

Transcend your mechanics

Nick Faldo and Ben Hogan were two of the most successful players in the last century of the game. Hogan was a journeyman Pro who had limited success because of what he called “the rattlesnake in his pocket”, a destructive hook shot which invariably showed itself under pressure. Hogan went about dramatically transforming his technique, and the rest is history – incredible success in the second half of his career, culminating in the fact that in 1953 he played 6 tournaments in the whole season, and won 5 of them, including all 3 “majors” he entered that year. Nick Faldo became the player he was, through a major swing development with David Leadbetter in the mid 1980s. In the subsequent decade, 6 majors followed and a place in golfing history. So, is one of the critical success factors of becoming a great player to strive for a perfect or near perfect swing?

What role should technique play in your development?

I often see what I call ‘**extremism**’ in technical philosophies - some players and coaches which advocate an ‘only’ technical approach, and then others which employ a totally non technical approach, whereby they feel its just about visualising the shot and then trusting. In my opinion **both approaches are radically wrong**. I believe in a balance—using **part** of your practise time to pay respect to your mechanics or technique, and then during tournaments to **trust your training**.

*“To be the best player that you can be is not about the swing, it is not about the mind - it is a process of combining **BOTH**”* Dr Karl Morris

Would Ben Hogan, Nick Faldo, Annika Sorenstam or Tiger Woods if achieved the illustrious heights in the game if they had disregarded the technical aspects of the game? All these players have worked very hard on their mechanics—but they key point is that they worked on them during practise. A Formula One team works hard on developing and refining their car in practise, but do they do an engine rebuild in the Race Day warm up of a grand prix? Recently, I was at a major international tournament and it amazed me at the number of players working on and ‘fixing’ their swing 30 minutes prior to tee off!

There is a wonderful citation in the book ‘Zen in the Art of Swordsmanship’ which I feel all golfers should relate to. Ancient Shogun warriors during the Meju era in Japan spent hours upon hours during training developing and refining their sword techniques, practising and repeating each movement time and time again. But during the actual sword fights, they had to **become at ‘one’ with their sword**, essentially the concept of Zen, and **trust their training** and totally **focus on the dynamics of the battle**. A Swordsman who thought of his technique during a duel would then give his opponent a crucial split second advantage, as his conscious mind had been distracted from the fight onto his technique. This mistake could lead to death for the swordsmen.

“If one really wishes to be master of an art, technical knowledge is not enough. One has to transcend technique so that the art grows out of the unconscious” Daisetz Suzuki

What can a golfer learn from this?

During the day of the tournament you **have to transcend your mechanics**. What does the word transcend mean? **Move beyond**. Just like the swordsmen you have to be at one with your instrument, your golf club, and your environment, the golf course, and focus and become absorbed in the task at hand. **Let the music play**. Thinking about technique the day of the tournament is purely an internal distraction. Just like a swordsmen, you will make non perfect strokes, but letting your attention focus on the past will affect its ability to be focused in the present, and will damage your ability to score the best you can on that particular day.

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Australia Programme 2009

The Australia Programme is now into its 11th week! We start at 7.30am each day (Mon to Fri) in the gym, and the students do their programmes which have been prescribed by Ramsay McMaster, Josh Meyer and Marco Renai. In addition on Tuesday's they have 1:1 physiotherapy with our golf physiotherapist Josh Meyer, doing remedial therapy to correct their physiology issues. After this they have 1:1 strength and conditioning training with Marco.



Student Ken Benz (21 years old, +2 H'cap) working with our physiotherapist Josh Meyer

On Friday afternoons they have another 1.5 hour session strength and conditioning on the beach and in the surf with Marco, using the sand and water to make the training more challenging. The students find this session extremely difficult and Marco is a highly skilled coach who addresses the students with motivational talks about how to get the best out of themselves and to expand and come out of their comfort zones.

During January internationally renowned physiotherapist Ramsay McMaster visited us to work with Josh to assess the students and give them further golf specific physiology advice.



Marcel Engelhardt (22 year old, Professional, EPD Tour) with Ramsay and Josh



Student Didrik Lindaas (16 years old, h'cap 1)

Ryan Lumsden, a top biomechanist who works with the AIS and on tour with Pete Cowen, evaluated the students in January to help us create a blueprint for the development of their swing and their body.

Swedish student Viva Schlasberg (22 years old, professional, European Tour) played her first LET event at Royal Pines this week, and will compete next week in the Australian Open. Viva had an good year in 2008 and her determination and commitment earned her a card to play on this year's European Tour. Watch out for Viva over the next few seasons, a future star in the making.



Some of the students played at the Lake MacQuarie International at the end of January, a world ranking amateur tour event. Student Laszlo Streit (17 years old, h'cap 1) had a great tournament shooting his lowest round in tournament play (70, -2) and finishing with 74-70-76-80.

Laszlo is a player who joined the Academy 18 months ago with a h'cap of 5, and during that time has worked with enthusiasm and desire and is a player to watch in the international amateur scene over the next 5 years.

Nicolas D'Incau (21 years old, h'cap +2) has been working hard on his management game and swing, and last week shot his lowest score ever, a 65 (-7) at Royal Pines. Nic is a great ball striker and will be playing in the Spanish Amateur Championship this month.



Next week we fly to the Tasmanian Open, where Ken Benz, Gian Andrin Derungs (Age 21, h'cap 0), Marcel Engelhardt and Laszlo Streit will be looking to gain some experience in another big tournament, and look to develop their games further. Gian Andrin has been working on trusting his swing, and not be so mechanical and perfectionistic and if he can take this mindset to the tournament it will let his big talent express itself. Ken, who has made the cut as an amateur at a European Tour event last year, has the game to contend if it is his week. Marcel is going to have a big 2009 because he's worked hard over the last 4 months building a solid technical foundation to his swing, and Laszlo will be taking to the 1st tee more self belief and confidence from the good results he has been having in Australia. Good luck guys!

