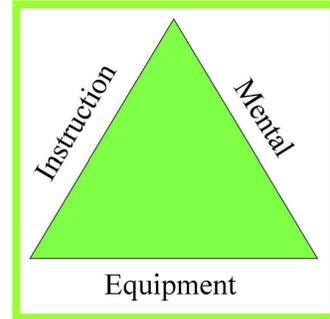


Develop Your Golf Game like a Pro!

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

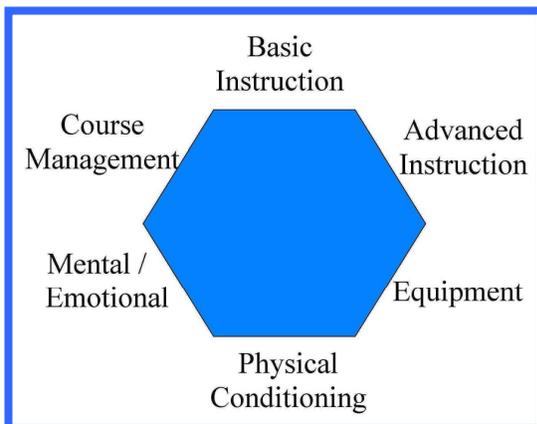
Everyone steps onto the golf course wishing they could put it all together and play a flawless round from beginning to end. Whether you are touring pro or a weekend amateur we all strive to play our best every time we get on the course. I can assure you Tiger Woods, Ernie Els, and Vijah Singh rely on a little more than luck before they play a Major. They instead develop their golf game and if you follow their lead you may just find yourself losing a few less golf balls and marking down a few more birdies!

Back in the early years of golf, professional golf teaching instructors believed that there were three components to address for building the ultimate golfer. Each of course was equally important. Just like three sides to a triangle, if a golfer wanted to excel in the sport they were asked to work on each area. The three components were: **Instruction, Mental, and Equipment.**



As years continue to come and go, the game of golf has continued to develop – the golf courses, the equipment and the players. A great example is that of Tiger Woods. Today’s professional golf teaching instructors often put their client’s swing against Tiger’s to illustrate where they need improvement. Also what is special about Tiger, other than his swing, is his approach to the development of his game. Tiger and many great players of today extend their development of their golf game beyond the original triangle approach. The three components of the triangle have been transformed to a hexagon figure.

The area of **Instruction** was broken down into three distinct categories: **Basic Instruction, Advanced Instruction, and Course Management.** Both the **Mental** and **Equipment** category remained. The one huge addition to developing a great golfer was the addition of a **Physical Conditioning** category.



1. **Basic Instruction**: The first area of Basic Instruction is really all about the basics and fundamentals. Every great sports athlete starts by learning the fundamentals of their sport. The same goes for the game of golf. Learning the correct gripping of the club, having the proper stance and alignment over the golf ball, and learning how to properly swing the golf club all fall into this category.

2. **Advanced Instruction**: Once you have the basics down you can then develop your golf game in the area of Advanced Instruction. This could also be known as the area of “shot making skills.” We all know choosing the correct club as well as hitting the club well is crucial to play well. A great shot from the

tee needs to be followed up by a great short game if you want to have a chance at birdie or par.

Another part of this category to be addressed is specialty shots and shot trajectory. During almost any round you will often find yourself in some trouble which will require some extra work from a specialty shot to recover. This could be hitting the ball high to clear a tree in your path or to land it softly on firm greens. You may need to incorporate a hook or a slice to turn a sharp dogleg corner. Some days the wind is really moving and only a low trajectory shot will keep your ball from straying too far off course. These are all specialty shots that will come as you develop your advanced shot making skills and if played well will allow you to have more opportunities at improving your golf score.

3. **Course Management**: Okay, so now you have hit the perfect drive off the par 5 - 18th tee. You have 170 yards to the front of the hazard crossing the fairway and 200 yards to clear it and hit the island green. What choice do you make? Do you play it safe or do you go for it?

Well, if you have developed your game in the area of course management you will have paid attention to how narrow and firm the green is which means only a perfect shot will keep you dry and in play. Knowing good course management in this case will lead many who are not great long iron ball strikers to make the smart decision of laying up. A good par on this hole will do more for your score card than a troublesome bogey or double bogey.

Good course management will help you keep your ball in play more and give you more opportunities to have a stress free low scoring game. Every good golfer should include course management in their golf game development if they intend to be great!¹

4. **Mental / Emotional**: The mental aspect of the game goes far beyond the excitement of just being able to get out on the golf course and swing the clubs. Studies show that the average time of a golf swing to hit the golf ball only takes between .93 seconds to 1.23 seconds. What this means is that out of 4 or 5 hours during a golf game, if you score 100, then only a little over 2 minutes (123 seconds) is dedicated to actually hitting the golf ball! The rest of the time we are getting to the ball, figuring out our next shot, studying the course, waiting on the group ahead of us, etc. Unfortunately there is a lot of time in between shots which could cause your mental game to become unfocused and your golf game to become unglued.²

What separates the great golfers from good golfers is consistency. Very often inconsistency comes from the borage of thoughts before we ever hit the golf ball. It only takes approximately .25 seconds for the brain to send out a single thought and receive feedback. If you have too many thoughts going through your head about your set up, your swing, or about the target, then you will never be able to accomplish all of this in 1.23 seconds and hit repeated consistent golf shots. Working to develop your mental side of your game will help you not only to keep your cool when you have hit a poor shot, but will also help you to keep it together the other 4 hours on the course when your not hitting the ball.²

5. **Equipment**: Are you playing with too short of clubs or too long? Do your clubs match your swing? Do you wear golf shoes or just tennis shoes? Do you even need a golf glove? These questions need to be answered so that you are prepared to hit the course before you get there. Having the proper golfing equipment for you and your game is just as important as having a good swing. If you have the wrong equipment it

can set up poor swing faults which will not only cause you to play inconsistent golf, but it can also set your body up for trouble such as back, shoulder, wrist, or neck pain.

6. **Physical Conditioning:** Years ago, this was not a vital part of the golf development triangle. Over the last 10 years, however, there has been a transition shift and a huge demand for good physical conditioning for the golfer. The top professional golf teaching instructors today understand the vital importance the physical condition of their golfer has in the development of a great swing and a great player.

The golfers who are more physically fit tend to repeatedly be at the top of the leader board. Tiger is no exception to this rule. If you are going to compare your swing to Tiger's to see where you may be "off" in comparison to his "perfect swing," then you also need to look at his physical condition as well.

There is no doubt that physical limitation and good fitness conditioning is the key to having a great golf swing. The reason Tiger's swing is often what others strive to imitate is because he is in great physical shape which allows his body to create a beautiful swing. If you can not separate the motion between your upper body and your lower body, have poor upper back (thoracic) range of motion, or can not internally rotate your lead hip, then you are not going to be able to imitate Tiger's swing or any other pro. Just like the pros, you must work on your physical limitations and physical conditioning in order to stay at the top of your game.

Working on your physical conditioning includes mobility, stability, posture, balance, strength, cardiovascular, and coordination. To improve in your golf development and your game, detecting and improving on your physical limitations and physical conditioning is a must.³

If you want to develop your golf game like the pros then you need to imitate them. They have a "team" around them to help them play and stay at the top of their game. Every great golfer utilizes his golf teaching instructor and his health professional to perform at their best. The same should go for you.

Seek the advice of a golf professional to develop your game in the areas of basic and advance instruction, course management, mental, and to be helped with equipment choices. When it comes to learning what your physical limitations are and where you should begin to improve your physical conditioning then consult a health professional who knows the golf swing and can develop a conditioning program specific for you. If you follow these tips to develop your golf game you will be well on your way to playing better golf.

About the Author:

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