

Time for a seasonal stock take

What's in your coaching toolbox? asks Dr Brian Hemmings

“ If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. ”
Abraham Maslow

This is the time of year when players start to look ahead to the new season and often will be more conscious of renewing efforts to develop their games to try to achieve their goals in the next few months.

The difficulty is that players of all standards will often not be specific enough in any practice they do. When applied to golf, the quote from Maslow, a famous American psychologist, implies that, if players don't develop different tools/shots in their game, their development is likely to stagnate as they are likely to always approach situations on the course in the same way. Of course this could also be applied to course management skills and decision-making on the course.

The same could equally be applied to golf coaches and teaching professionals (and psychologists). Broadening one's knowledge and skills set enables us to consider more variables when trying to improve the performance or enjoyment of the golfers we work with. Therefore, it is important that any coach considers what specific coaching education they might need in order to progress their repertoire of skills, coaching achievements, the players they work with, or to increase their income.

Therefore, take time to reflect what is in your coaching toolbox? Do you always reach the same conclusions with players and find yourself repeating the same instructions? Coaches in other sports are encouraged to engage in regular 'reflective practice' to self-assess their effectiveness. These questions might prompt where your 'toolbox' is limited.

Reflective Coaching Questions

- o What happened in that coaching session?
- o What were you thinking and feeling?
- o What was good and bad about the session?
- o What sense did you make of the player's progress?
- o What else could you have done?
- o If the same situation arose again what would you do?

To return to developing a player's toolbox, a suggestion might be

trying a 'shot of the month' short-term goal-setting task to focus their coaching, efforts and practice over the coming months. This simply requires you to discuss with players the goals they have for the coming year and what limitations they may have that could be improved each month. This is not to say all other coaching work stops but it is usually helpful to target one particular shot in a realistic time frame. Identify the most important shots or skills, measure their current success in some way and then agree the thrust of coaching, technical instruction and practice that month to improve that particular shot. A simple re-test or re-measurement at the end of the month should hopefully show better execution/results and therefore more confidence going into the season.

SHORT GAME SHOT OF THE MONTH

January



Chip from the fringe
 (e.g. currently 50 per cent finish within 4 feet)

February



Greenside bunker play

March

Mid-range putting

April

30-40 yard pitch shot

Considering your Spring 2014 coach education?

Dr. Brian Hemmings has released a fully online Golf Psychology Coaching Certificate course that is approved by The PGA of Great Britain and Ireland and the PGAs of Europe. It carries 100 CPD points and has been completed with great reviews by more than 350 PGA pros and coaches worldwide.

Go to www.golfpsychologycoaching.com for full details.

The course is full of practical activities and information on assessing mental skills, goals and motivation, attentional control, confidence building and anxiety reduction techniques 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 PGA to reduce the cost from £295 to £219. The course is also available in German and Spanish.

"Fantastic online course, highly recommend to all PGA Pros looking to better & build on their abilities as a coach towards their players."

Brady Sherwood, PGA Professional, Ireland.