



Good performance....good person??

One of the most common problems with elite young players (and sometimes older ones as well), is that they link their **feelings of self worth** to their **performance**.

Golfers' buy into the "I'm only as good as my success in golf". This is very dangerous as then how they feel about themselves is dictated by factors that are outside their control.

Emotions such as anger, crying, club throwing, severe disappointment or frustration etc all emanate from this belief. Emotions are like **messengers from our subconscious to our conscious mind**—they are trying to give us a hint or a message about how we truly feel on the inside. In our academy we do not actively discipline the younger players if we see them throwing clubs. Why? Do we approve of club throwing? **Absolutely not**—but we look at the underlying issues that cause these strong emotions, and when these issues are dealt with, then these strong negative emotions cease, and then the club throwing also ceases.

So how does attaching self worth to performance affect their performance?

- Creates **immense pressure**
- Can put pressure on relationships with parents/coaches/other competitors
- **Severe effects** on motivation
- **Severe effects** on long term success

To some extent, this problem is not only limited to sport—this happens in life as well—parents giving youngsters **conditional love**—"I'll love you more if you are good at school, or if you pass your exams". Society is constantly giving messages of "you are a better person if you drive a BMW than a VW". This is the basis of many marketing campaigns, and if you are not careful, you can buy into this lie.

Another inherent problem, is that during the ages of 13—20 this is naturally a **strong period** for the **development of self identity**. No wonder that, without careful supervision and understanding, that youngsters entwine their golfing success with their feeling about themselves. And then, unless addressed, this can continue well into adulthood. Many older players still have issues concerning this.

Jack Nicklaus is a wonderful example of an excellent attitude in elite sport. He cites that golf was only ever a **game**, a **challenge** to him, and he always put it in it's **true perspective**. The tournaments he enjoyed the most, were not always the ones he won—he cites the 1977 British Open ("The duel in the sun") as one of his most poignant golfing memories—a tournament he lost on the last green to Tom Watson, after Tom shot 65-65 last two days and Nicklaus 65-66. His autobiography "My Story" is an excellent read for all aspiring golfers.

"True victory is self victory – if all you think about is winning you will in fact lose everything"

MORIHEI UESHIBA – founder of the Japanese Martial Art of Aikido

So how can I learn to separate self esteem from performance?

First of all you have to understand that primarily you are a **person**, who has **CHOSEN** to play sport (i.e golf). How you are as a person internally will **always** be more important than **anything** you achieve externally, through sport or anything else.

Other techniques? Enroll on our distance learning program or our Internet mental coaching program together with mental workbooks and you can discover the delights of training your mind to work for you not against you. We offer a **free GMAP** (Golfers' Mental Analysis Profile) to all prospective students, and you will receive **free of charge** with no obligation an analysis of your current mental game. Email us at info@elitecoaching.com to receive your free GMAP.

“Best route to the Tour? It’s not US College” (Hank Haney 2007)

For a young player, with ambitions of going on Tour, it must be a difficult decision to decide which pathway to take. Should I leave my studies and concentrate on golf full time? Should I get qualified in a profession and then concentrate on my golf? Should I do a mixture of both? Which is the right answer? There is **NO** right answer for everybody. Each person is an “**individual case**”

Any young player (16 to 24 years old), which aspires to a career in Professional Golf needs to be supported by three things;

1. **Competitive tournament structure**—this enables the player to develop and hone their competition skills
2. **Skill development structure**—this is critical and often overlooked. To get better it’s not just about beating balls on the driving range—it’s about having a long term success plan which identifies the skills (technical, mental, management, physiological and character) that you need to develop and acquire, through coaching, in order to succeed in your goals
3. **Financial support**—Of course it requires money to support the young golfer with coaching, tournament expenses etc. But just as the aspiring Doctor going through University and Medical School needs financial support, so does the golfer whilst he’s going through his “golfing education”.

“If a young person’s final goal is to do everything possible to become a world class player, playing US college golf for four years shouldn’t be part of the program”
HANK HANEY

The ages between 16 and 21 are **critical** in a players development. It’s not so important what a players h’cap is at 15 years old, as what it is at 21 or 22. I remember a player called Wayne Henry who had a plus figure h’cap at the age of 14 and won all the Junior tournaments in England. But, by the time he was 20, his game had not progressed any fur-

ther, and the kids he was beating at 14 were now beating him at 20.

One of the reasons why countries such as Sweden, Australia or England are so successful in Professional Golf, is that they have this skill development structure. Their most talented youngsters are being given the best advice in swing mechanics, mental training, physiological development, diet and nutrition etc. And they are “**studying**” **golf full time**.

“The best training grounds for young players in their late teens are the sports institutes of Australia” HANK HANEY

So what if I fail and don’t become a Tour Pro?

Well first of all, failure is something that can happen in any career—the young aspiring doctor going to medical school, or the young aspiring lawyer going to law school, has **no guarantee** of success. But so few players make it at Tour level, so isn’t it too risky to try?? You have to understand, that there are **many careers within golf** that a player can fall back upon. Many golf course architects, club professionals’, golf teachers, TV commentators, golf magazine editors, golf media, tournament organizers, golf managers, golf sales agents etc are failed tour players. And they didn’t get these jobs because of a degree in journalism or economics. Their **pathway** to these jobs was their **golfing ability**.

The US College programs bring security, as it covers both options—education and golf—don’t they?? The problem is, according to Hank Haney (coach of Tiger Woods), that the academic side of the program means that golf is pushed to the side, and then in addition the College’s can’t offer the focused programs of elite golf academies whereby students can get the best advices in each area of the game—technical, mental, management and physiological. And as Hank Haney says, then after these four years these college kids have to compete against kids who have been doing full time elite golf programs—“It’s not a fair fight”, and at 22—24 years old, these kids which went to College have lost out at this **critical time** in their golfing development.

Australia 2007/8 Winter Program

Young players who reside in countries such as Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Switzerland etc, have to understand that if their ultimate goal is to compete on tour, they will be competing against players from USA, UK, South Africa, Australia etc. These players play golf 12 months a year, as opposed to 8 months a year. It means these players get a 50% advantage over the players from Switzerland, Austria etc. Over a 10 year development period it’s obvious that this makes a massive difference. But alas, I hear some young students say, “I go to Spain or Florida with a few friends for a month or two to practice”. Yes, that’s better than nothing, but do you have a competitive tournament structure in place, together with a structure for skills development in each

area of the game?? Our winter program in Australia allows golfers (amateur and professional) to train in a structured competitive environment, to develop and refine their skills in each area of the game. 2006/7 Student Jocke Altonen (+1 h’cap, Finland) says, “I gained a lot of understanding of my own golf swing, and my ball striking improved a lot. I really enjoyed the mental training, and now I know how I can practice this area of the game when I’m back in Finland. I reached all of my goals that I’d set myself” .

Students can enroll for just the Australia Program or alternatively enroll on an all year round elite program at our Academy—email us for an information pack.