

MOTOR SKILL PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING

Herewith is a digest of the lecture on motor skill instruction principles given by Prof. John Anderson of the University of Minnesota, at the Educational Clinic session of the PGA annual conference.

TEACHING is a professional job requiring considerable study, training and ability, as motor skills are acquired by the pupil slowly and with great effort.

Golf is a more complex skill than many factory operations.

In teaching, the errors are about as important as successes as a part of the complete picture.

It is to be expected that at the start the pupil makes superfluous movements, is emotionally tense and ill-at-ease. The pupil gradually loses tension, gains confidence and the performance takes on a simple mechanical character.

The purpose of learning is consistent performance, not an occasional low score.

The learning process is different in the beginner, half-way-along, and expert.

Fifty years ago reading was taught by teaching letters of the alphabet, then words, then sentences. Speed of instruction was stepped up 50%-75% by starting with words and sentences. The lesson of that educational history is, to golf pros, that of giving the pupil in early stages the complete pattern of the swing, then throw in details. Teach the beginner to duplicate a good swing by imitation. Caddies learn that way. Adults have sufficient imitative capacity to effectively absorb this type of instruction.

Verbal instruction is amazingly ineffective when it comes to motor skills. Critical kind of talking is particularly ineffective. An example is the husband making a series of critical remarks as fast as he can, about his wife's mistakes. In a relatively short period of time she is in such a frame of mind she can learn nothing from him.

Emphasize the Correct Thing

Emphasize the correct thing rather than the wrong thing. Compliment the pupil when he does well, then add critical comment.

First get the pupil interested. A youngster will kick a football for hours because he's interested. Detailed instruction risks killing his interest.

The individual's own efforts determine the pattern of response to which instruction must be fitted in each case. In learning motor skills there is rapid progress at the beginning; slower progress later. Plateaus of little or no progress come because of staleness, too much activity, poor instruction or other causes.

Practice in "compensating error" is effective with advanced students. Deliberately teach the wrong way of carrying through the particular act. For instance; teach slicing. Then the pupil becomes conscious of factors that produce a slice and is supplied with individual mechanism by means of which he can correct his own error.

Motion pictures are very helpful in showing the difference between what the pupil actually does and what he thinks he does.

Spread Lessons Out

Six lessons in 2 weeks are not effective in developing motor skill. Six lessons spread out over 6 weeks are better, and 6 lessons spread over 3 months are still more effective as the process of organization of skill goes forward. However, for the golf beginner spreading 6 lessons over 3 months is not advisable, due to shortness of season and necessity of giving the pupil frequent chances to experiment in actual play with the results of the instruction, then to have pro check-up on pupil's understanding and application of the instruction.

The preventive, check-up, and supervisory nature of pro services should be emphasized.

Books are effective when the instructor works along with the book. Danger of books alone is not only misinterpretation but that of making the learning process in its early stages so complex by over-emphasis of details that virtually no learning is possible.

Good form in any performance is partly a social product. Ability to imitate never disappears. These points make play-



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ing lessons and friendly rounds with the pro effective.

Practice tee lessons are more effective when the pupil shifts from one club to another rather than using the same club 30 to 40 times. Learning is more effective when nearest the real situation; such as the change of clubs when playing a round.

Golf instruction is still in a primitive stage but with notable achievement by some instructors. Extensive research and comparison of results must be employed in carrying golf instruction forward as pros and their pupils desire.

"Every profession develops and as it becomes a profession it is the ambition to make its materials better and make them public rather than private property.

"It is not a profession until it makes its techniques public property within that field.

"Every profession goes through a period in which the teachers are great individualists, then you have the great individual schools, then you move into the period in which the best techniques are sorted out and are made common knowledge in the profession and are made available to all members of the profession who are willing to study and work."

House Organ Reminds Boys in Service They're Remembered

IN "The Putter" house organ of the Fort Wayne (Ind.) CC, there is a feature "Greetings to Our Boys in the Service" giving names and addresses of members and members' sons with the armed forces.

Below the "greetings" head follows:

"... and to all of you the respect not only of the club membership but the entire community. Whenever you are back home on furlough come out—the club is yours!

"We do keep our boys informed on club events by mailing out announcements, The Putter, etc. They all like to receive mail and a card now and then from you will help make life more pleasant."

Lefthanders Go South—National-Left-Handers championship will be decided at the Sedgfield Club, Greensboro, N. C., June 30-July 4, which is the first time the left-handers event has not been held at a club in the Midwest. 1941 tourney was held at the Sylvania CC, Toledo, Ohio, where Alex Antonio of Linden, N. J. copped the crown. Host pro for the 1942 championship is Neal McGeehan.