



Dick Mackey and Miami U. coed demonstrate teaching methods recommended in this article.

## Are You Keeping Up to Date in Your Teaching Methods?

*Researchers are discovering new things about the complexities of golf instruction . . . Here are a few hints that may help improve your skill in giving lessons*

By **DR. RICHARD T. MACKEY**

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**H**ow about a scientific approach to golf instruction? Are you keeping pace with what the psychologists and college physical education researchers are discovering about how people learn a complex skill like golf? Let's examine some of these principles and see how their application can help make you a better teaching professional:

**Principle:** For efficient motor learning, the student should have a definite and clear image of what to do and how to do it.

**Application:** You should use frequent demonstrations in your teaching. In past years, copying the swing of the pro was the principal way that caddies learned the skills of the game. A word of caution — be sure that whenever possible, you allow the golfer to view the demonstration *as he sees it* when he performs the skill. For example: when teaching the grip, have the pupil stand along side of you rather than directly opposite you. (See Photos No. 1 & No. 2.)

When demonstrating the full swing, have your pupil see the demonstration from various views so he can gain a more complete image of the total skill.

### Slow-Motion Demonstration

Slow-motion demonstrations are helpful in getting the pupil to understand the parts of a complex movement such as a full iron shot. Be sure, however, to also include some visual images of the swing

at normal speed to give an accurate picture of the skill as it will actually be performed.

The use of loopfilms, which have been utilized by college swimming coaches so successfully, could prove very effective as a teaching aid. With some of the new audio-visual equipment, loopfilms could be shown to your pupils in an undarkened portion of your pro shop while they wait for their lesson.

### Add Word Pictures

Remember that when a person learns a sports skill, he learns with his entire body. His mind, body, vision, and hearing are all involved. So, to our visual images just described, we need to add some word pictures. Many times our verbal communication is not very effective.

To put it another way: "You can't say you've taught until learning has taken place."

A moment from the life of that fine teacher, the late David Ogilvie, long-time professional at Oakwood Club in Cleveland, may help to illustrate the point. One day Dave was giving his weekly lesson to one of his members, a successful businessman. Our businessman was having his usual difficulty of collapsing his left arm on the downswing. The accumulated white paint on the toe of the driver was ample testimony to Dave's inability to help his pupil.

At that moment Dave attempted to once again explain how the left arm should function throughout the swing. "Visualize a child swinging back and forth on a swing. The chain or rope remains in a straight line throughout the movement. The golf swing is much the same — a pendular motion with the club and your left arm forming the straight line just as the chain does."

### Try New Descriptions

Almost immediately the golfer began to improve. After three or four shots which went straight and true, the Businessman turned to Dave and said, "Why didn't you tell me this before?" Dave just smiled and replied, "I've been telling you to keep that left arm straight for 15 years."

True enough, but the illustration which

Dave had used on this day had not been used before. Make sure your pupils are grasping the ideas you're trying to get across. Try new descriptions and new word combinations and maybe you'll discover some bright phrases that are understood precisely by your pupils.

**Principle:** One of the important factors in learning a sports skill is the individual's **muscle sense**. This is the sense which gives us awareness of the position of our arms and legs etc. — when we cannot see them.

**Application:** Unfortunately our muscle sense is not a completely accurate one. It also varies considerably from one person to another.

Robert Burns, the Scotch poet, put his finger on the problem when he wrote: "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us. To see oursels as ithers see us!"

### Help at the Top

In teaching the full swing, for example, you should assist your pupil in reaching the correct position at the top of the backswing. Here, emphasize "feel" so he will mentally grasp it. Manual correction on your part and having the pupil see himself in the correct position is very helpful. (See Photo No. 3.)

**Principle:** Practice sessions should be so spaced as to insure most efficient learning.

**Application:** This principle is appropriate for both individual lessons and group instruction. Since it is very important that the beginner practice correct skills rather than incorrect ones, some time for repetition of the skill, under your guidance, should be included in each lesson. For beginners it is better to have two half-hour lessons on two different days than one full-hour lesson one day per week. The hour lesson is more beneficial for the more advanced and more highly motivated golfer.

### Speed First, Accuracy Second

**Principle:** Where speed as well as accuracy are necessary to skill development, speed should be emphasized first and accuracy later.

**Application:** Arnold Palmer, in telling how he learned golf as a boy, said he  
(Continued on page 154)

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## Teaching Methods

*(Continued from page 36)*

swung from the heels first and picked up finesse later on. His great power and accuracy certainly show how successful this method was for him.

Obviously, Arnold Palmer is a person with much more than ordinary coordination and desire to excel. The feats of performers like Julius Boros, though, indicate that all-out power is not crucial to golfing success. But certainly we can agree that doing the skill at normal speed, even in the early stages, is important to efficient learning.

**Principle:** To be sufficiently motivated to learn, the learner must experience frequent success.

**Application:** In the early stages of working with beginners, this principle is the most easily used and yet most frequently violated.

## Start with the Putter

Since the object of the game is to get the ball in the hole, you should begin your instruction with a putter and place the ball one foot from the hole. If you choose not to start with putting, good teaching indicates that a short, approach stroke would insure better chances of success than the use of a driver.

In working with beginners, don't discount the effect of fatigue on a beginner's ability to learn. This is usually a factor when your pupils are children or ladies, but remember, even husky men can tire when unused muscles are exercised.

**Principle:** Learning is highly individualistic. Each learner comes to the teacher with different motivations, different capacities and different past experiences.

**Application:** As a skilled golf teacher, you should realize that each one of your pupils is like all others you've taught —

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and yet he or she is different, too.

The fine athlete who is just learning golf may expect to excel very quickly. This may not occur. While general athletic skill will be helpful, golf presents a problem in coordinated movement which is as unique as the game is different from all others. The athlete may experience early success and then become discouraged when he is unable to shoot par golf. You must anticipate this and prepare him mentally for this possibility.

### Needs Motivation

The person who comes to you with little previous athletic success presents a different problem. He may need constant re-assurance that he can master the fundamentals. And don't forget the power of great motivation. Often the degree of success will depend less on natural ability than on a great desire to become a golfer.

Remember, too, that not all pupils, even the young ones, have a burning desire to become champions.

Jean Mulkeen, golf professional, in describing the reason most ladies don't approach golf with the all-out dedication men show, stated in the August, 1964 issue of *GOLFDOM*: "Maybe they're playing golf for what it was intended — for the fun of it."

Now that you've read some of the principles of learning, pause a moment. Think about your own methods. Perhaps there's a principle or two you haven't been applying. Or, maybe there's a better application you could be making.

### 17th Amputee Tournament

National Amputee Golf Association has scheduled its 17th annual tournament for the week of Oct. 4. It will be played at the Ida Cason Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, Ga. A practice round is set for the 4th; a Pro-Am will be played the 5th; qualifying is carded for the 6th and 7th, and the championship is scheduled for the 8th and 9th. Complete information as to the tournament itself and housing accommodations can be obtained from George A. Campbell, Jr., 28 Ocean st., Marshfield, Mass.