

Teaching Teachers

Think about club-focused instruction



By Henry Stetina, PGA
with Don Jozwiak, Senior Editor

There is a lot of talk from players and coaches these days about wanting to eliminate all thoughts when swinging a golf club. Unfortunately, this notion is inaccurate and misleading. Thinking gets its bad rap not from thinking too much, but instead from thinking about the wrong things. The critical task for the instructor is to coach the player to think and focus on the right things – those that direct the production of an effective swing.

EXPANDED CONTENT

See page 148 for more information on how *PGA Magazine* is increasing its instruction coverage this year.



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Help students grasp the concept

As we all know, the club does what the player is thinking. The above photos show a player contacting the ground with the leading edge versus contacting the ground with the bounce. As instructors, we will find ourselves unsuccessful in having the player change from photo A to photo B unless we can change the thoughts they have during the swing. The swing change will be made immediately and correctly when we coach the player to hold a mental image of the bounce sweeping the grass. We can impart that mental image by making the swing very slowly for them. Then, just have them remember what they saw while making the swing. The player will never change the swing until they change what their mind is seeing (visualizing) during the swing.

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Holding the mental image through the swing

Once they are set up following the pre-shot routine, the player must hold the mental image for the duration of the swing. And with each repetition, the brain coordinates the muscles to make a swing that matches that of the mental image. Club-focused instruction has been taught with great success for almost 100 year – first by Ernest Jones and later by legendary PGA Professional Manuel de la Torre, who was the leading authority of club-focused instruction for more 50 years. Now there are university professors, such as University of Nevada-Las Vegas' Dr. Gabriele Wulf and Dr. Bob Christina of the University of North Carolina, whose research is validating the effectiveness of club-focused instruction. They are finding that players of all skill levels improve faster when given club-focused instruction over body-focused instruction.

As Jones often said, "The trouble with the teaching of golf is that one is taught what a swing produces, instead of how to produce a swing." Whether you're experienced using club-focused instruction or not, I encourage you to do some research of your own, experiment with it, and see if it leads to improved performance and greater satisfaction for your students playing this wonderful game.

instruction



Setup for success

Coaching a player to be diligent about their setup is perhaps the fastest way for them to see improvement. The golf swing can become its simplest when the player's grip is natural, when the club is set square to the target line, and the player maintains their balance. When these are attended to, it allows the player to be occupied with a single intention during the swing. And that intention is to swing the club to the target. Too often, golfers underperform because their intentions are overcomplicated. Whether high handicap or low, the simpler we can make it the better our students will play.