

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. Thanks, CGM

One Under Par

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

Gadget Dependency vs. Self-confidenceWhat's Your Preference.....

We receive enough substantial questions and personal concerns referring to the essence of confidence in the game that it deserves a closer look. For multiple reasons, it appears that it is not clear to most where confidence comes from, not to mention how one goes about maintaining it. Perhaps it might be worthwhile to provide some light for a better grasp on the matter.

It is likely that there are so many training aids, gadgets and gurus in the world that none of us can come up with an exhaustive list of all that is available for golf. And even if we could, the raw number surely would create even more confusion than now exists among those taking notice.

There are aids, gadgets, books and articles for everything - full swing, release, stance, alignment, tempo, how your heart beats (seriously), "stress relievers," distance calculators, putting, fitness, balance, swing plane, simulators for many things, and the rest can come under the heading - "You Finish the List." And then, we have to add to those items - "others" - those who offer help - the teachers and psychologists in the game.

A short trip through dozens of pages that come up when the search words, "training aids," are typed into a browser will verify part of the number. The returned results will certainly convince any reader that there are plenty of devices and ideas out there. Then type in "golf psychology" or "mental game help" and you will get another bunch. Follow that by checking the golf forums and you will see question after question wondering, "Which ones are best?" "Can anyone recommend a training aid for whatever-is-on-your-plate-today?" "Which book should I read?" "Who is the best golf psychologist I can go to?" and more.

The problem as we see it is not the number of gadgets or helpers out there, and those are plentiful. It is not a matter of whether they help or not, albeit, some are questionable in the help department. The value rests in knowing how and when to use them, resting on the players need, what they can provide, and knowing when to put them away, based on when the task and information base is satisfactorily completed.

Using training aids effectively is directly linked to a player's ability and willingness to enlist an aid only long enough to evaluate, or learn to perform, whatever skill the player needs. That's the point at which players need to know how learning takes place so that they learn for themselves how to perform the task for which they were using the aid in the first place. What happens all too often is that players only learn to depend on the aid or the helper and not on reaching a conclusion based on what the aid or person helps them to be able to do. Or to say it another way, what the player depends on is assigned to the aid or the helper rather than to the player's own ability to learn and generate self-confidence. So under those circumstances, and without the aid or without the helper nearby, whatever problem is on the table may be acknowledged, but typically doesn't go away. That leads simply to repeating the process, attaching oneself to the aid or helping person,

and entrenching the repetition. The typical result - delayed or failed solution to whatever problem has the player's attention. That recipe includes an undertone that anticipates lack of success along with an erosion of self-confidence and adding a considerable load of anxiety to boot. Depending on the individual's history with confidence, negative expectations can easily outweigh and out-distance the mature personal development of confidence.

We don't want to "pick on" anyone in particular, but we have always wondered, considering how many times we have seen it on TV, when Vijay Singh will no longer need to practice with the glove under his armpit in order to "stay connected." Surely, by this time, he should know how to do that and his habit should be built, unless he doesn't know how to build a habit from a skill or how to engage a habit that is intact. That certainly speaks to a possibility that he has some "gadget dependency" instead of self-confidence in that respect. That, by the way is not an accusation, but an observation. We often see players practicing the same things for much longer than one would expect a learning need to exist, leading to conclusion that the player lacks the confidence that adequate learning will take place or be completed. So that sort of behavior is not exclusive with Vijay. It also belongs to an uncommonly large portion of the golfing community. In our experience, it is rare indeed to find a player who will attest to having consistent confidence in his or her game. In fact, it is noticeable that doubt is more prevalent than confidence and looms large for a major portion of players.

We know of only one way to help players elude having their own self-confidence buried under some object or person other than themselves, thus surrendering what is required for becoming an individually confident, self-reliant player. The path to success begins with learning how to properly and effectively use training aids, or enlist professional help, to assist in developing habits, but no longer than required for the aid or helper's work to get the job done. Then any "assistant" can be retired and replaced by well-learned, self-made, personal habits. Once the player finds that the game can be played in consistently excellent fashion through one's habits, there is no alternative to becoming confident. It will happen. That, in itself, promotes self-confidence and is always accompanied by more proficiency in playing. In case you have missed that connection, have a look or enjoy a refresher, courtesy of the URL - <http://clearkeygolf.com/Aids.htm>

In any solo exercise, game or profession, a person needs to develop, nurture and embrace self-confidence, with the emphasis placed on "self." We hear much about "confidence," but not much has been said about the "locus" of that confidence. In other words, where does the core of confidence lie? If you allow a careful, honest, studied observation, you will find many illustrations of how confidence becomes locked onto an aid, another person, a slogan, a book (or its author), or something exceptional that occurred in a round. The number of players who incorporate willingness and ability to internalize what is being learned is much smaller. We have noticed players saying things like, "Wow, I shifted my hand position a little and started to hit the ball really great!" or, "That new putter really helped my putting," so that a sort of pseudo-confidence abounds briefly, but only based on maintaining a location in a device or another person. The next day, or soon thereafter, however, that success is nowhere to be found, and yesterday's chin level confidence is now down around the ankles. In the wake of such trips, confidence is damaged, threatened or lost altogether. Persistent ups and downs with the confidence issue multiplies a negative belief and expectation that "we really can't get that accomplished." The forum question then becomes, "Why do I keep losing my confidence in the middle of a round?"

Confidence must seem very fickle to many players. Here today, gone tomorrow. So ask yourself if you really understand where confidence comes from.... Confidence comes from two main ingredients: 1) the *knowledge of what one needs to know for the action at hand*, and 2) the *skill turned into a habit to perform it*. Where those two ingredients coexist for anyone, confidence is a given. If you know how something works and you have the skill to do it, you will be confident. If either of those is lacking, confidence has no chance.

When anyone experiences doubt, that means that person senses (or knows) that knowledge or skill is incomplete or faulty in some way. That leads one to return to the aid or the helping person,

or to go looking for one or another substitutes, or merely to hope that telling oneself to "be confident" will make it happen. That defaults regularly to building a pattern of dependence on a helper or helping device, triggering a "lost" feeling when the device or the helper is out of sight.

Now we have another problem. How can we use aids to teach what we need to learn in such a way that we do not learn more about dependence on the aid than we do about developing the skill from which we can build a habit? That's where we need to insert a reminder concerning the 32 ball drill, which is designed to meet that issue squarely. (If you are not acquainted with that process, check it out at <http://clearkeygolf.com/32Ball.htm>)

Emphasized in that drill, however, is the fundamental necessity to use an aid when you are working manually on a skill, but take the aid away when you shift to automatic. That recognizes that we do not have the help of aids on the course, during the game, though there have been some rule shifts in the game when it comes to limited use of certain devices. We suppose what that means is that even the golf industry may unwittingly be on track to favor more gadget dependence over ways to increase individual confidence.

In case even that is not completely clear, here's the skinny. To build a skill, and move that toward the habit level, one must work both manually, with an aid if one needs it, thinking about the action performed for 4 shots, aimed at building a desired skill. Then remove the aid and hit four shots, having entered a command for the skill being practiced in pre-shot, followed by using a clear key for execution, which moves the learning toward habit. In that way, the responsibility for building the skill to facilitate storing it as a habit retains internalization and responsibility within the player's mental grasp. That results in greater effectiveness in learning, since that process permits the player to put the aid away when the task is complete. When that player finds success, the confidence that comes with it belongs to the player (self and game) and not as a connection to the training aid or the helper. It's that simple. That's the beginning of solid self-confidence. It's fine to appreciate the aid or the helper for their contributions, but the credit goes to the learner, who holds the club and "owns the house" containing the strength, motivation and energy for the game. If that is not in the plan, players might be better off doing something else, unless pleasure is being gleaned from pain, which does happen occasionally.

Care needs to be taken, too, when it comes to reliance on other people, counselors, gurus, mental game experts, or any others you may consult. There is a dynamic that most do not pay enough, if any, attention to in any relationship. It's found in one of the typical functions of "transference." One can easily become very dependent on a helping person and attribute success or failure to that person, needing to "stay close" to persist in borrowing confidence. That folds into less confidence, while assigning that to some aid or someone else. (What makes that so powerful is that it allows a player to avoid personal responsibility. "Not my fault, you didn't teach me properly"). Conversely, there is another crimp in the relationship game called "counter-transference." That's a dynamic in which the helper unwittingly encourages the relationship dependence and forgets, either accidentally or on purpose, to cut the umbilical cord in time to prevent permanent dependency and transfer of confidence. So there is double jeopardy lurking to thwart the process for building confidence. If that seems unlikely, just notice how many players will indicate their frequency of consulting with some one for advice or encouragement.

Golfers, one and all, need to pre-determine whether they will follow the line of gadget-dependence (including leaning on others excessively - beyond the completion time of the task) or seriously decide to take up a personal commitment to self-confidence and follow the path that leads to it. It is doable, but only if you grab the reins on the horse you are riding.

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