

Pulling off the confidence trick

Dr Brian Hemming explains how coaches can dispense a key ingredient for good golf

Confidence is central to playing good golf, whatever the standard of player you may work with. With that in mind, PGA professionals can play a key role in the build up to the new season by boosting the confidence of the players they coach. And they can do so much more effectively by taking a few simple steps.

The trouble is many players misunderstand the development of confidence and will look for quick-fix ways of addressing their mindset, without really addressing the most powerful way of building confidence - namely, continual effective practice. After all, confidence, at its most basic level, refers to 'what I feel I am good at/can do'.

Too often, however, players will focus too heavily on results for confidence, when results or finishing positions are not under their control as they rely also on the performance of other competitors. So the best way to boost a pupil's confidence is to get him or her to reflect on the skills they possess and what they have done before, rather than what results they might achieve.

Get your players/pupils to complete the following task over the coming weeks. This will help them be clear on what areas of the game they feel they are already confident about from last year, and to identify what areas of the game their confidence has grown over the winter months.

My experience in completing this activity with players is that it will identify lots of areas where the PGA professional has been successful in coaching the player, and the player will be clearer on the greater chance of success they now have in competitions.

Help the player to be specific and then discuss where ongoing practice can be measured to continue to show improvement, and hence more confidence gained. This sort of analysis asks the player to think more clearly about how they play, and also engineers many opportunities for the coach to have an ongoing impact.

In essence, robust confidence will come from demonstrated improvement in skills, not from short-term fixes and tips. Try this exercise with a player of your choice and I am sure you will see

greater confidence in the player and you will get more opportunities to have the impact you want to have.

Dr. Brian Hemmings has been lead psychologist to England golf for over a decade. During this time he has helped develop the mental skills of the best emerging English golfers including the likes of Ross Fisher, Richard Finch, Danny Willett, Tom Lewis, David Horsey and Chris Wood. Brian is author of the book 'Mental Toughness for Golf: The Minds of Winners' and is also a regular presenter on the PGA CPD programme.

Brian has released a fully online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate

course that carries 100 PGA CPD points and has been completed with great reviews by PGA professionals. Go to www.golfpsychologycoaching.co.uk for full details. The course is full of practical activities for the PGA professional to guide players through improving their mental game, and is endorsed by some of England's best coaches. You can complete the course at home so you will have no travel costs or time away from your work. All you need is a player to work with and the time to complete the course activities. For a price reduction type in the promotional code 2012 to reduce the price from £295 to £219.

Area of Game	What was I good at last year	What I have improved over the last 6 months
Long Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver/length off tee • Shape ball well off tee both ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hit 10% more fairways • Stock shot much tighter now
Short Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using different clubs; being creative • Chip shots around the fringe much closer to hole 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunker play when little sand • Wedges 60 - 90 yards much better technique now
Putting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holing out from 3 - 5 feet • Lag putts 30 - 40 feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-range putting more solid • Left to right putts
Mental Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-round routine • Good under pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grind out scores when not playing well • Find it easier to leave bad shots behind
Course Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing par 5's; good balance between risk and reward • Knowing where safe misses are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go for flag a little less when pin in tight position • More options off tees



Dr. Brian Hemmings has been lead psychologist to England golf for more than a decade. During this time he has helped develop the mental skills of emerging English golfers including the likes of Ross Fisher, Richard Finch, Danny Willett, Tom Lewis, David Horsey and Chris Wood. He is author of the book 'Mental Toughness for Golf: The Minds of Winners' and a regular presenter on the PGA CPD programme.

He has also released a fully online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate course that carries 100 CPD points and has received positive reviews. Go to www.golfpsychologycoaching.co.uk for full details. The course is full of practical activities for the PGA professional to guide players through improving their mental game and is endorsed by some of England's best coaches. You can complete the course at home so you will have no travel costs or time away from your work. All you need is a player to work with and the time to complete the course activities. To reduce the price by 25 per cent (from £295 to £219) type in the promotional code 2012.