

What Men Should Know About Women— When It Comes To Teaching

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It isn't often that a male professional comes to a woman professional for advice. But it happened to me about two years ago.

"How in the 'ell does a man go about teaching women to play golf, Jean?" this strapping fellow said to me. "I'm getting more women students every year, but every year it seems that I'm learning less and less about getting through to them.

"What makes it so tough," this pro continued, "is that half of the lessons I give are given to women."

This is the universal complaint of men, and always has been. It's not something that male golf professionals have discovered in the last ten or fifteen years or so. The ancient question, "How do you go about understanding women?" has been asked many billion times.

Where golf is involved, the answer isn't very complicated. But many men never learn it or fully grasp just what it means.

Here's Your Answer

It's as simple as this: Only one woman out of a thousand is really interested in excelling as a golfer. Most simply want to be average players, at best.

The male professional who sought my advice didn't comprehend what I told him. "Why shouldn't anyone who goes to the bother of playing golf," he sputtered "not want to excel at it? It doesn't make sense." I talked to him as recently as two months ago and he was still quite bewildered. "You were right in what you said about women students," he told me,

"but I still can't understand why they aren't more competitive in their approach to the game."

"Maybe they're playing golf for what it was intended — for the fun of it," I replied.

I suppose it all comes down to the fact that women — or housewives — the ones with whom I and most pros deal almost every day don't have to be competitive. They're not down at an office every day slugging it out to make a big sale, get an important order through, or come up with an idea that will knock the boss right out of his chair. They're not vieing with another man for a job upstairs.

They Relax At It

Consequently, they don't come to the club in a supercharged frame of mind. For them, golf is a way of relaxing, of getting out of the kitchen and into a



Jean Mulkeen

different environment for an afternoon. It is not another obstacle that has to be knocked down or overcome. In the 14 years I have been in the golf business, either as a range owner or teaching professional, I have yet to see a woman or group of them stay miffed very long over a golf match. The game doesn't mean that much to most of them.

Men have to understand this attitude if they are going to successfully teach women golfers.

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What Men Should Know

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One thing that the male instructor most frequently and flagrantly overlooks is the compliment that should follow a good shot on the part of a woman student. She may hit the ball only 100 or 125 yards, at best, but it shouldn't be forgotten that this probably is a superlative effort for her. In altogether too many cases the pro doesn't take into account that *this is a woman* who is on the practice tee, and that 125 yard effort on her part is the equivalent of a 200-yard drive by a man.

Conversation Lesson

Several pros, referring to males again, of course, have told me that they get awfully annoyed when a woman spends what should constitute the entire lesson period describing her game of the day before, including all the three putt greens she had plus the mis-hit shots. The chief complaint is that the woman expects a full 30-minute lesson in addition to the time that has been taken for conversation. As a result, the pro's teaching schedule is disrupted.

With a tight teaching schedule there isn't much room for conversation, it is conceded, but still there is no denying when a professional takes a job he becomes a father confessor where matters relating to golf are concerned. There is no getting around it. How do you get a woman to cut down on conversation and start swinging when she is taking a lesson? Simply hand her a club and ease her toward the spot where the practice balls are. Nine times out of ten she'll take the hint.

Concentrate on Rhythm

Getting back to the subject of hitting the ball, I am afraid that most male pros don't take into consideration just how incapable the average woman is of really swinging with power. She doesn't have the strength in her hands, wrists and arms to do it. So, in teaching her, the emphasis has to be on the proper grip, good footwork and the pivot. Much patience has to be exercised in getting her to perfect these things because, unlike a man, she can't cover up deficiencies

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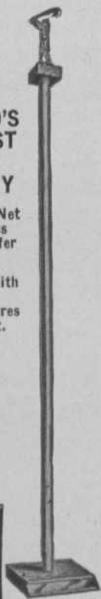
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in her overall rhythm by sheer strength.

When a woman who I am teaching hits a better than average shot, I always stop right then and explain to her the actions she brought into play to do it. In many cases, I go into a great deal of detail in telling her why she hit the shot well, mainly because the feeling of the shot is firmly implanted in her mind at that moment. This, I feel, is the truly positive way of teaching. I am not telling her what she did wrong, but rather what she did right. And, that is what she wants to know.

The Real "Home Pro"

Women students ordinarily won't go so far as to tell their pros that their golf-playing husbands browbeat them. But I suspect this often is the case. For example, you may work with one of your women players for a week or so, and bring her game along beautifully only to have it undone when she goes home and starts talking golf with her husband. He and not you is the "home pro." He has

studied her swing on those few occasions when he has condescended to play with her, and what you have taught her may be basically all right, but there are refinements he insists on making. Unless this husband really understands the swing, serious damage is going to be done to one of your pupils.

How do you find out if a husband has been tampering with the ideas you have tried to teach? The next time the woman student takes a lesson from you she is going to expound some theories that are going to make you wonder where she picked them up. Now you know!

She's A Relief

I think it is fortunate for all pros that most women players take a rather casual attitude about their games. Think of what we'd have to put up with if 90 and not 50 per cent of our teaching time was occupied with hard driving males who either want perfection or are intent on learning how to drive the ball 250 yards to satisfy their masculinity. The

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woman who wants nothing more than to be an average golfer, who is desirous of acquiring just enough skill so that she won't slow up her husband when she plays with him, is a relief and a blessing when everything pertaining to teaching is considered. She may be just a little exasperating because she isn't a dogged competitor, and she may be annoying on those occasions when she'd rather talk about her game than work on it, but you have to concede that the time she spends on the lesson tee is one of the more welcome intervals in your working day.

Uses A Rope Trick

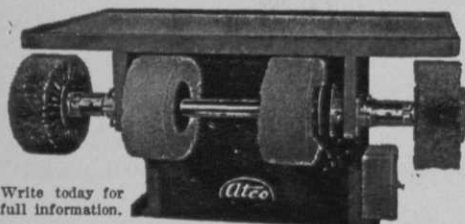
I won't say that I prefer women to men when it comes to teaching. Actually, I have no preferences. I like to teach kids as well as grownups and I think nothing of spending eight or ten hours a day on the lesson tee. Accomplishment in teaching thrills me more than anything — even my own game when I'm

playing well. I like nothing better than to bring a woman to the point where she can consistently break 100. Taking a wild hitting male and helping him to straighten out his drives gives me great satisfaction. Several years ago I devised a rope trick that I have used effectively in getting golfers to pivot correctly. I loop the rope around the player's mid-section, apply pressure on the right side for the proper twist, and then pull the left side for the turn in the follow-through. Many players have told me that the rope improves their timing immensely. It isn't uncommon for them to come back from time to time for further sessions with the rope, especially when their timing goes sour.

Brigitte Varangot of France will play in the USGA Women's Amateur at Prairie Dunes CC, Hutchinson, Kans., Aug. 17-22. She also will stay on to play several events on the Ladies PGA circuit.

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