

TECHNIQUE
MANAGEMENT
MENTAL
PHYSIOLOGY
EXCELLENCE
FUN



Swing identity

Most elite players are constantly looking to develop and perfect their swings, inspired by the belief if they can hit the ball purer and more consistently it will lead to lower scores and thus better results. As a coach I also believe this to be true, although I would also add that although improving your technique is a critical part of the road to success, it is only part of the puzzle and every player should **respect all parts of the puzzle and not get obsessed by one particular part**, albeit the technical side, the mental aspect or the physiological part.

Which swing model should a player follow?

I firmly believe there is only one swing model a player should follow. Is that Leadbetter's, Haney's or 'Stack and Tilt' ??...which one is correct?? Let's look at the dictionary definition for technique—*"A technique is a procedure used to accomplish a specific activity or task, in the most efficient manner"*

When I do 'Coach Coaching', for younger coaches, I talk about the concept of **absolutes and preferences**. An absolute is something that all good swings possess, whilst a preference is something that I prefer to see, but it's not essential. I also work with Jim McLeans concept of 'corridors', whereby there are acceptable limits or tolerances—as opposed to demanding 'spot on' positions. For me, there is no such thing as 'positional perfection'.

An example of an absolute, and something a player should strive for, is that they learn to swing the club in such a way that **through the impact zone the club is on a consistent plane, with good sequencing**. And when I talk of sequencing I'm referring to kinematic sequencing, which I define as the transfer of energy from one body part to the next. So I like to see the hips reach the peak rotational speed midway through the downswing, then slowing down and transferring the energy to the upper torso (shoulders), then arms, and finally the delivery of the clubhead with the right arm and right hand to transfer the energy through to the ball. That's what I'm looking to do with every student of mine. Every player provides the coach with a unique conundrum on how to get this, and this is where as a coach it's important to be flexible. You cannot demand the same takeaway position, top of the backswing position etc for every student.



ECCA student Jessica Ji at the 2009 French Open, demonstrating consistent plane through the impact zone and good sequencing

The biggest technical influence on my coaching has been through Denis Pugh, who coached me for 5 years in the 1990s. Denis has taught over a hundred tour players and played a part in Nick Faldo's development, and still currently coaches the Molinari brothers, and is regarded as the leading technical coach on the European Tour over the last twenty years. Denis coached Montgomerie for over a decade, and at the time people could not understand how Colin's swing differed vastly from other players Denis taught. But if you looked at Montgomerie's impact zone it is actually quite orthodox, and ticks all of Denis' boxes.

Denis always emphasised to me the importance of **very clearly understanding what is happening through the impact zone**, and then look at reasons why, and work back from there, when diagnosing a swing. Often, when a player struggles to do this it may be because of the backswing or address position, then as a coach you need to address these issues.

Every player and coach must come to realise that **each player has their own unique swing DNA**, signature moves that are theirs. It's not a question of everyone following the same swing positional blueprint, but it is about creating an efficient technique that incorporates the key absolutes.

Interested to learn more about developing your golf so that you can become the player you aspire to be? Our player success has come through **creating tools and structures to help players APPLY success strategies**.

Send an email to info@elitecoaching.com and we will email you our free 15 page GMAP questionnaire, and then we will give you a free of charge game assessment.

In the title, we've used the term 'zen like focus'. What do we mean by this? What is Zen? Zen is simply the process of enlightenment through being connected and at one with what you are doing in the here and now.

Zen can never be forced or 'made to happen' – it's elusive if you over try or push too hard. Instead it refers to a feeling of 'oneness' – you are totally engaged in what you are doing and nothing else matters. You are there totally in that moment.

I had the opportunity to live for four months in Japan in the winter 2002/3. I explored there a little the discipline of martial arts at the dojos of Kamukura, with the view of learning if any of the concepts could be related to elite golf performance. Interestingly, martial arts coaches, or 'Sensei's' as they are known in Japan, **ALWAYS relate the coaching of technique in harmony with the mind.** They believe the two are inextricably linked, intertwined to the extent that each feed off

each other. I have totally absorbed this concept in my own coaching, and too believe that golfing excellence cannot be achieved without these two disciplines fusing together to create what is commonly referred to as 'peak performance'. Daisetz Suzuki, founder of the Japanese martial art of Aikido cites, "*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*".

Many years ago, I attended a coaching conference and one of the speakers asked the audience the most critical skill necessary for golf excellence. The most popular choice was concentration (fortunately for him as this was the topic of his talk!), and then he asked how many of the coaches actively coached this skill into their students? The answer was virtually zero (including me). This struck a chord with me as I could identify through my own experiences

as a player how my best performances were not necessarily when I was technically at my best, but rather when I could focus well, and distractions just passed by, rather than stop and interfering with my game. My understanding of the topic was then further enhanced through my sport psychology studies, and hopefully through this workbook I can create first of all some conceptual understating of the topic of concentration, and then through your action (by actively participating in the exercises), look to improve and develop your ability to concentrate, which in turn will manifest itself into better tournament performances. The workbook will teach you strategies to enable you to get in the 'zone', and then once you're in it to stay in it for longer - nothing more, nothing less.

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