



Talking in the 19th Hole

DRIVER. If you ask me the virtues or abilities that I most want a student to have, among the first on the list would be: their willingness to learn and their passion for golf. I have met children and young people with what many consider a potential golfer due to their physical characteristics, but they have abandoned the game wasting their natural talent.

For me, the true potential has to do more with what is inside the player's head. If the person is open-minded, teachable, and moldable, his potential is enormous. An open mind is a fertile field for learning and progress.

When the player believes that he already has a full glass, is unwilling to learn, does not listen, and ignores details, there is very little that the pros can do for him. One of the biggest challenges we have as pros is educating people's minds so that they are willing to follow the learning process.

The pros are happy when a child, a young woman, a lady, or a gentleman listens to us and follows our instructions. If the student is willing to learn, correcting the technique is very easy. When students are willing to learn and train, it is easy for a class to be successful in every respect. When students are unwilling to learn, they are wasting their time, money, and effort.

The teaching of golf is a process of reciprocal action between the student and the pro. The pro may be the best in the world, but the class performance will be low if the student does not take part in it.

Some behaviors that reflect a willingness to learn are:

- Confidence in the pro. Students trust in their pro because of his level of play, communication skills, knowledge, or other reasons. If not, then there is no point in pursuing that relationship. What is the point of taking classes if the students continue to make the same faults?

Lorenzo Engell, when he was a child, he was my student. In the last minutes of class, Lorenzo told me, "now I can hit the way I like." I did not like his request and explained that he would better try to do what we had seen in class. In the end, Lorenzo shot as he wanted, as many students do. Students must be willing to accept the answers to these questions: 1. What am I doing? 2. What should I do? 3. How do I make the changes?

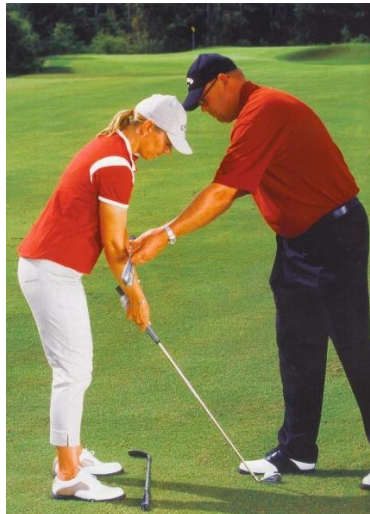
- Listen and observe. Good students pay attention, which allows them to understand the pro's information verbally, shows them by visual means, or conveys them through sensations. Quickly grasp the answer to the questions what am I doing? and what should I do?

One of my biggest frustrations as a pro is that boys and girls don't pay attention when you explain. I believe that parents and pros are failing in our responsibility to educate the new generations in details as simple as listening to teachers and respecting the experience (the gray hair) of the elderly.

- Warming up and stretching. People who arrive 15 minutes early to their class to do warm-up and stretching exercises prepare their body and mind for the training. It would help if you made a rule of warming up and stretching before a class or training, thus avoiding injuries, achieving the muscles' flexibility, and good joints' mobility. A player's maturity is reflected, in part, in the time he uses to warm up and stretch.
- To ask. "It is better to be ignorant for 5 minutes than for a lifetime." What words of wisdom about the importance of asking. Players who want to learn to take advantage of the class to ask questions of the pro. These students are so eager to learn that they want to absorb all the pro's knowledge and experience. In my opinion, the number of questions a student asks is directly proportional to her interest in the game.
- The motivation. Get a scholarship, play with your husband, win over friends or be the club's champion are some of the reasons that a person has to take classes and train. The more powerful the motives the person will spend more time practicing, and his efforts will be better directed. Who is motivated finishes 18 holes and wants to continue playing; who is not motivated plays a hole and no longer wants to continue.
- Train. My thermometer to measure whether a boy or girl is engaged in golf is when they decide to train or play on the course on their initiative. Most children only play golf when they go to private lessons or the academy, as they do so out of obligation or pressure from their parents.

In the case of ladies and gentlemen, their willingness to learn is manifested in the time and quality of their training. Going out to the course in practice rounds is essential to put the different shots at their point.

- Do drills. Players who do drills in their training are counted on the fingers of one hand. There is a general resistance to doing drills. I understand that most drills are uncomfortable and give the appearance of not working, but I know it is one of the most efficient ways to improve.



I have known players who here in Mexico do not want to do drills, but when they go to classes in the United States, they do the drills put on them. I do not understand the reason why his behavior is different. Perhaps in the United States, they charge you dearly and in dollars, or it will be for the same reason that in Mexico, we do not respect traffic laws, but in the United States, we do.

- Study. When I was a child in my city, there was no golf channel, no golf digest, no YouTube, no golf books, etc., so we learned to play by watching others. The new generations have the privilege of having more golf information on their cell phones than we ever imagined. The point is that the general golfer, including the pros, seems not interested in studying golf. It is gratifying for me to know that a student has read golf books and handles the subject correctly. How important is it to know the why? And the how? of our sport.
- Dedication. Most golfers are successful at work; they know very well how hard it took them to be successful professionally. Curiously, in golf, they expect to play well with equipment that does not work for them, without taking classes, without exercising, without training, without going out onto the course, and without a caddy. I consider that a dedicated person with average skill will be a better player than a lazy person with great skill.
- Patience. Beginning players want to learn fast, while intermediate and advanced players want to correct their mistakes in a class. The reality is that we pros do not have a magic wand to grant their wishes. Beginners should know that mastering motor skills takes practice and time. Intermediate and advanced should know that skill substitution takes time; If you have been making a technical error for years, it stands to reason that it will take months to correct it. Patience is key to being successful in the learning process. A difficult lesson to learn.

I invite you to reflect on your willingness to learn and train. The 10 points we have discussed can be a good starting point. Take concrete actions to be the student that every pro wants to have. **FORE.**

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