

We have taken the liberty to add friends with whom we wanted to share our newsletter. As with all transmissions these days, our emailed notice doesn't have to be in your inbox. If you prefer not to be notified every two months, just let us know.

In the interest of dealing with the "spam" issue, we are continuing the policy of sending a URL rather than the entire document.

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A Newsletter from *ClearKeyGolf®*..... December, 2010

As you can see, this is a combined issue, necessitated by unforeseen hardware complications in our office, too complex to detail here, but needing our apology for the forced sabbatical. We expect to be back on regular schedule hereafter.

We wish for you a Merry Christmas and Successful and Happy new Year.

IN REVIEW

"The golf swing is like a suitcase into which we are trying to pack one too many things." *Tiger Woods*

What should we do when reality is ignored while half-truths, distortions and fantasies make their way to the top of the information chain and, by default, become unimpeachable laws and secrets, as if under divine sanction? And how will we know when we have been "had" by the promise and glitter that comes leaking out of the sanctuary in which those notions are deified?

Our Answer: We won't know unless there is an intervention!

Having purposely refrained from directly challenging the "golf establishment" for many years, but now being energized, without regret, by the reality of my own creeping finite existence, there is no longer any reason to "be nice" about the missing information and miscalculations coming from a majority of the "priestly corps" of golfdom's self-appointed authorities. If you pause to view the scenery, you will notice that there is no one really "in charge" of the golf industry. There is, however, a gaggle of preceptors, all subtly framing their presence with a dominant agenda aimed at "being number one," in a climate of unfinished business, and no one challenges any of them. They just challenge each other. All that is bench-marked by the presence of debatable, untested ideation and insistence on strategies that are, at best, warped by opinion, and at worst, completely distorted due to missing or misrepresented notions, essentially allowed, unquestioned, and even insisted upon, as gospel. Together, the resulting perceptions have taken the world of golf hostage by masquerading as the final, authoritative word of truth. It's not possible to proclaim a "winner," but the losers are found on every golf course in existence, struggling with balance, tension, swing plane, aiming point, what to do with the arms, hands, legs and feet, how to stop reverse pivot and coming over the top, to name a few of thousands of pieces of mechanical missteps regularly tossed about in tips and clichés, like so much side salad at dinner. The struggle continues as everyone looks in all the wrong places for solutions.

So the choices here boil down to delivering a challenge to the general, institutionalized authority of the golf nation ("kingdom" might be more accurate) or hereafter, forever remaining silent. Our choice is the former. There is no one person or group to address. We tried that with the Class A PGA members in the late 1980s and following, with what looked like reception but was limited at best, and in the 1990s with top golf psychologists as a group, which got either no response or a blank look, so at this juncture we will take aim at all.

It is of little value to list the number of recent incidences and pronouncements that have stoked the fires of present disenchantment, but suffice it to say, they are legion, presumptuous and

flowing like a river that regularly goes out of its banks, unchanged in history, though reweven rhetorically in an attempt to reinvent themselves. Occasionally there is a daring idea extended like "Vision 54," which carries a theme that scoring 54 for 18 holes is indeed a possibility. However, close inspection reveals that while there are objectives and goals given, the process descriptions are thin to missing. But there's no lack of physical and mechanical issues to hold one's attention and we agree with them, if they can finish the resource package to get there. If they cannot, we can. What isn't in evidence, as Vision 54 now stands, are the mental themes required to execute, integrate and manage the game to enable a 54.

No more had we started writing this than we were gifted with a link to the words of Sport Psychologist Lisa Brown on YouTube, that said, "Sport psychology is *all* about *Mental Toughness*," which many talk about but either don't know what it is or how it actually works, and all virtually appear disinclined to find out, which the YouTube presentation perpetuates. As far as we can tell, that message is included by all the mental toughness groups. Ask any athlete how he or she performed "so well," and the first words out of their mouths will be something to do with "toughness." Happened again in an interview with a Navy player after the Army-Navy game

Also in 2010 came Sian Beilock, PhD, on the faculty of The U. of Chicago, with a book called "Choke." It promises to overcome the choking problem (mostly in putting), but a close look shows that while the problem issues were researched and perhaps showed improved understanding of the problems, the remedies were incomplete, and, in fact, as far as we could gauge, nonexistent. The book represents one more adventure into the same avenues of being prepared in advance to meet the demon, but nothing conclusive about what to do when the demon attacks - at the moment of truth. In his evaluation of Beilock's work, Dan Peterson wrote, *"The bottom line throughout all of these studies is that if you're learning to play golf, which includes putting, you should focus on your swing/stroke but beware of the distractions which will take away your concentration. That seems pretty logical, but for those that normally putt very well, if you feel stress to sink that birdie putt, don't try to focus in on the mechanics of your stroke. Trust the years of experience that has taught your brain the combination of sensorimotor skills of putting."* That is close, but no cigar, since there is still no mention of "What is the composition of thoughts that intervene during actual shot-execution that lead to habit development and then to the retrieval and release of that habit when it is needed?"

We knew the critical nature of that, and finished the task with the introduction of clear keys in the early 1980s, said so and wrote about it to the guffaws of those who heard or read it. Oh well, getting close in 30 years from everyone else is a lot better than what happened with the discoveries of Hippocrates about styles in 400 BC. That took 2400 years to displace tradition.

The challenge can begin almost anywhere, since there is nothing in evidence in the game that has shown immunity to shortfall. In other words, there are no processes or programs already formed that do anything more than conform to existing traditions claiming to affect (correct) the typical golfer's desired path to excellence. Even the different approaches to the golf swing seem eternally locked in dissonance. The blank page is still present when it comes to execution time. Most programs speak as though they know that balance and synchronicity between the mind and body in the game are vital, but none get to the point of knowing how that is actually carried out. And with only a few exceptions that has left the game for individuals on something akin to life support, with no attempt (except here with the process using clear keys) to address the most important time frame in the game - namely the 14 second window for shot making during which one has a club in hand moving it toward impact with the ball. That's where intervention is most desperately needed (required for finishing the task).

The "mental-toughness-dead-horse" keeps rearing its head as though it were the holy grail. It is like listening to an argument that the geographical shape of the earth is flat. (Not the Friedman book "The Earth is Flat," though). Those who believed that hypothesis in the past were no doubt convinced they were right. Same with the mental toughness crowd. Just don't ask them to tell you what MT is. What it does to our perception is reinforce the view that anything resembling golf

wisdom continues lost in a historic maze and is closing in on its own black hole. Why? First of all, because the name "psychology" is being misused and misunderstood. *It is a body of knowledge, not a strategic process*, and that certainly is not about mental toughness, which is a result, not a process. Properly applied psychological understanding can provide a picture of the true dynamics of whatever folks mean by mental toughness, but it has no tools for taking us there. Some even would have us believe that psychology is an action program, which it is not, but they keep saying things like "use psychology on it." So what should be a grass roots information system becomes lost through misapplication. Psychology is not a game plan, political statement or point of view. It is a knowledge base for understanding and evaluating the way the mind works and affects what we do in life (and golf). Mental toughness is a total misnomer, promoted by many, for what reasons we do not know, as the key to excellence in the game, since it does not actually exist as a process. If, by chance, someone stumbles onto a result or condition of toughness that is process-related, that needs adequate description. It may be proclaimed as a prerequisite for "peak performance" or excellence in the game. But no one seems intent upon describing what peak performance is, how it works, or why it is necessary in the game, so it becomes one more deified, worshiped-from-afar notion used as a chapter title with no content. It is, finally, unseen, unidentified and unknown - except in fantasized form.

With that dissonance ringing in our ears, and while seeking relief from that sour note, we chanced upon a second "authority," uttering yet another "word of truth," giving his view of what one needs for mental toughness. His view - *"One must have his inner world full" so as "not to be pressured by pressure."* That is illustrated in a video by how easy it is to crush an empty pop can, and how a full one is "tougher" by comparison. Now that's a barn burner that will consume not only the barn, but the house and the rest of the neighborhood, if not the entire village. This person teaches "sport psychology" at Austin Peay State University, so we are quite happy we have no appointments to meet there.

Our dismay is further supercharged by the persistent failure of anyone in the field known as "Sport Psychology" to give any help to players and participants directed to the "moment of truth." For instance, what is in "sanctioned" circulation among players and gurus for that vital portion of the game is a noisy proclamation that the "moment of truth" only requires a golfer's good preparation, getting ready to play and being in possession of mental toughness.

So there is little, if any, attention given to anything other than getting ready. What is unattended is the space between getting ready and when the ball is airborne - the very brief time during which a player has a club in hand, moving it toward impact with the little ball, and the manner in which the mind works and affects directly and instantaneously what happens mentally and physiologically that influences and creates the result, good or bad, during that fractional moment. (That, by the way, is the only time in a golf game one will encounter actual - not imagined - concerns whatsoever with respect to consequences, mistakes, errors, glitches, missteps or stumbles). What has been thoroughly omitted in golf's books of wisdom is that every pixel of that time frame begins in the mind, while most have programmed themselves to believe that everything starts and ends in the physical, bodily action - as if nothing more is needed than good biomechanics. No wonder golf, among other activities, has remained in its long-termed, unfinished condition, without any noticeable evidence of improvement either in scoring, game management or finished product.

There have been those who pointed seriously and hopefully to "the mental" part of the game, but it is now clear that even those with purposeful intent missed one more critical issue. They have "bought" and paid for a skeleton with no meat on the bones, since the going belief is that all one needs to do is "control" his/her conscious mind and bodily motion, and all will be well. The impossibility of that idea simply never received its due.

It was "wrong" because it was unfinished. The only "right" there was, and is, that each of us does have a skeleton and a conscious mental resource, but that is only the very smallest part of what is in reserve. The non-conscious portion of the mind specializes in action, the largest, fastest and

most consistent part of our mental reserve, but typically the least known, understood and used. It's the part that puts the meat on the skeleton. The conscious mind is only an inn-keeper. The bed and board are in the non-conscious mind. The conscious mind is your input device. The non-conscious is where your programs are stored. The conscious mind is a manager. The non-conscious is the workforce. The playing task is to use the conscious functions to enable the non-conscious both to build and produce when needed. Trying to control all that tends to be stifling and unproductive. Control makes one nervous. Managing tends to be freeing and releasing. It sidetracks nervousness. The conscious mind provides direction. The non-conscious follows the lead, unless no direction is given, thus leaving it to its defaults. Demands do little more than add resistance to what one is doing, so learning to manage is of the essence, especially for golf's time frames. Anyone can give commands, but free motion needs an open door, not a forced entry.

Given such a backdrop, we are invited to face what is likely the most critical issue for taking the game to its best individual level. That involves recognizing and accepting the reality of something we cannot see and an element most fear - the non conscious. We need to go beyond the frightening aspects of dealing with what feels unknown. Success will not come as long as we perpetuate a belief that says, "If you can't see it, it's not really there."

And now for the rest of the story. When Peterson, in writing about Beilock's "Choke," said *"Trust the years of experience that has taught your brain the combination of sensorimotor skills of putting,"* he did not finish the matter, since he apparently didn't know what is required to release all that good stuff when the pressure is on - and that's the job description of "clear key." He also leaves an impression that has something to do with one's conscious mental activity that needs to be kept still. But he doesn't evidence knowing how that is done and will not until he sees the crosscurrents between the conscious and non conscious mental functions.

If you learn to use a clear key, all that will be subsumed. It's better if it is understood, but you really don't have to understand it for it to work. Curiously, Peterson quotes another interesting source: He wrote, *"Just remember the Chevy Chase/Ty Webb philosophy; 'I'm going to give you a little advice. There's a force in the universe that makes things happen. And all you have to do is get in touch with it, stop thinking, let things happen, and be the ball.... Nah-na-na-na, Ma-na-na-na....'"*

Is it not frighteningly amazing that one can come that close to realities of what's needed for clear, undisturbed performance, while continuing to insist on the fantasy for want of just a little more knowledge? The observers thought Chevy's words were "cute," especially since it came from him, and we don't know what Chevy really thought. For what it's worth, check out our newsletter issue from December 2000 - ten years ago- showing that a lot of folks had come close, and then repeat after me: "A 6 inch miss gives no better result than the space between earth and Mars." Your clear key will close that distance either way. <http://www.clearkeygolf.com/Under/Dec2000.htm>

The intervention will continue!