

Playing Golf vs. Golf Swing

Many individuals becoming so immersed in technique I would describe them as playing golf swing instead of playing golf. Let me stress one point right off the bat, great golf scores are shot by playing golf, not by playing golf swing. Remember this, don't ever forget it. Golf is scored by getting the golf ball in the hole in the fewest strokes possible; it is not scored by how beautiful your technique appears. It is not Olympic aerobics. It is golf.

Swing thoughts are thoughts in golfers' minds while making golf swings. These thoughts vary among golfers; vary in the type of thought, the complexity of thought, and the number of thoughts. I never know what is going to come from golfers' mouths when I ask them, "What are you currently thinking about when hitting shots?" I have heard golfers say anything from "absolutely nothing" to rattling off 4 or 5 of technical thoughts at once. Before I say anything else, let me reiterate this point, great golf scores are shot by golfers playing golf, not playing golf swing. The best golfers use simple and basic feels, but I assure you, complex thoughts are rare among the world's best. It is even better on the course to have zero thoughts about the swing, playing using simple visualizations and feels, and embracing your tendencies on that particular day. This being said, there will be times when a swing thought is necessary, this is also a part of golf.

Swing thoughts can be helpful during times of struggle and when trying to improve one's level of ability. These are times when having a swing thought can be helpful, but the thought needs to be both correct and simple. By correct, I mean should be aimed towards improving golf shots and not the appearance of technique. An good example would be using a feel which helps to minimize a slice. An bad example (relating to appearance) would be thinking about position and placement of a body part during a part of the downswing. Like the famous teacher Claude Harmon use to say, "If you are tied with a player with three holes to go, and the player is thinking about the position of their right elbow during their downswing, bet that player for everything they have." Jack Nicklaus has mentioned great golf is played by using "feels" with sound mechanics, not through having technical perfection. I often tell students feels used to improve golf shots will likely improve appearance of technique as well. Often, golf can be more difficult when golfers try to improve golf shots by improving appearance of technique first.

Swing thoughts should be simple, not complex, only one thought in a golfers mind at once. The mind is a powerful thing; it sends signals and controls the movements to your limbs and body. The mind is effective when given a limited number of movements to focus upon. However, the mind can reach a point of overload to which it becomes detrimental to a player's motions. This happens when the mind is given too many movements to focus upon at the same time. Working on too much at the same time will hurt you. How much is too much? Well, this depends on the individual, but one swing thought is plenty for most of the world's best, and especially no more than one.

I want you to play golf without thinking about technical thoughts. I want you to play golf; I don't want you to play golf swing. You now know what this means. When you are struggling or trying to improve, and you're playing on the course, here is how you can approach the round. Use one swing thought from your practice sessions and apply the thought in the simplest manner

possible. Think about it mostly during practice swings. If you use it during shots on the course, keep it extremely simple, the thought relating to feel not mechanics. Great golf is not played using swing mechanics. Although great golfers often have beautiful swings, they do not play golf swing, they play golf.