

To Be...or Not to be...A Knowledgeable Golfer or Not...

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Perhaps the biggest single problem facing golfers across the board is manifest in this quote: "We don't know what we don't know." That inherently shapes into a dominating condition contending for superiority over golfers' minds, from high handicappers to tour players, initially boiling down to a notion, first, that they must "be in control," and subsequently, that if they can just "control" everything they do - both what goes on in their minds and what happens in their swings - they will become complete players. Unfortunately, that comes loaded to the hilt with an opposing cliché that says, "What we don't know can't hurt us," or "It's not worth knowing." So we proceed to overlook or ignore the unrelenting interconnection between the way the conscious mind, the non-conscious mind and the body form a trilogy that will either succeed through cooperative integration, or struggle through degrees of "a house divided against itself." What we don't know often can bring profound injury. There is plenty of evidence in word and action that there is more going on with golfers' minds and games that conflicts with (much or little), rather than benefits from cooperation and inner harmony. When the knowledge to understand what to do or how to go about it is unavailable, missing or disregarded, natural internal human integrity is injured and responds anxiously (or as most observers prefer, the less threatening, "doubtfully and nervously"). That is not optional and it closes the door to new ideas and alternatives for action. In turn that increases the need and urgency for "control." "Control" tends to be throttling, and thrives on too much or too little even of "good things." Even when golfers and their gurus can describe "what" to do, where they are missing the full picture of "how" to do it, the residual defaults to doubt, and hence, invariably, withdraws into trying to stop the nervousness. That merely circles once more around to greater need for "control," in the form of turning only to whatever means we can find to contain the "demons."

The majority of the golfing population either has been, or continues to be, unwittingly mesmerized by commonly circulated themes, like "mental toughness," "peak performance," "concentration," and "being aggressive." Sound good, don't they? Mighty words often affect us that way, but do they contain the wisdom for actually getting the job done? There will surely be an outcome - a result, but will it be successful or ragged?

Now focus your most open attention. As you do, you will hear a conflicting sound from instructors and media voices as they caution players (privately) not "to try so hard," to "slow down," "swing smoothly," use "good rhythm" and "maintain what the tour tempo device tells you."

Regrettably, very few pick up the ominous dichotomy between the public "go at it hard," and the private "tone it down." If that is not conflicted, what is?

More importantly, why does that happen? Do the gurus and the media fail to hear themselves making contradictory statements? What are they thinking? They are thinking in terms of *result*, not in terms of a *process* to reach a reasonable, desirable, outcome

Having carefully and systematically observed it for 30 years, sometimes amazed or amused, but always chagrined, we have attempted, instead of taking it straight to main street, to insert a calmer, more studied process containing the knowledge and information that requires embracing "knowing what we don't know." Simply because the important issues are so fraught with unfinished perceptions cast in "absolute certainty," any challenge from us or anyone else, past or present, would tend either to sound like it was "dead wrong," "outside the box," "non-traditional," or "off the wall." That happens because we know that belief systems in both life and golf are so thoroughly pounded into human conscious psyches that, even if they do listen, the response or reaction is immediately to become defensive if their cherished beliefs are challenged, and most everyone knows, or should, that defensiveness is not compatible with listening, understanding and comprehension. What may not be so clear is that we each of us owns a built-in mechanism that resists making changes to our thinking and/or acting - at first - no matter the quality or character of the issue. It takes awhile to accept what was previously unknown and is, therefore,

something "new" to the eyes and ears of the beholder. Transition is never instant and tradition is, after all, impeachable.

People would be in a lot of trouble if they believed tacitly that there was no such things as gravity and acted accordingly. "Hey, just jump off the building. You can control your decent. You won't get hurt!"

As you hear that, if you do, you may think it outlandish and a stupid thing to propose, but that has a distinct parallel in the traditional views of the game of golf, which completely ignore the "gravity" of human activity existing in natural, innate, non-conscious, non-discriminatory behaviors, subject like all other natural "laws" to unavoidable and unforgiving consequence wherever there is misuse, abuse or ignorance. But then, someone discovered a parachute and suddenly there was new information and potentially new behavior. Still, we bet that there are a lot of folks who will not make a jump.

The upshot and result - the consequences - of ignoring or denying such realities come to golf in many forms, and they are here to stay unless golfers take a new look at the old game. Do you enjoy the experience of hitting the ball where you did not want it to go? How about the moments in which you suddenly flinched in mid swing? Or the time you said to yourself, "Don't go right. It's OB," and you went there anyway. "Why am I unable to stop slicing, or hooking, or hitting it thin or fat?" So you don't think those are consequences? Of course you don't because unknowingly, you joined the mass who bought into a set of labels for such issues, which get buried underneath one or more over-simplifications like, "Oh, you have the "yips," or you are "choking," or you are "fearful." For any or all of those we are advised to "take charge" or "be in control" so the "pressure" will go away. What is offered for that task sounds like good advice: "Just change your grip, take charge of yourself and be 'tough'." And so goes the persistent trick that has besieged golf's collective mentality. Talk comes in "end zone" terms," born, bred and continued in unexamined tradition, with the unspoken conclusion that it is enough to know the objective and knowing how to get there then appears not really necessary. Certainly it is not for anyone who thinks it works like the drive-thru lane at McDonalds. Process takes knowledge, understanding and time. The game does not respond well in an environment of band aids and instant gratification.

Fact: Unless a player understands how the human system really works and understands where pressure comes from and the physiological changes (consequence) it exacts, golfers will go on playing the game competitively, passionately, socially, and in varying degrees of enjoyment, while lacking the ultimate satisfaction of consistently maintaining their best levels of effective success. They will do that because they don't know that there is a simple, direct action a golfer can take at the moment of execution which suspends the physiological consequences of pressure long enough to make an unfettered golf shot. Our take is that there are way more variables noticeable among golfers than can be explained easily, and that none of the gurus who promote the mental game have announced their knowledge (or lack of it). It is simply not on their radar. Moreover, in this way, it is well within reach to generate a lot more consistency and confidence, as we are able to recognize it with our eyes, ears and minds. To do that, however, requires a genuine search for what none of us know now. That's not a maybe. It's a certainty.

We have said it for generations; "If you keep on thinking what you always thought, you will keep on doing what you always did, and if you keep on doing what you always did, you will keep on getting what you always got." We've all heard the popular theme that guru's like to use. "You keep on doing the same things, expecting a different result," but they seem unable to translate that into how to do things differently simply because they do not know what they do not know and that includes "how" to get that done.

Needed: Golf's own "Reality Show."