is easy to apply a moving mind to just one thing. When there are two in succession, the boundary between them can cause our mind to stop. To prevent that from happening, we call those two things one. If there are three things, we call those three things one. We can extend this combining as far as we want.

We can even call the entire golfing cycle one. Though the steps in the cycle are distinct, each step blends into the next one. There is no clear line of demarcation. This is especially true of the Walking to Gathering transition. After the cycle has begun, Walking is not an end and Gathering another beginning. The golfing cycle is like a wheel that continues to turn. You need only set it in motion on the first tee and let it keep presenting you with each phase as it comes around, until the ball is in the hole on the eighteenth green.

The large majority of problems you face on the course involve how you use your mind and are less involved with technical issues. For example, most golfers have had the sad experience of their swing breaking down without warning after it had been working so well. Shot after shot was going just fine and then came three clinkers in a row. This is seldom because of a technical problem, unless your swing was on the edge of an irretrievable error and finally spilled over. It usually means something about your mind changed. Now you have the tools to change it back. If you're hitting one good shot after another, keep it up! That's what's supposed to happen. Just keep doing the thing that got you there, which is to keep your mind moving.

## 7

### DOWN THE FAIRWAY

A few years ago, I played with a young man just starting out in the game. He hit his tee shot on the first hole into a clump of trees to the right of the fairway. I stayed back a bit, to give him room for his chip back into the fairway, which was the only realistic option he had from there. Instead, he made a try for the green. I heard the ball bounce off a tree and it ended up not far from where it started.

We weren't being rushed, so I walked over to where he had played his shot. There was a tree limb twenty feet in front of him, and six feet above the ground. The green was about 140 yards away, behind a large pond. So I asked him if he was trying to hit the ball under the limb, but with enough force to carry the pond, and enough spin for the ball, flying like a low bullet, to stop when it hit the green. He looked at me like it was the strangest question he had ever heard.

"Of course I was," he said. Enough said, I thought to myself, and I didn't press the point.

Here is a truth about golf: while the short game and putting secure your score, a good score is only made possible by getting the ball up to the green as quickly as you can. To make the journey to the green efficient and safe, any old drive and any old iron shot won't do. The more you think it through ahead of time, the better results you will get, because you'll be getting the job done with shots you hit well, all according to a plan; preferably a better one than my young friend had.

### *Gathering and Deciding down the fairway*

Playing from the fairway or the tee is probably the simplest application of the moving mind. From the tee, choices are relatively uncomplicated. You can scan the course and find the right landing area fairly quickly. The club that will get the ball there will be obvious, too.

From the tee, you can put the ball down over a wide range of ground. If you're standing on the left side of the tee box and can't see a shot you like, move to the center or to the right. When the success reaction occurs, tee up the ball and hit away. You'll get a better result if you first decide from where you want to hit the ball into the green, and then look for how to get the ball from the tee to that spot in the fairway.

Hitting from the fairway into the green is a bit more challenging. The greater quantity and variety of hazards around the green usually make the penalty for an off-line shot more severe than from off the tee. Use a moving mind to find places where you can hit the ball to that give you a reasonable chance of getting your next shot close to the hole. On a few occasions that spot might be deliberately off the green to a favorable side because playing for the green is too risky. Avoid weighing one shot against another, calculating risks and rewards. Just let the shot come to you and play it with confidence.

## *Driver off the tee?*

The tee shot might be the most important shot for a recreational golfer. Unlike the pros, recreational golfers have to get the ball in the fairway in order to shoot a good score. Many recreational golfers, however, have a hard time hitting their driver straight. If that's you, think for a moment before you pull out your driver just because you're playing a par-4 hole or a par 5. Do you really need the distance the driver gives you? Can you trade some distance off the tee for greater accuracy and a better chance to keep the ball in play?

To decide whether to use your driver on a par 4 or a par 5, think of your expected score on the hole and go through the questions below. If the answer to any of these questions is no, leave the driver in the bag and tee off with a shorter club.

1. Is par a reasonable expectation on this hole?
2. (On a par-4 hole) Think of the longest club you feel confident hitting into a green. Will your average drive get within that distance?
3. Do you need to hit a driver to have a short iron or less into the green?
4. Look at the trouble off the tee. If you hit into it with your driver, can you still make your expected score?

Here's how this works in practice. There is a hole on a course I play several times a year, 386 yards uphill, par 4. In the nearly twenty times I have played this hole, I have parred it twice. It's an easy bogey for me, but a hard par. To get a par, I need a perfect drive followed by a hybrid club off an uphill lie into the green. Those are two demanding shots to have to hit, back-to-back. So, the answer to question 1 is no, I don't expect to par this hole, and the choice is made right away. I play a hybrid club off the tee, advance the ball with a mid-iron, chip on, and get my bogey. Keeping the driver in the bag lets me hit three easy shots into the green instead of two hard ones. Double bogey never gets put in play. There's an outside chance of making par if my chip gets close enough.

The very next hole, on the same course, is a 375-yard par 4 on which I always use a driver. Why? First of all, I normally make par on this hole, so question 1 is yes. The fairway slopes downhill and angles to the left, favoring my shot shape. The cumulative effect is to leave me with a short iron into the green (question 2 is yes). Question 3 is yes; a shorter club off the tee won't catch the slope, leaving me with a mid-iron to the green. As for question 4, the trouble is on the right and is easy to play out of. Sometimes I have made par from there, so the answer to all four questions is yes, and the driver comes out of the bag.

These decision rules make explicit what you'll perceive from the tee if you go through the Gathering and Deciding phases of the golfing cycle with a moving mind. As you get better with this most difficult club, your mind will free you up to use a driver on holes where you once kept it in the bag, but not before you're ready.

### *The right spot in the fairway*

Golf course architects like to make us think a tee shot is harder than it looks, or encourage you to hit your tee shot into the wrong place. One hole I often play shows you very little fairway from the tee and invites you to carry a fairway bunker on the right. The bunker is farther away than it looks. You can end up in it if you don't hit your best drive. Even if you do carry it, you'll find yourself in the rough with the ball above your feet. Meanwhile the fairway you thought wasn't there is right beside you, and it's huge.

The next time you go out, look for a landing spot on each hole, as you're walking down that fairway and get to your typical driving distance, that you would like to hit the ball into. Now line up that spot and the tee with something in the opposite direction that you can use as an aiming point for your tee shot. It might be a tree, or a building in the distance. Make a note of these landmarks and use your notes the next time you play that course.

The hole with the hidden fairway is on a course that sits in the middle of a housing development. There is a house in the distance with a unique gable that I use to line up my tee shot. It looks like I'm aimed at nothing, but I'm really aimed at a wide fairway that is hidden by sloping ground.

Another example is a hole which has a shallow ravine that requires a flight of 242 yards to carry. Normally, I'll play short of the ravine and aim at a yellow road sign off the course about a quarter mile away. If I'm feeling like I can take on the ravine, the line is at a barn a bit to the left of the road sign.

Knowing in advance where you're going to aim your tee shot, and which club you're going to use, makes the start of each hole a lot easier. This is not bypassing the process of Gathering with a moving mind. It is giving the moving mind more information to work with.

The first time I used a landmark to aim a tee shot was in 1968 when I played the Old Course at St. Andrews (which is a story in itself). I got to the 6th tee and all I could see in front of me were weeds and bushes. I was playing solo and it must have been clear that I was puzzled, because a local coming from the other direction walked over to the tee to ask me if there was a problem (as if he didn't know). I told him I couldn't see where to hit the tee shot.

He said, "Do you see that steeple in the distance? Aim for it and you'll be all right."

I thanked him and he went back to his game. The steeple was several miles away across the River Eden estuary. I hit the ball at it and got the ball in the fairway, which I eventually found.

## *Zeroing in on the pin*

When you hit into the green, your primary strategy should be to get the ball on the green and let your putting take over. Aiming for the pin invites high scores unless there is ample room on either side for a miss.

The general rule is to aim for the center of the green. That gives you the most room to miss on either side, and leaves you with a putt of about 30 feet. If the green is quite broad, you don't have to aim for the center, but aim no closer to the pin than halfway between the pin and the center. That gives you a chance to put the ball closer to the pin, but leaves enough room on either side of your aim line so a miss won't hurt you.

Choosing the right club depends on knowing how far you hit each one.<sup>7</sup> When you know how far each of your irons will carry, be aggressive in figuring your distance to the pin. A rangefinder gives you the exact distance, but that distance needs to be adjusted for how the hole is playing at the moment. Perhaps after you have weighed all the factors that determine playing distance (lie, wind, weather, topography, etc.), you figure the pin is playing to 154 yards. Holding a club that carries 158 yards, just tell yourself, with a moving mind, to hit it 154 instead. Your mind/body partnership will make the necessary adjustments. If you think this way, you'll stop being short of the green so much, and once a round, maybe twice, you might stick the ball close to the hole. I mean really close.

### *The pursuit of distance*

You might wonder on occasion what you could do to hit the ball farther than you do now. Wouldn't it be nice to hit your driver 250 yards instead of 220? How about hitting a 7-iron 160 yards instead of 140?

More distance, as in being able to hit the ball farther with any given club, does make the game easier to play, but only to a certain extent. Professional golfers are consumed with distance because they have only one set of tees to play from. Short hitters on the Tour have a disadvantage.

Recreational golf is not the same game. You have fewer worries about how far you hit the ball because you can play from the set of tees appropriate to the length you have.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to hit the ball farther, but the pursuit of distance often leads to trying for a little extra at the last moment before impact, which frequently leads to a mishit. It also leads to hitting too soon, using up your power before the club gets to the ball. If you think you have to hit an iron hard to get the ball to the green, take one more club and hit it with an easy swing. You'll hit a much better shot. The only person who cares which club you use is you.

The pursuit of distance is especially damaging with a driver. The purpose of that club is not meant to hit the ball as far as possible. It's only meant to get the ball in play. Try to hit your driver the same distance every time, with the distance that's built into it and which you get out of it, just like every other club. When you play it to a standard distance, you'll get consistent results and leave your ball in a good position for your next shot much more often.

## *Keep the ball in play*

Recreational golfers need to keep the ball in play, especially off the tee, to have a chance at making a good score. Get your tee shot in the fairway, and you're on offense. Don't get fooled by how the pros make par when they hit their tee shot into deep rough or the trees. Those guys are *really* good. Taking penalty strokes and chipping out of terrible lies hurts your score and adversely affects your level of confidence.

If you are still trying to break 100, try this experiment. The next time you play, leave every club longer than your 4-iron, or the hybrid equivalent, at home. Just give them the day off. Tee off with that 4-iron on every par 4 and par 5 with an easy, keep-it-in-play swing. Play whatever shots it takes to keep the ball in the fairway so that your ball doesn't get in trouble. When you hit into the green, hit short if there is serious trouble around the green—bunkers, water, high grass, mounds. Chip on without getting too fine. Just get the ball

on the green so you can get your two putts. It is unlikely that you'll shoot a much higher score than you normally do. Quite possibly, it will be a lower one.

This might be a good experiment for the more accomplished golfer to try, too. When the round is over, reintroduce the longer clubs into your bag one at a time. Stop when you begin to lose strokes because of stray or mishit shots with the last added club. That doesn't mean never to play with that club, only to practice with it and get good with it before you use it on the course.

All golfers might want to consider an extension of this experiment as a strategy for general play: *Never hit a ball on the course with a club that has less loft than your average score over par.* That excludes your putter, of course. If you aren't breaking 100, the 5-iron (28° of loft) is your big gun. A 6-iron might be a better choice. Break 90 regularly and you can move up to a 19-degree hybrid iron, which should get you 190-200 yards off the tee. Drivers in this scheme are for golfers who break 80.

By following this rule, the ball will be in play much more often because you'll be playing within yourself, using clubs you can control. That translates to fewer strokes lost getting the ball up to the green. Yes, you could lose some distance overall and on many holes this strategy might take par out of play. Remember that you are a handicap golfer and are not expected to par every hole. It is unlikely, however, that you'll earn any fewer pars than you do now by playing with this abbreviated set of clubs. What you remove from your scorecard are double and triple bogies. You will also learn more about the strategy of the game, since your ball will be in a position for you to play a hole more often by attacking it rather than by recovering from wayward shots.

## *Coordinated club selection*

When you know you need more than one shot to cover a certain distance, make them two easy shots, not a hard one and an easy one. Take a short par 4 for example, of 304 yards. Most golfers could get on with a driver and a wedge. Short par 4s, though, commonly feature more trouble off the tee than usual, to catch errant drives. If you hit a 4-iron off the tee, you would be in the fairway much more often than with a driver, and have an 8-iron remaining into the green, which are two fairly easy shots.

A typical par-5 hole from the white tees runs 485 yards. Plan A would be to hit two big shots, because there's a lot of distance to cover, and play whatever is left. The sequence might be driver, fairway metal, 40-yard pitch. None of those are the easiest shots. Plan B would be to choose your preferred shot into the green and play up to it. That might be a 9-iron from 120 yards, which leaves 365 yards to be covered. You could do that by hitting a fairway metal off the tee and a 5-iron from the fairway. To choose between the two plans, think about what your total score would be if you used each plan ten times. I think Plan B would give you a lower overall score than plan A.

You can use this method on a long par 4 that you normally need a drive and long iron or hybrid to reach in two. Chances are you don't hit this green in two shots very often anyway, so if it's going to be three shots, make them three easy ones. Two shots of 175 yards followed by a longish chip will cover, say, 410 yards, keep the ball in play the entire distance, and take the double bogey out of play. With a good chip, you could make par.

Think the same way from the fairway. Say the green is 260 yards away, which is out of reach in one shot for most recreational golfers. Even if you hit a fairway metal to cover as much ground as possible, that's not an easy shot. Try hitting two short irons instead. An 8-iron followed by a 9-iron might

work, or you could hit a 7-iron and pitching wedge. Both sequences will probably put the ball on the green in two more often than a fairway metal followed by a pitch.

What I hope you get out of this discussion is that being a long way from your objective doesn't always mean using your longest clubs to get there. If you have the distance, by all means, use it. But if you expect to take several shots to get the ball on the green from where you are, do some math. Play several easy shots, not one or two hard ones. This will save you strokes in the long run.

## *Wind*

Playing in the wind is not difficult. Hit the ball with an easy swing to keep spin off the ball. The wind accentuates spin. That will make your slice or hook curve more. Shots hit into the wind get lifted higher, at the expense of distance. With a crosswind, hit into the wind and let the breeze carry the ball back. Into the wind, take one or two more clubs and make an easy pass at the ball. With the wind at your back, don't try to belt the ball. Hit it high and let the wind carry it.

From about 120 yards in, where accuracy is paramount, keep the ball as low as you can. Maybe your 120-yard club is a 9-iron, but learn to punch a 7-iron that distance so you can keep the ball under the wind. From closer distances, if you have fair ground and green to work with, run the ball onto the putting surface rather than fly it on.

## *Lie*

When you have to play from a lie that is out of the ordinary, your first concern is picking the appropriate club so you can hit the ball with clean contact. Playing off a bare or patchy lie, or the opposite, where the grass is thick, might mean using a different club than normal, hitting a different shot, or at least setting up differently. Uneven lies make clean contact harder as well.

Too often I see my playing partners pick their club solely based on the distance from the pin and hit the ball poorly because the combination of club and lie gave them only a small chance of success. Unusual lies are part of the game. Learn how to recognize them and how to adjust for them. Unless you have professional control of a golf club, pay great respect to your lie.



## 8

### AROUND THE GREEN

There's an old golf joke about a gorilla that can hit a golf ball 400 yards. Have you heard this one? The gorilla tees off on the first hole and whack! smashes the ball 400 yards right onto the green. He gets up to the green, takes out his putter, lines up the putt, addresses the ball, and whack! 400 yards down the second fairway.

There is an element of truth to this story. Sometimes I play with a golfer who has one shot for everything around the green. No matter where he is, no matter what the shot calls for, it's the same shot with the same club. When it works, it works great, because he has hit it so many times. Most of the time, though, it doesn't work out that well.

Then there are guys I get partnered with who have a shot for every occasion. They get up and down from places where you would bet the mortgage they couldn't. These guys are the players. They're the ones who figured out that golf is about getting the ball in the hole, and around the green is where you do it.

While the green game is mostly about finesse and imagination, there are definite technical matters that need to be worked out in advance. The more different shots you can hit and can control, the more you give your moving mind to see. You will nonetheless come across little shots that take you outside of what your short game practice has prepared you for. This is when imagination carries you into the realm of creating new shots with the skills you have. The moving mind is just the tool for the task.

In a simpler scenario, you might have five shots you could hit from a particular spot, but you have to choose the right one. Deciding is not something the conscious mind is very good at. Once more, here is where the moving mind will show you what to do.

This chapter will present a general approach to the game around the green that lets you apply the moving mind to reveal effective shots that you can hit successfully.

### *Gathering and Deciding near the green*

When you are close to the green, think first about getting the ball on the green so you can start putting. A heroic shot at the pin that doesn't come off can cost you a stroke or two. Your first look at a short shot should be to find a spot on the green which you can get to easily and end up within two-putt range of the hole. Once you've found it, you can keep looking to see if there is a way to get the ball close enough for one putt. If there is, your moving mind will find it. If there isn't, it won't.

As before, you're waiting for the success reaction to occur. When it does, pull your club and step up to the ball. Take a few practice swings to rehearse how you are going to make this particular stroke. In the short game, where every swing has its own design, practice swings are necessary, whereas you might or might not take one on the tee or in the fairway. After you have taken them, get into your stance and look at

the shot one more time to feel the success reaction again. It will happen. When it does, address the ball and hit away.

### ***Chip or pitch?***

When the ball is ten yards off the green, and the entrance is clear, and there is lots of green in front of the pin, you have two ways you could get the ball next to the hole. You could fly it to the hole, or knock the ball just on the green and let it run the rest of the way. Which shot do you hit?

First, check the lie. Fluffy lie, both options are open. Tight lie, that is, without much grass under the ball, chip. Second, assuming the lie is favorable, check the distance to the edge of the green and from there, the distance to the pin. If the distance to the edge is *greater* than the distance from the edge to the pin, fly the ball. How far? Land the ball halfway between the edge of the green and the pin and let it release to the hole. If the distance to the edge is *less* than the distance from the edge to the pin, run the ball on. Land the ball a few feet past the edge so it can roll the rest of the way. The general rule when chipping is to run the ball across the ground to the hole if at all possible. Balls that approach the hole like an approach putt go in. Balls that fall out of the sky don't.

Again, this is not short-circuiting the process of Gathering and Deciding with a moving mind, but using it in an informed way. There might be instances when the best choice is the opposite of what these guidelines suggest. Your moving mind will tell you when.

### ***It's a big green you're pitching into***

When you're 80 yards away from the center of the green, it is almost impossible for even an average shot to miss. The target is just too big. The pitch from 60-100 yards should be easy to put on the green, but it seems to be the last short

game skill that many recreational golfers develop. Make it easy on yourself. The green is probably as deep as it is wide. From 80 yards away, you could hit the ball anywhere from 65 to 95 yards and still be all right. There's an old bit of advice that you should try to hit the top of the flagstick with these shots. That's still good advice. If that's your target, your moving mind will guide you to a shot that lands hole-high or a bit beyond, and not way short, which is where recreational golfers commonly miss these shots.

One thing that makes these shots seem to be harder than they are is that the foreshortened view of the green you have from the fairway makes the green look like a narrow sliver of ground. Remind yourself that the green is likely to be as deep as it is wide. Hit into it without concern and start putting.

### *Gathering and Deciding on the green*

Green-reading is the place on the course where the moving mind can help you out the most. Gathering here is the most confined, and the simplest. The lie is always good, and wind is rarely a concern. Regardless of the distance to the hole, we know which club we are going to use. We never have to shape the shot because the green does that for us. We're looking for just how the green is going to do that.

In order for your moving mind to give you the right impression, you have to be in a place where it can see the right things. The first thing to read on any green is the overall slope of the land it is sitting on. All greens are tilted to some degree so rainwater will run off and not collect. Look for the lowest spot and the highest spot. This will be easier to see when you're walking up to the green rather than standing on it. Every putt you read will be influenced by this general tilt. It is the reason why putts that look like they will go straight into the hole sometimes break in one direction or the other.

For putts beyond tap-in length, take a look from the low side of the line. This is how you see subtle changes in the

elevation profile of the green along your track that will affect the speed of the putt. Make this read first, before you read the putt along the line to the hole, because it will affect the speed of the putt that you visualize. Save time by making this read while others are putting.

If you can, read your putt looking uphill. Contours stand out much clearer from this point of view. Similarly, read putts looking into the sun. Sunlight at your back flattens out the green and makes contours hard to see.

When you read the green, you're looking for the contour that will take the ball to the hole when it travels at the speed you wish to hit it. Begin by running your eye along the ground at that speed, from the position of the ball directly toward the hole. If it's not a straight putt, your moving mind will sense the ground leading your eye to one side or another. Let's say it's to the left. From here, you can proceed in two ways.

You would repeat the same process but starting to the right of the hole, and keep repeating it in increments farther and farther away, until you sense the line of ground that will take the ball, at your desired speed, into the hole. The success reaction will confirm it with a "That's it" feeling.

The other way is to observe how far to the side of the hole your first visualization carried the ball. In this example, the ball went left in your first look. Say it went two inches left. You would aim the ball two inches to the right of the hole for it to fall into the center. If your moving mind confirms that read, step up to the ball and hit the putt.

Whichever method you use, do not force your visualization. Let your moving mind find the right path, and once you get it, trust the process you used gave you the right read.

For putts of over 25 feet or so, take a second look along your line from about ten feet away from the hole to evaluate the ground near the hole. This is where the ball will be rolling the slowest, and thus be affected by break the most. Get up close because you can't really see subtle breaks around the hole from far away.

Do not take very short putts for granted. Take a look from about thirty feet behind the ball. You might find that a green that looks absolutely flat in the area of the putt has break because the entire green is sloping. From all the way back there, you can see it. Then playing that short one inside right, for example, instead of dead center, can be the difference between making and missing.

Though you can see the line, green speed is not visible. You might have some adjusting to do at the start of the round. When you practice putting on one particular green, you get quite accustomed to the speed of that green and learn to lay up a putt closely from any distance. Unfortunately, the greens on courses you play seldom match that speed. If the difference is significant, do not try to adjust your sense of touch right away. Stick with the sense of speed you have developed and think of the putt as being shorter than it is, or longer, as the case may be. Facing a fifteen-foot putt early in the round on a course with faster greens, for example, you could hit it like a ten-foot putt on your slower practice green. After a few holes you'll have adjusted to the speed of the greens you're on and be able to play directly for the cup.

## ***Making your putting stroke***

When you have found the starting line and have the right speed in mind, pick a spot on the green along that line no more than four inches in front of the ball. Align your putterface square to that short alignment line, step into your stance, look at the hole for a few seconds to review the firmness of the stroke, return your eyes to the ball, and start the putter back.

Don't delay. This process shouldn't take more time to do than it took to read about here. Hit the putt right away with complete trust in what you have just felt. Looking more than once, trying to justify your choice logically, or doing any other conscious processing of the information you just got,

will destroy the assurance you have and leave you guessing again. What you must do to make best use of this intuitive process is trust a way of knowing that might be much different from the one you're using now. That's really the same as trusting a swing change. It might be difficult at first, but the rewards will come if you stick with it.

These guidelines apply equally to a greenside chip, which can be thought of as an approach putt with an iron.

### *The ball is transparent*

Several years ago I heard a television announcer comment, when Justin Leonard was putting, that, "There is absolutely no 'hit' in that stroke." Leonard's stroke through the ball was as smooth as the stroke away from it—one of the reasons why he was such a good putter. Look at videos of Ben Crenshaw putting, or Brad Faxon or Loren Roberts. The ball seems to start rolling by itself.

The "hit" in most putting strokes arises because when we think that the ball is about to be struck, we flinch a little bit, bracing for the impact. Even a microscopic flinch can alter impact conditions enough to throw off the shot. This is especially damaging in the putting stroke, where precision is so important.

In order to take the hit out of your stroke, use a mental trick of thinking that the ball is transparent to the putter. That is, think the putter will go right through the bulk of the ball as if it weren't there and make contact for the first time on the inside of the ball's leading edge. Even if you tend to brace for impact, your mind is expecting the hit to come at a point after it really does. By the time your mind is ready to apply your brace reaction, you've already struck the ball and sent it on its way to the hole. So when you return your eyes to the ball following your last look, look at the leading edge of the ball, the one nearer to the hole.

You can use this mental trick not only in putting, but also on any shot. It's especially effective in the chip shot to prevent hitting behind the ball. When your mind believes the target of your stroke is 1.68 inches ahead of where contact will actually be made, a mishit turns into reasonable contact, never a chili-dip. Looking at the leading edge of the ball when in the fairway is a good way to help you get the ball-first-ground-second contact that creates your best iron shots. Overall, it will help keep your mind from becoming ball-bound, probably golf's worst distraction.

## 9

# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The previous two chapters dealt with what could be called the tactics of golf—controlling your game in specific situations. What is just as important is the strategy of golf, which is the overall plan for your round in which the tactics will be executed. This plan can be broken down into three parts.

First, take care of yourself before you leave home. Rest your body, prepare your mind, and go to the course ready to play. When you get to the course, set your agenda for the day by giving yourself a challenge you can meet. Finally, have a plan for playing well, and a plan for recovering when you don't. This makes it much easier to play a steady game based around your talents and skills. This chapter is meant to open up your thinking along those lines.

### *Caring for your mind*

The mind is a reflection of the operation of the brain, which is a physical organ that requires maintenance just like

any other part of the body. You can calm the mind and focus it at will only if the brain is operating at its peak.

In the short term, get some sleep! Get a full night of sound sleep the night before you play. Adequate rest is probably the best way to prepare your brain for its daily activities.

Be careful of how much time you spend in front of a computer screen in the evening. Medical research shows that exposure near bedtime to the close proximity of the viewing screen, and the strong light it emits, affects the circadian clock that manages the brain's regulation of the release of melatonin, a hormone that governs the sleep cycle. Interference with that release leads to reduced sleeping time and an increase of sleep disturbances. Turn off your computer, or don't look at it, starting several hours before bedtime.<sup>8</sup>

Do the moving mind exercise, not just on the golf course, but also in your own home, daily, for five minutes or so. Calming your mind for five minutes gives you five minutes of mind power. Over time, this adds up. Just like you would lift weights to build strong muscles, do this exercise to build a strong mind.

Do brain exercises. Puzzles, new computer skills, foreign language learning, and complicated physical skills such as juggling, tax the brain and force it to generate new cells.

In the longer term, proper nutrition through eating a well-balanced diet, using alcohol in moderation at most, and avoiding tobacco products, are all strategies for brain health. Omega-3 fats, found in fish and plant oils, or a daily supplement, have been shown to promote the growth of nerve cells in the brain.<sup>9</sup> Pay special attention to nutrition and hydration during the round.

Reducing the amount of stress in your life is of tremendous benefit, too. Everyone has some kind of stress. Avoiding all situations that might be stressful almost means to retire from life. The idea is to manage your stress so it does not take over your life, with physical and mental problems starting to appear.

Golf is not the biggest part of your life, but it's a part that should provide you with as much satisfaction as possible. Golf is your recreation, your release, your happiness, for the time you're playing. You deserve these rewards. If a stressful life prevents you from doing that, then you might want to take a step back and think: if I'm too frazzled to do something as simple as play golf, maybe I need to make a change.

### *Nutrition and hydration*

In the four to five hours of walking around a golf course, you will get hungry. You'll get thirsty, too, regardless of whether you're playing in the heat. Playing well in the later stages of the round depends on your staying energized in the earlier stages. Professional golfers carefully plan what they eat during their round, how much, and how often.

Keep up your energy by snacking on every third tee or so. A handful of trail mix will do. A sandwich at the break is a good idea. A hamburger and French fries at the turn is not. Avoid high-protein foods, because digesting protein requires a large supply of water, which dehydrates you. Get ahead of your hydration needs by having eight ounces of water before you tee off. Drink two or three ounces of water on every tee, more if it's hot out. On a hot day, mixing an electrolyte powder in your water, or drinking a sports drink, keeps your electrolyte balance at proper levels.

### *The mind range*

We go to the driving range to improve our shot-making. Unfortunately, there are no mind ranges where we can go to improve our mental skills. It is up to you, then, when you go to the driving range, to train your mind there at the same time.

Among many golfers, including touring professionals, a perennial complaint is that they can't bring their range game to the course. They hit the ball just fine on the practice

ground, but those good shots seldom make the trip to the first tee. The reason for this is simple: the formula is backwards. Golfers should be taking their course game to the range. What I mean is you have to play the same way in both places. The practice tee is the place where you teach yourself to hit playable shots on the course, when it counts. The best way to achieve that goal is to simulate the playing environment as closely as you can. Now you can't bring a golf course and all its hazards and distractions to the range, but you can bring your mental responses to them, and train your mind appropriately.

1. Get your mechanics worked out using practice swings. This is where your conscious mind helps you out, by explicitly directing your technique and monitoring it as you perform to make sure you get it right. In this process, keep your mind on what you're trying to learn, rather than on hitting a ball. Practice the technique by taking as many swings as you need to feel you are performing it correctly.

2. When you're ready to hit a ball, set up the same way as you would on the course. Go through your entire pre-shot routine, including the use of your moving mind. After you've taken your practice swings, step away from the ball and let go of any technical thoughts. Get into playing mode. Prepare your mind by going through the cycle of golf. Pick a spot downrange and plan your shot to that spot. Then hit the practice ball. Play golf!

3. Every so often, take a break. Stop hitting golf balls and just sit down for a while. Give yourself time to absorb what you have learned so far (practice mode). Then go hit another ball, asking yourself to pull out a skill you haven't used for a few minutes or more (play mode). These breaks give you a chance to practice keeping your mind moving between shots.

Before you step onto the course, there are some things to think about regarding the way you intend to play the course, and what kind of challenge you want to give yourself. They

make all the difference in your overall golfing experience for the day.

### *Play to your handicap*

A good way to reduce self-induced pressure, which competes with your moving mind for your attention, is to accept that you're a handicap golfer. You don't make a par on every hole. When you try to get a low score on holes that are too difficult for you, you force your game to produce more than it can deliver. You risk taking a high score by pressuring yourself to play better than you know you can.

Professional golfers know on which holes they can attack and on which holes they need to ease off. Recreational golfers need to play golf the same way. Your handicap gives you an allowance for holes where playing for par, or even for bogey, depending on your handicap, is asking too much. Take advantage of that. Play to take an extra stroke on the difficult holes. Take what is yours and let the golf course have the rest. As you improve, you can start challenging the holes that used to challenge you.

### *Play different courses*

Though we all have our favorite course, it will round out your game to play away from home every so often. It should be a source of pride that your handicap travels.

Playing different courses forces you to notice different aspects of golf course architecture that add to the store of knowledge which your moving mind can take advantage of. It's also too easy to build a good game around your home course but not play well elsewhere. One course does not present all the challenges you might face in golf.

For example, one course I play requires accurate tee shots. Another course features unforgiving greenside rough. A third is carved out of the Pacific Northwest mountain forest. Miss the fairway and don't even bother looking for your

ball. On a fourth course all the greens sit about two or three feet above the fairway, so the chipping game is much different. Now it is a fact that all these things are characteristic of the course I normally play, just not on every hole, and not to such a degree. Playing courses that emphasize one particular aspect of course design teaches you to notice more subtle expressions of that aspect on other courses. This creates a richer context in which your moving mind can operate.

You also keep your judgments from getting stale by putting yourself in a place occasionally where you have to make new ones. Playing a new or unfamiliar course puts your moving mind to the test and at the same time develops your ability to see what is there when you have no experience to rely on. Then when you go back to your favorite courses, you can play with a fresh mind rather than falling back on old perceptions and habits that you retrieve from memory by playing the same course over and over.

### *Play from the right set of tees*

Even though modern equipment lets everybody hit the ball farther than they did twenty years ago, most golfers play a course that is too long for their ability. This leads to the damaging pursuit of distance that we discussed earlier. Golf, instead of being fun like it should be, becomes frustrating because a course that is too long places demands on us that we cannot meet. It's hard to keep your mind moving when the course you picked out to play is too hard for you.

On your home course, how many greens do you hit into with a 7-iron or less? My home course is 6,402 yards from the white tees. When I play from there, I hit a short iron into four greens in regulation on average, six on a good day. How about you? Think about it, write it down. If the answer is just a few, you're playing from tees that are too long. You're making the game harder for yourself than it should be.

Which tees are best for you? Let's do some math. On the PGA tour, the average course length is near 7,200 yards. PGA

pros average 290 yards off the tee. The length of the course is about 25 times the length of the average drive. The ratio is roughly the same on the LPGA Tour.

Now multiply your driving distance by 25. Say your drives go 235 yards, carry plus roll. That would give you a course length of 5,875 yards. The white tees on my home course are almost nine percent longer than that, asking for an average driving distance of 256 yards. Playing from the golds, at 5,925 yards, is a much better fit for a shorter hitter.

Nine percent doesn't sound like much, yet it's equivalent to the men on tour playing courses averaging 7,850 yards, or the women on tour playing courses measuring 7,100 yards. That's the same kind of handicap you give yourself when you play a course that is too long for you.

I have broken 80 six times in the last few years. Four of those times came on one course which measures 5,917 yards from the white tees. I've broken 80 on my 6,402-yard home course, which I play much more often, only once.

Every so often, try playing from the red tees. If the tee boxes are well-designed, the red tees will be in different places than the white/blue tee boxes, giving you a different course to play. You'll be hitting into places where you never had to before, from places you've never hit from before. This amounts to playing a different golf course, yet you don't have to make different travel arrangements. Don't take the red tees lightly, either. You still have to keep the ball in play. Once the ball is near the green, whether you teed off from 395 yards away or 345 yards doesn't make getting the ball in the hole any easier.

## ***Your equipment***

The rules of golf allow you to carry fourteen clubs. You're not required to carry that many, though. In a previous chapter, we talked about limiting the number of long clubs in your bag so that you can keep the ball in play. In a larger sense, the only clubs you really need are a putter and whatever else you

hit well. I often play with just seven clubs<sup>10</sup> and shoot scores that are comparable to the ones I turn in with a full set.

If you don't hit your driver well, leave it home. If you haven't figured out how to use your lob wedge, don't take it with you. The idea is to avoid luring your moving mind into directions it should not go. By knowing that a particular club is not available, you will see the course only in light of the clubs you do have, hopefully the ones you hit your best shots with.

An additional benefit of playing with a limited set is that you'll need to be creative from time to time. Having to manufacture a new shot is a test of both your playing skills and of your moving mind. When the shot you had to invent works, it's a bigger thrill than the score it leads to.

When you're playing, you can't predict what is going to happen. Golf is a game of continual adjustments, and most of them are mental. By knowing in advance which situations in golf require adjustments, and what to do when that time comes, you'll be able to maintain your single focus on the moving mind so it remains active in guiding your decision-making and performance.

### *Never give up*

I once had a tendency to quit trying for a bit after I hit a bad shot, especially when things had been going well for a good stretch of holes. But no more. I finally learned my lesson.

A few years ago, in one of the last rounds I played before the autumn rains came, I was cruising. I normally stop paying attention to my score after about the fourth hole, so I didn't realize until the round was over that in one stretch I had parred eight holes in a row. All I knew was that I was playing well. But on the next hole, a par-5, with a 9-iron third into the green, I cold-topped it. The ball disappeared into a waste area that fronts the green. Words were spoken inside my head.

The waste area was marked as a water hazard, but instead of walking up to the hazard and having a 70-yard pitch into the green, I dropped another where I was and hit another 9-iron. By golly, I was going to prove to myself that I could hit that shot. The ball got over the hazard, but went way left and it took me three to get down from there. That's an 8 if you're counting.

On the next hole, a par 4 that slopes downhill and to the left, I popped up my drive. It went 150 yards tops, maybe not even that, and left me about 210 yards from the hole. I got up to the ball and figured this round had been trashed because of the last hole and this shot. I thought I might as well try hitting my 2-hybrid to see how close I could get it to the green. I had been working with that club, and I thought if I didn't hit it well, it wouldn't be a problem, since the round had been ruined anyway. But a little voice said to me, "No. Take another look. See if you can still get a par from here." This was before I knew about the moving mind, but it was working nonetheless.

I looked again and saw that if I hit a 4-hybrid, I could put the ball at the front right of the green in a good position to chip into a sharply sloping green for a par putt. Since I have both the 4-hybrid shot and that particular chip in my bag, my attitude changed just like that. "Yes," I thought to myself, "I can do this," and I was in attack mode again.

You know what happened? I put the 4-hybrid on the front right, just where I wanted to, chipped on to three feet, and made the putt. I made a promise on the spot never to quit on myself again.

Do you remember the 2009 Masters, when Angel Cabrera, contending, hit his tee shot on the 72nd hole into the trees on the right? Usually the pros find a little gap and hit a rifle shot straight through it onto the green. Not him. He truly had no opening. All he could do was chip sideways into the fairway. His third shot after his chip-out was an 8-iron that ended up 12 feet from the pin. He sank the par putt, got into a playoff, and won the tournament on the first playoff hole.

As long as you can keep hitting the ball, there's a chance. I've made par from a tee shot into knee-high rough. I've made par from a tee shot into the water. When you hit a bad shot, don't kick yourself and don't ever give up on the hole. Instead, let your moving mind show you how to make the next shot count—how a poor shot can be part of a good score, and not the cause of a bad one.

Keep playing. Find a way to get the ball in the hole. There is always something you can do.

### *Ride a hot hand*

One day I had a dicey chip from about thirty feet into a pin close to the edge of the green. I took out my lob wedge and hit down sharply with a wristy stroke. The ball popped upward and stopped where it dropped, about three feet from the hole. Great shot.

On the next hole I had another chip, not identical to the one before, but close enough. I still felt good about the wristy lob wedge chip I had hit on the prior hole. Out came the lob wedge and I hit the same shot with the same result. Two holes later I had to chip again, from farther away than the first two times. I could have run the ball to the hole, but I was feeling really good about that wristy shot I had hit successfully twice before. Even though it wasn't called for at all, I felt that with this shot I could put the ball next to any pin. And I did, for the third time.

This is what I call riding a hot hand. My moving mind kept seeing a shot that I had hit well earlier and I kept hitting it. The same thing might have happened to you. Once you hit a shot that is unexpectedly good, it gives you a feeling of great confidence. Use that shot again at the next opportunity. If it works, keep hitting it as often as you can. Look for chances to hit that shot. Maneuver the ball into a position where, all things being equal, you can hit that shot.

Another time I had a 3-iron into a tight green, which isn't an easy shot. On the hole before, though, I had hit a 4-iron to

advance the ball down the fairway on a par-5 hole and it was just a beautiful shot. Though the shot I had now called for a 3-iron, I felt so good about the 4 that I wanted to hit it again. I decided to hit the 4 and deal with the distance to the hole once I got to the green. Again, I hit a beauty. The ball ended up farther away from the pin than I would have liked, but it was on the green and I got my two putts. This is not to say I didn't trust my 3-iron, but I chose the 4-iron because I had so much confidence in it at the moment.

Performance is all about confidence. If you find something on the course that gives you confidence, ride it for all it's worth that day. It could be a shot, or a club. When you discover something that really works: use it, use it, use it. Take full advantage of whatever you believe in.

## ***Blow-up holes***

Making double bogey when you had par for the taking, or making a triple or quad anytime, sometimes comes from a series of mechanical breakdowns and is evidence that we can't play perfect golf. We can let those go. Preventable blow-up holes are what we want to avoid. They are almost always the result of poor thinking, and they come in two types.

A Type I blow-up hole happens when you're in trouble (or don't recognize that you're in trouble) and you try playing like nothing is the matter. This example is my personal favorite. I hit my drive on a 375-yard par 4 off the fairway to the left. The ball ended up on an uphill, sidehill lie, sitting on dry grass coming out of hard ground, about 175 yards away from the green with a wide-open look. A discerning reader such as you would think, "Take out your 8-iron and chip down the fairway for a short iron onto the green." That thought never crossed my mind.

I pulled out my 5-iron to have a go at the green, and (I'll make the rest of this quick) duck-hooked the next shot into waist-high weeds thirty yards left of the green (2). Found the ball, unplayable lie. Had to drop, still in the weeds (3). Hacked

at it, but didn't get out (4). Hacked out, this time for sure (5). Chipped on, long (6). Approach putt (7). Short putt (8). Simple. Anyone could do it.

Long before I knew anything about playing golf with a moving mind, I wasn't that good at recognizing when conditions were different enough that I had to play defensively. If I had been watching someone else do this, I would have thought the same thing you did: chip out and play on. But when it's your own decision, logic fails. The rational response takes second seat to the emotional response. What you want prevails over what is right.

The next example is a Type II blow-up hole, which comes from trying to hit a heroic shot when you don't have to. One day I was fifteen yards short of the green in two on a long par four. The direct line to the pin, shot A, went over a bunker. Another choice, shot B, was to play about twelve feet to the left of the pin, which would avoid having to shoot over the bunker.

Shot A would have given me a good chance at a short par putt, but I had to chip off a tight, downhill lie and stop the ball quickly because there wasn't a lot of green to work with. I can hit that shot, but I can't guarantee it will be a good one. If I missed, the ball might have ended up in the bunker, forcing me to get up and down for a 5. A 6 or a 7 became real possibilities.

This situation occurred about four years after the first one. Being a smarter golfer, and playing with a moving mind, it was clear I should play shot B. I did, chipping the ball to twelve feet. I almost made the par putt.

One of my favorite rounds was when I shot 85 on a course where I normally threaten 80. On this day, though, I had all pars and bogeys—no doubles or “others.” I was an 18-hole golfer because I played with a calm mind that kept moving and made one good decision after another. If I had executed better in a few spots, the score would have been lower. My mental execution, though was first-rate. That's why I like this

round so much. Being able to have mental control like that every day would be worth at least four shots on a day-in, day-out basis.

If you look at your old scorecards, you might find that if only you hadn't gotten the triple here or the two doubles there, all of which were preventable, you would have turned in a decent score. A hole slips away from you more often than not because of one shot you didn't think through. Keep your mind moving in the present so it can evaluate your current condition clearly. That's how to keep "if only" scores off your card.

### *Strategic planning*

Think of playing a hole of golf as a team project. At work, you might be on a team of four or five people, organized to plan and complete a project of some kind. Every member of the team has a role which is coordinated with the roles of the other team members, such that their efforts will return a satisfying product. The team in golf consists of yourself and the strokes you plan on playing from where you are, to the hole. All of you are in this together, each playing their role. The relationships between the work of each team member and its desired effect on the outcome of the project, getting the ball in the hole as quickly as possible, are known from the start.

What you would not do at work is get a general idea of what you wanted to have done, ask someone to do this part of it, and when they're finished, see what's left and ask someone else to do another part of it, and so forth, never coordinating the tasks or the team members as a unified group. Playing golf in this way means you hit a shot off the tee, see where it ends up, hit another shot, see where it ends up, and keep doing this until you finally hole out. This is what I call "hit and hope" golf: hitting a series of unconnected shots and expecting good results. It's not the way to shoot low scores.

The theme of the second part of this book is that the more information your moving mind has to draw upon, the better it will be at finding shots that fit the situation you're in, and that you can hit with confidence. Up to now, I have been talking about this mainly in regard to the one shot you are about to hit. Remember that you can extend the moving mind to cover more than one thing. Here is where the moving mind intersects with a basic truth about golf, that each hole is a separate game of getting the ball in the hole. A round of golf consists of eighteen games. The most effective use of your moving mind is in the context of the golf hole, not the golf shot.

Before you tee off, make a plan for getting the ball in the hole. Expand the Gathering and Deciding phases beyond your tee shot to include every shot you intend to take on this hole. Plan it out in the following fashion. See yourself on the green hitting your approach putt (if you can see the pin from the tee). Next think of the spot in the fairway from where you would want to hit the ball to the green. From the tee, decide what's the best way to get the ball to that spot in the fairway. We'll call this the scoring sequence for the hole.

Now all your team members have been assembled and each one has a job to do. You can move on to the Preparing phase for the shot you're hitting now. Every shot you'll be hitting is now part of a planned sequence of the shots that are most likely get the ball into the hole as soon as possible.

As noted golf coaches Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott say, every shot must have a purpose. *That purpose can only be known in light of the shots that follow it.* "I'm hitting this shot to here, because next I can hit it to there, from where I can hit it over there, and into the hole." Feel that each shot is the start of a sequence of shots that gets the ball into the hole, *and you have thought through what that sequence is before you hit the shot you have right now.* Every shot you plan to hit from here on is, again, part of a project for which you have

gathered team members, decided what their roles will be, and of which you are the team leader.

The 4-hybrid/chip/putt sequence of shots I described in the *Never give up* section is an example of how this works.

After you tee off and get to where your tee shot ended up, create a new scoring sequence, from the hole back to the ball. If you're now playing from somewhere close to where you intended in the original sequence, the new sequence could be a continuation of the original one. Your gathering would be done to take into account any variables that were not apparent from where you first hit the ball.

Of course, if the ball ended up far away from where you wanted it to, the original scoring sequence must be discarded and a completely new one developed. Adapting on the fly like this is not as simple as it sounds, mainly because it is not always easy to adjust to a new perspective at the same time you're trying to figure out what to do about it. A moving mind keeps you detached from what might have been, and able to focus clearly on what to do next. It's easy to make good decisions when every shot works out like we wanted. Better golfers do not let stray shots affect their ability to analyze their options.

## *Remembering*

We play golf in Nature. We don't have a polished court, or a uniform, manicured playing surface. No two holes are alike. No one hole plays the same way from day to day, or even the same way from different places on it. This is golf's major distinction from many other sports. It's one of the reasons why we love the game so much. There is a price to be paid for this peculiarity, though. We are presented with a near infinite variety of shots to be hit from different lies, in different directions and trajectories, with different spin, in order to handle successfully all the challenges a golf course can throw at us.

To be in command on the course means building up a deep bank of knowledge that we can draw on when assessing the shot at hand. Remembering what you learn as you play is critical for a golfer's development.

There's a classic scene about remembering from Mark Harris's baseball novel, *Bang the Drum Slowly*, in which star pitcher Henry Wiggin is talking to his friend Bruce Pearson, the slow-witted catcher, about why opposing pitchers always take advantage of him. Henry says,

*"I would say to myself, 'No need to keep a book on Pearson, for Pearson keeps no book on me.' Because if I was to strike you out on fast balls letter high, by the time you face me again you have forgot all about the time before."*<sup>11</sup>

In golf, take a simple chip from the edge of the green. Now move the ball a few feet away, and it can be in a position where a completely different shot is needed. The moving mind will help you determine what shot that would be, but only if you have trained yourself to see that conditions are different enough to make a difference, and that you remember what to do about them. The moving mind can only operate effectively within a trained context. It can only work with what it knows.

Eventually you have to remember what works and what doesn't. Whenever you have a shot or situation of particular interest, make a quick note of the situation and what you did. If the shot came off well, you'll have a starting point for next time. If the shot didn't work out, make a note of how you would do it over if you had the chance. Again, that's a starting point for the next time. This doesn't mean to evaluate the shot or pass judgment. Just note the facts of what you did, and if necessary, what you think you would do next time.

For example, if I hit a chip shot with a pitching wedge off an uphill lie and it went too far, next time I would use a sand wedge from there. Or, if the pitching wedge from there

worked, I would make a note of that, too. On the putting green, a particular putt can look like it goes left but stays straight. Make a mental note of where on the green that putt was and what it did. Jot it down if you have to, but make that *factual* observation and move on. Don't let remembering turn into evaluating. When the round is over, you can sit down and think more deeply about that shot and any other. The time to analyze your game is not while you're out there playing.

## ***Relaxation***

You don't play golf to relax. You relax to play golf. Relaxation begins in the mind and is expressed in the body. When the body is relaxed, the muscles you use in the golf swing operate the most efficiently and in the right sequence. The club almost swings itself. Physical tension interferes with the smooth coordination of the swing. You literally work against yourself to get the job done. Everything you have done so far with the moving mind contributes to keeping your mind free of nervous tension so your body can perform unimpeded by mental upset.

If you find yourself getting tense during the round, physical exercises suggested in mental game books will not get you back in order. The only solution is to calm your mind, to get it moving again. The working of the mind is subtle, though, and difficult to assess in the middle of physical activity.

Fortunately, grip pressure and swing tempo, two of golf's prime fundamentals, also act as indicators of the state of your mind. Remember that it is the mind that leads the body. You don't alter your grip pressure or tempo to relax your mind. It's the other way around. If your grip is too tight, or your swing too fast, that's a sign that your mind has stopped and is now being controlled by your circumstances. Relax your mind and the body will follow naturally.

As for grip pressure, it should feel light at address, light through the swing, and light at the finish. Grip pressure does

increase during the swing, peaking during the downswing and returning at the finish to the level it was at address.<sup>12</sup> It should feel, however, like the pressure doesn't change very much. If you sense your hands tightening during the swing, or feel that you're holding on tightly at the finish, chances are that you were holding too tightly at address. Keep your mind relaxed and moving so you can grip the club gently at the start and feel that same level of pressure when the swing is over. How light is light? Grip the club as firmly as you would when shaking the hand of a small child.

Poor tempo and a too-quick rhythm are other indicators of an unfocused mind. When the mind gets tense, we start to rush. I don't know if mental tension has ever caused anyone, if they're not aware of it, to move more slowly. You hear professional golfers sometimes complain that they played poorly because they "got quick." I haven't yet heard any of them blame a bad round on slowing down.

Tempo is an individual matter. There is no one tempo that is right for everyone. When you have found yours for the day, stick to it.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to notice your tempo slowly speeding up, and it doesn't take much of a difference to start throwing off your shot-making. If you are starting to hit the ball poorly for no reason, check your tempo first. Calm your mind, get it moving, and take a few practice swings at a tempo that makes you feel in control again.

## *Patience*

Be patient if you have a high score early. There's plenty of time left to play well.

Be patient when you take the club away from the ball. Give the stroke its own time to develop.

## *Milestones*

The progress of a recreational golfer is measured in scoring milestones. The most talked-about milestones are the

ten-stroke scoring increments: breaking 100, 90, 80 and maybe even 70. Some are more subtle, such as playing eighteen holes without a double bogey. Another one is playing eighteen holes without a three-putt green. You can be pretty good and still have trouble with either of those. Breaking through a barrier, though, means you are a different kind of golfer. You've joined the club.

Much of what you have to do to move to another level is technical. The mind aside, you have to have the shots. I once read about some Eastern guru who said, "I took up golf because I heard it was a mental game. I have a very strong mind. Why can I not break 100?" Because you don't have the shots! Most golfers who get close do have the shots. They just don't have the mind. That's the missing link. Because this book concerns the mental game, everything I have been talking about so far is meant to provide you with that link. But just like any application of the moving mind, we have to learn how to apply it here to shooting a landmark score. I'll get to that part shortly. First, I would like to go over what I feel are the technical skills you must have to give your moving mind a chance.

Breaking 100: Make reasonably good contact. You might have a slice off the tee, but it is not a wild slice. Most of your tee shots are reasonably straight and leave you with a shot into the green rather than a recovery back into the fairway. You need to have a good idea of how far you hit your irons. You can't keep hitting 7-irons over the green or leaving them 20 yards short.

The short game needs only be good enough to get the ball on the green in one shot so you can start putting. Down in three all the time is all right. As for putting, practice getting 30-footers close and three-footers in. Missing both of those standards is the main reason why you three-putt.

Breaking 90: Start using fewer strokes getting the ball up to the green (within chipping distance). Chopping out of weeds or trees, losing balls, etc., must be minimized. This

means hitting the ball straighter and maybe farther. Once you get to the green, you need to be getting the ball down in two strokes maybe one out of three times and never in four. Hitting your long putts close and sinking your shorties is still good advice.

Breaking 80: Start using fewer strokes getting the ball onto the green. You need to be hitting greens with regularity now. The idea is to make pars, and you make more of those with two putts than you do with a chip and a putt. Get up and down half the time. Leave approach putts close and get ones of five feet and under in the hole.

Breaking 70: Become an honest 4-handicapper or better and have a good day. To break 70 routinely, quit your job, work with a swing coach several times a week, hire a personal trainer, and work out, practice, and play, nine hours a day.<sup>14</sup>

*Breaking 60: (You're kidding, right?)*

Playing skills: (same for everyone, it's the same game) Have a plan before you hit your tee shot, one that takes the ball all the way into the hole. Keep the ball in play by playing away from trouble. When you get into trouble, get out first and then play on. Know which holes are easy for you. Attack them. Remember that you're a handicap golfer, so give the course your extra strokes on holes that are too hard for you.

Mental skills: (again, same for everyone. Though we have different levels of shot-making skill, we are all humans and our minds all work alike.) Change your mind about what kind of golfer you are. Start thinking of yourself as a 90s/80s/70s golfer and let your performance catch up. Learn to live with a moving mind. Apply it to your golf within the cycle of golf as explained and developed in this book.

One reason people have so much trouble with these barriers is they think they have to play mistake-free golf to break through. That makes you play fearfully, which is the major reason why you never do. You're a handicap golfer. Mistakes are built into your game. You're going to make some. What you can't think is that you can't make *any* mistakes. Most of

the time I break 80 I have a double bogey on the card. A bad hole or two isn't a big deal.

Speaking of breaking 80, everybody wants to break 80. It's the major milestone in a recreational golfer's career. Entire books have been written on how to do it, and about golfers in pursuit. So if you want to know how it's done, let me tell you how I did it.

I started playing when I was ten and got to the mid-80s level by the time I was in college. After I graduated, I went into the Navy, and following that, started my career and family life. I doubt that in the next 25 years I played more than a dozen rounds of golf. As I got close to retirement I picked up the game again, thankful that I had started playing at age ten, because I had laid a good foundation. It didn't take long for me to be playing in the mid/high 80s. I could get close to 80 sometimes, but never break through to 79. I had the shots, but they never seemed to come together.

One day I went out with a friend to play a tight course with tree-lined fairways. I decided to hit careful shots, keeping the ball in play, not worrying about distance. I hit 13 of 14 fairways that day, missing the one by only a few feet. By the fifth hole, I knew before I hit it that my iron shots from the fairway would land on the green. My approach putting was tremendous. I never had a second putt longer than three feet. I got the only break I needed when a downhill putt that had too much speed went in the hole for a par. Otherwise there would have been two putts coming back uphill.

I wasn't keeping a running tally of my score, but I knew on the tee of the par-5 18th that I had a serious chance to break 80. There was out-of-bounds on the left all the way from tee to green, with a narrow fairway. I took out my three-wood and gave myself a pep talk for the first time. Up to that point, it had been "see target, hit target." Now, I said to myself, "Just get the ball in the fairway. That's all you have to do and you'll be home free." And I did.

Standing over the next shot with a 5-iron in my hand, I said the same thing: “Just get this ball down the fairway and you’ll be all right.” Playing one shot at a time, as you can see.

I did get the ball down the fairway, and had a 9-iron into the green. I said to myself, “It’s a big green, just get the ball on it and it will be over. Nothing more to worry about.” The ball hit the green about 30 feet beyond the hole and well clear of a deep bunker on the front right. One more approach putt and one three-foot sidehiller, and I was in with a 77. I wasn’t talking much after the fourth hole or so, just keeping my mind on my game.

Mentally, no shot made me nervous or seemed to be one that I couldn’t find a way to hit well. I wondered a few times why golf had never been this easy before.

I did make one bad decision. On the ninth hole, a par 5, I had a third shot from under a tree about 80 yards from the green. I could have played a low, running shot that would have avoided low-hanging tree branches and ended up right next to the green. Instead, I tried a bolder shot to get on the green. The ball hit a branch and came to rest still about 50 yards away. I finished the hole with a 6, but tossed aside a good chance to have made a 5.

That was the first time. Since then, the times I have broken 80 haven’t been quite as dramatic. They were occasions when my mind was clear and I had no expectations from any shot. I played within myself all day, never asking myself for anything heroic, only something smart, and the strings of pars and the occasional birdie just came my way.

### *Application of the moving mind in a nutshell*

1. There is a shot that the course wants you to see. Keep looking, without pre-judging, until you feel it.

2. Let what you feel guide you to choosing the right club and to making the right stroke.

3. As you step up to the ball and make your stroke, think of nothing but the feeling of your moving mind. Everything else about the shot has been pre-programmed and will take care of itself if your conscious mind stays out of the way.

## *In conclusion*

Golf is my passion. It gets me outdoors in beautiful surroundings, spending time with friends, doing something that tests my athleticism. Its major attraction, though, is the series of fascinating mental challenges it presents me with every time I strike the ball. Golf is a series of puzzles to be solved. A golfer with a few keen skills and an alert mind can play a solid game.

When most people start playing golf, they take lessons on how to hit various shots or on refining their technique. Throughout their golfing careers, that's all lessons will be about. Professionals can give you good advice on how to play the game, how to manage your shot-making, but as we noted before, there are driving ranges, but there are no mind ranges. There is nowhere you can go to develop the mental skills you need to make your shot-making skills pay full dividends. Nor do I think there ever will be.

That's why I wrote this book. If you read it, study it, learn from it, and apply its lessons where you can, you'll become a better golfer because you'll be bringing more scoring equipment with you to the course. It's one thing to hit good shots, but golf is about getting the ball in the hole. The second does not necessarily follow from the first, but it does if you have developed your mind as well as you have your shot-making.

The real joy of golf is in being able to look at a golf course and pick out the right shots, one after the other, to get the ball around in the way this particular layout asks you to. The puzzle is presented to you, and you solve it. You can do that most easily and most consistently by playing with a moving

mind. Develop it and apply it along with your technique, and golf rewards you with joy beyond your wildest dreams.

There aren't many parts of our life that are black and white. Most of it is a shade of gray, hopefully light gray. But on the course, you either hit the shot well or you don't. You hole out in one less stroke or you don't. My hope for you, reader, is that every time you step off the eighteenth green, you can say you had fun, and it was time well spent. You won't be able to wait to get out and play again, because you met the challenges the course offered you, and more often than not, you came out on top.

Play well, and have fun.

## NOTES

1. Jaynes, pp. 27–44. In developing his theory of the origin of consciousness, Julian Jaynes (1920-1997) first takes us on a tour of what consciousness is and what it is not. This and the following paragraph are a partial summation of the groundwork for explaining what consciousness is by clearing out first what it is not. From there, Jaynes develops his theory that consciousness is a recent human phenomenon that emerged at the beginning of the first millennium BCE and was established by its end. He takes his evidence from writings from that epoch to show how humans changed from having a mind obeying the orders of internal voices, somewhat like what would be classified as schizophrenia today, to a mind that can process the world internally and come to its own conclusions.

2. Nørretranders, p. 126.

3. Nørretranders, pp. 213–15. Most books on the subject of consciousness describe this experiment and Benjamin Libet’s astonishing follow-up experiments. Nørretranders provides the most thorough and readable overview.

4. Tohei (2001), pp. 27–29. The fact that mind leads body is one of the foundations of the teachings of Koichi Tohei (1920-2011), founder of the Ki Society International, and developer of the discipline of mind and body coordination through the understanding of *ki* principles. These principles are currently taught in Ki Society training centers worldwide. Tohei also taught many professional athletes how to use *ki* principles in their sport. One of his best-known students in the West was Japanese home-run king Sadaharu Oh.

5. Tohei (1974), pp. 12–25.

6. Crouse.

7. Go out to the course early in the day, or late, when there aren’t many people playing. You’ll get the most accurate results if you try this test in a playing environment.

Pick a hole with a level fairway and forget about your tee shot. Just walk out to the 200-yard marker. On many golf courses that's a blue marker embedded in the fairway. Step off 25 yards from there toward the green and drop a few balls. You're going to find out what club you hit 175 yards.

Hit three balls with what you think is your 175-yard club. These must be the kind of golf balls you play with, not old balls you pulled out of the practice bag. If your three shots fall short of the center of the green, take out one more club and try again. When you start hitting one ball after another to the center of the green, that's your 175-yard club.

Walk up to the 150-yard marker now and do the same thing. Finish the test by stepping off 25 yards closer to find out what your 125-yard club is. You have now identified which club you hit to three different distances. You can fill in the rest of the clubs and their distances by interpolation.

8. Mesquita. In a sleep quality analysis using university students as subjects, Mesquita found that computer use between the hours of 7:00 p.m. and midnight affected the quality of sleep adversely, because close proximity to the computer screen's strong light interrupted the circadian rhythms of the subjects. Television-viewing did not have the same effect.

9. Wahls. In 2000, Dr. Terry Wahls was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The standard medication proved to be ineffective, and her body continued its decline. She researched her condition and learned that over time the disease causes the brain to shrink. Dr. Wahls began reading medical literature on diseases that shrink the brain and found that in all of them, cellular mitochondria do not function properly. Researching further, she found studies that showed the mitochondria in mouse brains were protected by doses of fish oil, creatine, and co-enzyme Q. This was the springboard to developing a human diet high in omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, sulfur, and iodine. By following this diet, Wahls went within a year from being confined to a zero-gravity chair to riding bicycles and horses, hiking, and leading a life full of normal physical

activity. Her inspiring video lecture can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REFQ\\_r7QsZE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REFQ_r7QsZE) (March 2013) or by searching at YouTube on “terry wahls mitochondria.”

10. Driver, 19- and 24-degree hybrids, 7- and 9-irons, 54-degree wedge, and a putter. The driver and long hybrid get used off the tee. The gaps between the four fairway clubs stay small by playing to the right distances. The short irons and wedge take care of almost everything around the green.

11. Harris, p. 78. *Bang the Drum Slowly* is the second book in a tetralogy by Mark Harris (1922–2007), which follows the career of fictional baseball pitcher Henry Wiggen. The peculiar means of expression is deliberate to the Wiggen writing style, who is the “author” of all four books. The other three books in the series are, *The Southpaw* (1953), *A Ticket for a Seamstitch* (1957), and *It Looked Like Forever* (1979). *Bang the Drum Slowly* was made into a motion picture in 1973, with Michael Moriarty as Wiggen and Robert De Niro as Pearson.

12. Budney and Bellow. A number of golfers, professional and amateur, swung a golf club with pressure-sensitive transducers embedded in the handle. With one professional golfer, pressure in the right hand and left thumb peaked half-way through the downswing, while pressure on the last three fingers of the left hand peaked about 0.1 second after impact. In another professional’s swing, pressure in all three areas peaked during the downswing and returned to near starting levels at impact. Pressure in both golfers returned to starting levels at the conclusion of the swing. Grip pressure in an 11-handicapper was much greater at address, and while showing the same pattern of force as the professionals, displayed much greater pressure at all stages of the swing. At the end of the swing, pressure was greater in all three areas than at the start.

13. To find the tempo and rhythm that make your swing work, bring a metronome to the range. Set at 160. You’re going to count out five ticks. Tick 1 is the signal to take the club away, without pausing. Time your backswing so you reach

the top at tick 4. Swing down and reach impact at tick 5. This is an objective way to swing with the right rhythm. If the 160 setting seems too slow, try again at the next setting, 168. Now you're looking for the right tempo. Speed up as much as you want until you find that your shot-making is getting bad and you are swinging so fast you are unable to keep your balance. Back down the metronome until you find your groove. You'll know it when you get there.

14. To examine a professional practice plan, see: Practice Plan at <http://www.swingimprovement.com/article/practiceplan.htm> (March 2013).

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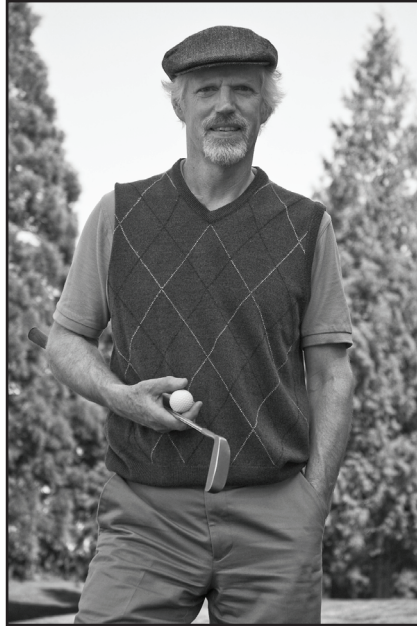
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