

Technical Rehabilitation and how you perform it

Many golfers have taken the big step of fundamentally changing a part of the technique, in the pursuance of playing at a higher level. In a previous article we discussed the idea of Band-Aid or Reconstruction, and the factors that decide which strategy a teacher should take. Let's quickly review what we discussed.

The first consideration is the Player's state of mind, and consequently their belief levels. It's no point attempting a technical rehabilitation on someone who has 100% belief in his current technique. The player must have a relatively severe lack of belief in an area of his technique, which he feels is an obstacle to future or success at

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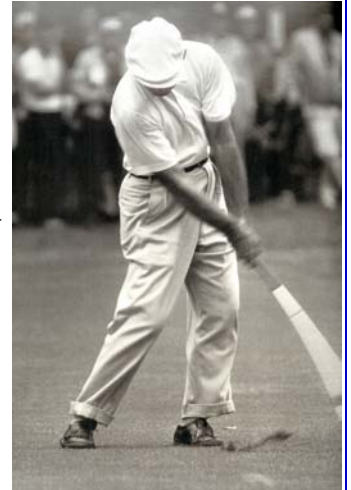
a higher level.

The second question to ask yourself is where exactly is the player on what we call the “Player Performance History” chart. Often the player who is most receptive and benefits most from technical rehabilitation is a player whose game has plateaued, and despite continual efforts over a period of time has failed to improve further, and may of even regressed.

Probably the two most notable successes of a complete swing overhaul were Nick Faldo,



which we highlighted in the last article, and Ben Hogan. 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.



How do you perform technical rehabilitation ?

Moshe Feldenkrais, an Israeli scientist who was consultant to the Israeli Olympic teams in the early 1970's, developed a system for reorganizing a movement. A brief overview of his method was :

1. Awareness of the current movement
2. Understanding of the New movement
3. Breaking down the new movement into small pieces and practicing these pieces
4. Linking the new movement to **breathing**
5. Trusting the subconscious to make the new movement, and to merely focus on the breathing

In the PGA Teacher Training Manual they refer to a similar process of learning :

1. Unconscious incompetence

2. Conscious incompetence
3. Conscious competence
4. Unconscious competence

To break down the Feldenkrais theory into a golf teaching situation, the sequence I follow is

1. Awareness of the current movement
2. Understanding the 'concept' of the new movement (I call this conceptual understanding) I would like to emphasize that "conceptual understanding" is a very basic understanding, **not in detail. You can liken it to how a doctor explains an impending operation to a patient – in easy to understand simple language.** But if a doctor were to speak to a colleague about the exact same operation, he would use a much more "technical" language.
3. Experimenting with the new movement, with no ball, using drills, mirror work, eyes closed, exaggeration, differentiation and grading etc.
4. Gradually moving to a "creative image" - for example a client who may have had a steep takeaway, using an image such as an aeroplane taking off etc. I also strongly believe in encouraging the student explore and develop his own imagery.
5. Linking the movement to breathing (or alternatively a concentration point such as '1' on the backswing and '2' on the downswing works very well). Basically, what you are trying to do is to develop trust in the new movement, i.e that the student is not thinking consciously about the movement.
6. Then use a contact point, such as a tee
7. Introduce the ball, but frequently going back to drills etc, and then again with a few balls etc.
8. Introducing a competitive environment, to practice and refine the movement under more stressful conditions

To summarise, breathing is a 'tool' which you can use for the re-organisation of a habit , whether that habit is a physical movement or a mental habit. Of course, the final stage is that the student can repeat the movement under extreme pressure, without conscious thought. Nick Faldo, having re-organised his swing movement in 1985 and 1986, came to the 18th hole of the 1987 British Open facing a 5 iron from 167 yards into a narrow, well guarded green. He trusted his new movement, hit the ball on the green, and made his 18th par of the round to win his first major championship.



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