

Jonathan Wallett, director of the Elite Coaching Golf Academy, analyses the attributes that separate a Tour professional from an elite amateur.

What Makes the Difference?

Only a small fraction of talented young players succeed in making the grade as a Tour professional. Pictures by HSBC CJGP and Getty Images.



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ON DRIVING RANGES and practice grounds around the world there are countless young players who aspire to be the next **Tiger Woods** or **Lorena Ochoa**. Some will make it, most will not. Why will some players succeed and become successful tournament professionals ... and others just fade into obscurity?

The question here is what are the critical attributes required to be a successful tournament professional?

Entire books have been written on the subject. In this article, I've focused on providing an overview of some of the skills that I believe are a pre-requisite for developing into a Tour professional.

Technical

What is good technique? This is a controver-

sial question, and a question which will elicit many different answers from many different coaches. But here are a few key technical skills I've identified through my coaching career:

- ▶ Repetitive shot – this has often been overlooked
- ▶ Stock shot under pressure
- ▶ Effective shot-making (distance, consistency and shaping)
- ▶ Good short game

Mental

What is the mental game? For me, it relates to a player's cognition, or how they think. Key attributes of Tour players are:

- ▶ Confidence – most notably 'competitive confidence'; confidence under pressure



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- ▶ Concentration – the ability to totally focus your attention on the task in hand
- ▶ Vision – great players programme their minds for success and have a success mentality permeating through their game

Character skills can be developed, just like other skills. Key character skills are:

- ▶ Desire/ambition
- ▶ Dedication
- ▶ Persistence – the ability to handle failure

Management

The management game has many different facets, but some of the key topics are:

- ▶ Practise specificity
- ▶ Tournament preparation and analysis
- ▶ Course strategy
- ▶ Ability to score well with 'B' or 'C' game

Physiology

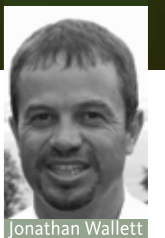
The role of physiology is playing an increasingly important part of the pro game. Some key issues are:

- ▶ Strength/flexibility
- ▶ Corrective issues
- ▶ Injury free

Character

Very little is written in coaching books about the role that character plays. Character is not something you are born with. It's something you develop through your perception of your own personal experiences.

Jonathan Wallett is a certified and qualified Sport Psychology expert and a member of the British and Swiss PGA. He is the Director of the Elite Coaching Golf Academy, based at Evian Masters Training Centre, France and Royal Pines Resort, Australia. Jon has been the author of teaching articles, DVDs, elite performance workbooks and mental training CDs. For further details about the Elite Coaching Golf Academy, visit www.elitecoaching.com



Jonathan Wallett

One thing that hasn't been mentioned is talent and, of course, it's clear that talent plays a part. However, almost all top players have said that they feel this is the most minor part of the jigsaw. Any young player needs to take a multi-dimensional approach these days if you want to fulfill your ambition of one day being a Tour player.

In an interview at last year's Evian Masters, LPGA Tour player **Minea Blomquist** said: "You can't really say that one part of the game is more important than the others. You have to work on all aspects of your game if you want to be the best player that you can be."

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Make a plan to develop the whole of your game
- ▶ Look to develop your skills in all areas

To Do: On an A4 piece of paper write down the key skills you feel you need to develop in each area of the game. Then formulate a strategy on how you intend to acquire these skills. Put this map on your wall and review and reassess it regularly.

How this can help the club player

Most club players have a one-dimensional plan to improving their game – go and 'beat' more balls on the range. This has a very low chance of success! Instead, look

at the game as a whole and look to improve a little in all areas of your game. Some ideas are:

- ▶ Practise one-metre putts for five minutes a day on the carpet at home. Use an alignment training aid if possible
- ▶ Practise 50 per cent of your time at the range working on the 'scoring shots' – from 100 metres in
- ▶ Choose three flexibility/stretching exercises and then do daily, either in your office or at home. This will help most players' swings immeasurably if done over a significant period of time.
- ▶ Next time you play, record your stats – fairways hit, greens in regulation, short game and number of putts. Keep a record of these over time and look to improve each area a little over the course of a year.

