



Talking in the 19th Hole

DRIVER. The golf learning process is similar to any skill we have developed in life. First, we learn to crawl, then to walk, and then to run. We go to college until we have passed elementary, middle, and high school. This being the case, it is curious to observe that people expect to learn to play golf in a short time and with little effort. Right off the bat, they think they can swing the full swing without first learning the short shots. That is akin to running a marathon without going through the 5 and 10 kilometers and the half marathon.

The learning process is so simple that most prefer not to follow it because it does not add anything extraordinary. This process, called incremental learning, consists of learning from the short to the long, from the simple to the complex, from short strokes to long strokes.



The process applies to beginners and advanced. The first class I teach a beginner is putting. Then we see the chip, pitch, $\frac{1}{2}$ swing, $\frac{3}{4}$ swing and full swing. For intermediate and advanced players, I apply a similar process. I have learned that by correcting short-shot faults, I am enabling the player to correct his long-shot faults. I have a theory that is already practically a law: players make the same mistakes on every shot. For example, the player whose wrists break down on the putt, scooping on the chip, and scooping on the full swing. Correcting the scooping in full swing will be easier if we fix it first in the putt.

Many players who ask me for class get sad because we see putt and chip in the first class, and their main interest is to see the driver. In particular, I wouldn't say I like classes where the student only wants a driver class. In most cases, the player fails the driver, not because of the club itself but because the swing has many defects, which are magnified in the driver along the length of the club and because the player hits the ball harder. To correct the driver, you have to fix the swing, which will be achieved better if the short shots are trained.

On many occasions, I have heard children, ladies, and gentlemen complain that the academy repeats the class of putt or half swing. According to them training it again is boring or unproductive. They do not

know that a class is repeated because they have not mastered it yet and that if they do not master that part, there is no point in seeing more advanced movements or strokes.

I met a club where there is behavior that caught my attention. Many young people go to the practice range to hit balls without knowing how to play and ask to borrow clubs, but they don't want an iron; they want a driver. They think that hitting the ball away is a display of manliness, and they also do it to feed their ego. Many players have similar behavior. These people do not understand that golf is a precision sport. It is not whoever goes the furthest who wins, but whoever makes the minor strokes. By far, I prefer a player with an excellent short game than a long hitter who shoots everywhere.

Students, in general, want to train long shots, but it doesn't make sense to swing the full swing with many technical errors, which will become increasingly difficult to correct. Professors must be firm in that students do the movements to where they are capable of doing it well. Otherwise, we are condemning them to limit their golf.

Sadly, I see that most of the professors I have met try to teach the complete swing to beginners. The poor students make very uncoordinated movements, and in general, the result is not good. Over time these students will learn to play, but it will take a lot of work to hit where the full swing is not made, such as pitches of less than 100 yards.

One of the most important lessons I had in the master's in sport psychology was incremental learning. It influenced me so much that I have made this concept one of the central axes of my teaching. Whether you want to learn how to play or improve your game, I invite you to follow the process and see for yourself that this concept works. If you are a professor, I invite you to put the concept of incremental learning to the test, and I assure you that you will have tremendous success as a professor. **FORE.**

Mateo Melgar Ochoa – Golf Pro
www.handy.golf
www.youtube.com/jugargolf
mateomelgar1969@hotmail.com