

We have taken the liberty to add friends with whom we wanted to share our newsletter. As with all transmissions these days, this one doesn't have to be in your inbox. If you prefer not to have it sent every two months, just let us know. Also, we have elected to provide a URL from which our readers may download the current issue so as to deter anything resembling "spam." Thanks, CGM

One Under Par

Volume 10, number 4

A Newsletter from **KEYGOLF**.....August, 2009

"What's Past is Prologue"

William Shakespeare

Perhaps you have heard - or even said - something like the following, which showed up in a recent post on one of the well-worn (from use) golf forums.

[edited for anonymity]

I'm in a big rut with my game. Not a great player, usually shoot in the low 80s with the occasional round in the high 70s. Not close any more. Hit the ball OK, but now can't seem to get it under 90. Can't believe it's been this way all year. Just played and it went well until one hole. Then it hit the skids. Does anybody have tips on what to do to keep the game fun and forget about the score, or something to help me so I don't give up the game? [end of edit]

The responses were also typical. Here are the first five that showed up, which we've limited to the first sentence in each.

**Go see a good teaching pro.*

**Stop over thinking and rely on your muscle memory.*

**It's probably just course management and short game.*

**Maybe you need a playing lesson.*

**Hang in there.*

Preferring not to belittle what others say, those answers made it virtually impossible for us to attempt to help the original poster, since getting to the core issues would likely have sounded belittling to what others offered, even though it would not have been intended. So we refrained. Clearly the responders wanted to help, but their responses produced enough sympathetic identification with the person who asked the question that it unintentionally and quietly revealed the unfinished business belonging to the good Samaritans. What they offer, though well-meaning, is no less tentative than he indicates he is. If you read his question carefully, it comes through rather clearly that he's not quite sure even what to ask or how to ask it. Being uncertain about any situation and what is happening is a precursor of doubt, which inevitably runs neck and neck with "nervousness" (anxiety) in the face of a task or job to be done.

Our preference would have been to help him see that there is more behind his question than meets the eye. Is the problem coming from a physical, swing-related issue or from the mental side of his game? Is the problem in his hands or in his head? Until that is identified, any solutions offered would be apt to add to feelings of inadequacy or unfinished business rather than relieving them.

The possibilities are numerous. Indeed, what about the skills needed? And have they been promoted to the habit level? To point all that out, in view of the existing responses, would seem like using a foreign language. It would fall on deaf or puzzled ears.

So much for how the traditional landscape of comprehension of the golf game really lies. Unfortunately, golfers' perceptions have been short-sided by allegiance to the status quo, reinforced by the fraternal order of those who unconsciously need to

protect their vested viewpoints from the past. Sad to say, all that put together has produced a mule from what ought to have been a thoroughbred racehorse. In other words, golfers have inherited a knowledge base that is sorely lacking. To say only that it is second class may be more of a compliment than a condemnation.

Enlightenment may call for a brief evaluation of the question raised by our "forum poster" that needs something resembling a satisfactory answer, so we'll let that be a springboard to interpret the comments given.

Seeing a teaching professional would generally be a good thing, though we don't know if that had already been attempted or not. It wasn't presented as a question but as a potential solution, blessed by the unspoken assumption that it was a step that had not been taken.

What meaning does "muscle memory" have for resolution, since that is a physical dimension that does not exist, and ventures very little that helps the poster? If the point is to recommend habit development, why not just say that? And what has been done to identify and build both the objective and the how-to that must accompany the development of habits? What should a person bereft of those resources do when facing the urgency to "play better?"

In what way does "over thinking" get in one's way? How does thinking really work. Who knew that the frontal brain carries the rational, conscious "mail" and the backside of the brain stores the actions that are non-conscious? Who realized that exercising obsessive activity in the frontal brain could and would block the development of the back? Or as some say, "We think too much; we're about half-smart."

What about "course management?" Do that really mean self-management of our games? Course management is what course superintendents do.

Does suggesting attention to the "short game" in the response above point to anything more than the person's inability to know what to say, so it just sounds good? It certainly gets enough idle mention in literature to be popular as a "cause" of poor scoring, or conversely, someone's reason to explain a good score. It is certainly a long road to make the trip from "pointing" to "doing."

Perhaps we should ask just what a playing lesson might provide to relieve the problem. Seems as though that might be a help if it came after some other matters are attended to and remedied, but in view of the question here, it is more of an indicator of "something to say" when one is not sure what needs to be said, but wants to feel like he's made a contribution. It is just possible that the responder is searching for a solution to his own problem rather than that of the questioner.

"Hanging in there" is probably useful, too, but the cliché begs for the rest of the story. Hanging is a characteristic of the Sloth, some species of which are endangered. They share a common pattern of hanging upside down a lot...in a rainforest.

With the kind of superficiality indicated by the forum comments, any words from us aimed at really solving the problem for the poster, would likely have appeared like Sir Walter Raleigh's cape over a mud hole for a lady's convenience - gentlemanly, but somewhat pretentious. The underlying indication from this snapshot in time is that players cry out for Band-Aids and tips. They are rarely in a mood to go home and cook when it's easier to visit the drive thru at a fast foods spot.

What appears mundane can often be eloquent. If what is past is truly prologue, golfers may be in for another long winter. As long as the kind of question illustrated here persists, and that surely will continue unless ultimately addressed conscientiously and thoroughly, rather than flippantly and self-aggrandizingly, it is unlikely that we will come even close to really solving the problems that arise daily in the game. And that's the point for this day. It's time, at least for those paying attention, this writer included, to get serious about bringing the game out of the past and into the present. The future will then take care of itself.

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