

# Golf Range Pupils Teach A Pro to Teach

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We have 10,000 beginners or novice golfers at our golf range in a year's time. One would not compare this golf layout to a college or to the actual practice of medicine, but in using medicine as a parallel our range is like the medicine clinic. It is a place where the doors are admitting sick golf swings by the hundreds for examination. After study and work, most leave with improved golf swings. True, some we cannot help. But, and here is our point, we DO know most of the time why we could not help this fellow. Through constant clinical approach and contact we here at the Sandusky golf range learn what will help a pupil and what will hurt a pupil.

By the same method that science learns the good and bad of drugs and treatment, we learn of the good and bad methods and points of golf instruction. We find out by trial and error. In a manner of speaking, we are working with the novice golfer, much as the clinic researcher works with the rabbit or guinea pig. Theory after theory is quickly discarded under actual practice conditions. Sound points of instruction, and they are few, are carefully cherished. After much testing these sound golf instruction points are then stressed. These points are not a compromise of man's thinking, but plain honest and sound points of the golf swing which have worked to the pupil's benefit in a huge majority of the cases, over a long period of time.

The pro instructors here at our range do not make the rules of instruction that we follow. The pupil makes the rule and establishes methods of instruction. He makes them either by his ability or inability to follow. By the fact that he has been helped or hindered. The pupil shows us what we can teach. Just as important, he shows us what we cannot teach.

## Talk Understandably

Here is what we have found in our research with both the novice and experienced golfer:

Factor No. 1—Plain language must be used for golf instruction.

Trick phrases confuse the pupil and must be avoided unless they are very ex-

plicit. For example: Two phrases used in recent suggested instruction are: "Hitting thru the ball" and advising the player to keep "behind the ball" at impact. First, I asked myself, "Are these understandable points of golf instruction or not?" So, in following the same clinical method of determining the merit by test we set out to learn whether the above phrases were helpful or harmful types of golf instruction. Ten players were polled on each phrase. In the group of ten were two professional golfers, three golfers of five years experience or more (85 average), and five golfers of less than five years experience (90 to 110) or novice golfers. We received ten different interpretations of the phrases. Thus it appears that golf jargon must not be used. (Webster's—Jargon, confused, unintelligible talk, a mixture of two or more languages; the peculiar phraseology of a party, sect, etc.)

Factor No. 2—Points of the golf swing that are taught must be logical.

(Webster's—logic, the science of correct reasoning, the laws which govern correct thinking.)

A logical explanation of "Why?" and "How?" should be offered for every point of instruction. We must not dictate to our pupils. We must reason with them.

Left of center with regard to the feet is the desired and best spot from which to strike a golf ball. But why? Here is a recent published reason: "This gives a longer arc with which to generate clubhead speed." I can hear the pupil already, "If I get greater clubhead speed playing the ball left of center, why not play the ball opposite the left foot or still farther to the left and get still greater clubhead speed?" Now, our pupil has a good point.

Why? Study has shown that the ball is played left of center slightly because this is the point where the clubhead reaches its maximum speed and thus can project the ball maximum distances. Also, slightly left of center is the point where the club has finished its downward journey and is about to start its upward journey. Just exactly where the downward travel finishes is a matter of debate. The important point to stress to the pupil is, that

this spot left of center will best serve the purpose of getting the ball into the air for maximum distance and good control. This is what we are all striving to do when we play golf.

The above points have been used to show the value of plain language with sound logic to back them up.

Now, for the most important lesson we have observed in golf instruction:

It is not to keep a steady head position. The head may be kept steady for twenty years, but this will not make a golf ball fly. Motion is the important factor, still more important is controlled motion. How to transmit this motion of the individual to the golf ball, to make the golf ball fly, and fly far and true, is the golf teacher's job. After a few practice swings most non-golfers can hit the ball without any instruction whatsoever. In some cases they can sometimes hit the golf ball 250 yards. In approximately 80% of the cases, a slice will result. The degrees of the slice will vary, but here is our problem, the slice, or the tendency to hit to the right. If our beginner hits the ball straight down the middle or hooks it, he will with practice and very little instruction become a golfer of some degree of ability. But if he slices it, we have our job established for us. For without good

competent instruction this novice will soon quit golf, and remember he composes one of the great number who try the sport.

#### Pros' No. 1 Problem

The slicers are the No. 1 problem of the golf professional. Teaching them how to transmit motion and the proper motion to the golf ball is the great task cut out for the teaching golf professional.

The pupil must be taught to make the clubhead move not by arm action alone. The huge majority of golfers try to strike the ball with their arms and hands. The lower half of the body must begin the golf swing down from the top of the backswing for all full golf shots. Starting the golf swing down with arm action alone from the top of the backswing is the great fault that creates our present huge group of slicers.

Now we have established a starting place for golf instruction.

"Thou shalt not slice." "Learn to hook the ball" is the motto from which progress will follow for the novice. A slice is cancerous in nature and will slowly eat away the golf game. Finally the novice golfer will quit golf in disgust and in humiliation. If the novice can learn to hook the golf ball he will continue to play golf and the game will gain another recruit. The popu-

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larity of golf, the future of the golf equipment industry, the future of the golf profession hinges on whether or not we can teach the novice to play golf.

Now for the No. 3 factor in golf instruction.

"JUDGMENT." (Webster's — mental faculty of deciding by the comparison of facts and ideas.) Never over-prescribe for the pupil. Sometimes it is better to suggest counteractive treatment rather than a cure although this will at sometimes not seem the honest thing to do. Know your pupil, judge his capabilities and never burden him with more change than he can handle with regard to his time and money. Whenever a pupil has money and time enough to follow through with a program of instruction set up by the pro and the pupil is willing to make the sacrifice, then and then only should the pro prescribe radical change in the pupil's style. If the pupil is limited by time, apply first aid only and leave major surgery for those who can spend some time in the hospital with the Doc.

Thus three important factors in golf instruction are: plain language, sound logic to back up points, and shrewd judgment. AND! The number one point of the golf swing as stated above: Start the downswing with the mass of the lower body. Impress on the pupil that he must not start the downswing with the arms or the hands. At a range where we have to get results quick that's what we tell them and it works.

## **STRESS FERTILIZING, DRAINAGE, FIRST YEAR OF A COURSE**

**By DENNIS LAVENDER**

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There are two factors of major importance facing the greenkeeper in the maintenance of new turf the first season. Overlooking either of these two factors will mean certain failure to make expected progress in the new course condition.

First of these two factors, and by far the most important, is heavy fairway fertilization.

As a rule the soil on newly constructed courses is at an extremely low level of fertility. The plant food for a new crop of turf is simply not there, and must be added.

The turf will start out thin and open and will stay that way throughout the season if not fed heavily.

If the season happens to be a dry one and there is no irrigation, the young turf will suffer far more than an older and more established one and at the end of the growing season will be more open and

thinner than at the beginning of the season. Blame for a skinny turf condition the first season can be laid entirely to drought. Heavily fed turf will be able to withstand drought and will be growing fast, thickening up and closing in all throughout the growing season.

By heavy fertilization the first season we mean something equivalent to this: Application of 200 pounds of Cal-Nitro per acre as soon as the frost is out of the ground in the spring. This application followed by 800 pounds of Milorganite the first part of May. The first part of Sept., 1800 pounds of Milorganite per acre.

The second of the two factors while not having such quick reaction as the fairway feeding, in the long run is of equal importance. And this factor is green drainage, sub-surface.

The entire green maintenance program must be governed by the manner in which the new greens drain. If the greens drain well and dry out quickly after heavy rains there are no problems and present standard practices of putting green maintenance procedure will produce very satisfactory results.

However if the greens do not drain well and stay wet too long after rains the maintenance practices will have to vary considerably from those of well-drained greens. For instance: Every attempt must be made to keep this type of green very much on the dry side. This means not using a sprinkler. Avoid the danger of getting the greens too wet. This means early morning hand syringing simply to wash off dew. This will dry the greens sooner than poling them.

This also will mean later morning mowing so that the mowers are traveling on a dryer surface with far better and cleaner cutting and far less compaction.

With these expensive precautions a hot wet summer may probably wreck this type of green and this situation should be fully explained to the greens committee so that the only answer, that of tile or perforated pipe sub-drainage, be installed as soon as possible.

It would be well not to make the serious mistake of thinking in terms of surface cultivation (aerification, addition of porous material, etc.) as the answer or even part of the answer to this problem of sub-drainage. No amount of surface improvement in the way of soil texture, aerification and the like will change that basic fault of the sub-surface water not moving out of the green freely.

If the greenkeeper in the first year of the new course attends to these matters of heavy fertilization and greens drainage in a sound manner, the golf course will surely be on the road to success for these are the fundamentals.

*(NGSA convention paper)*