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## Book and Resource Reviews

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### ***Coach 54: Golf Fundamentals for the Future***

By Lynn Marriot and Pia Nilsson. Copyright 2004 by Virtual Brands.

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Traditional golf culture teaching posits a path to improvement that focuses upon equipment changes and the search for the perfect swing. While occasionally successful, this approach is incomplete and has led many golfers to experience an endless cycle of frustration and disappointment. The DVD, *Coach 54: Golf Fundamental for the Future* by Lynn Marriot and Pia Nilsson, proposes an alternative path toward performance that makes the teaching process more complete. The DVD, which is specific to golf training and performance, describes a unique approach that coaches and performance enhancement consultants should add to their applied work with athletes.

Marriott and Nilsson are golf coaches who have integrated applied sport psychology into their coaching/teaching philosophy, using the term coach rather than applied sport psychologist, golf teacher, or swing coach. Nilsson and Marriott define coach as one who teaches from a fully integrated platform by combining physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions (Murphy & Leonard, 2000; Wilbur, 2003).

Through their “Coaching for the Future” workshops with golf professionals (teachers) and players, Marriott and Nilsson emphasize an integrated coaching approach to internal feedback awareness training that challenges a traditional golf instruction paradigm, emphasizing external feedback. At the heart of their awareness approach, the authors promote a guided self-discovery method of teaching, wherein students become aware of their internal feedback system (how it felt to the student) as opposed to external feedback (how it looked to the teacher). Marriott and Nilsson also weave into their integrated approach additional concepts from applied sport psychology such as process goal setting, imagery, concentration routines, and performance evaluation.

*Coach 54* is organized into four different vignettes or clips. Each clip demonstrates a particular aspect of the Coach 54 philosophy. For the uninformed, “54” stands for the art of the possible and was developed by Nilsson in the 90s as the coach of the Swedish National Team. An affirmation of what is possible is represented by “54”—when goals are stretched beyond cognitive limits, i.e., a score of 54, 18 under par. The authors contend that extended goal setting for a student occurs on a parallel dimension with the coach’s journey.

According to Marriott and Nilsson, coaches must ask themselves, “How can I develop myself to help the players?” In short, coaches must develop a coaching/learning environment that emphasizes process rather than outcome, where the student learns to coach him or herself. A process approach is not new to practitioners, but the method Nilsson and Marriott use puts a new slant on an effective procedure.

One of the most informative sections of the DVD is the hands-on application with students on the practice range. In this first range clip, Mariott demonstrates how to create a learning environment that prompts a student's self-discovery (internal feedback) rather than receiving external feedback from a coach. Through the use of inductive questioning, Mariott helps the student become more aware of his own internal feedback system (kinesthetic, visual, auditory) rather than relying on the coach's external feedback (Albaugh, 2002; Keefe, 2003). As in most instances, relative to internal feedback and golfers, kinesthetic and visual imagery are the dominant responses: My swing feels free of tension (internal feedback), versus your swing looks free of tension (external feedback).

On the range, Mariott presents the Coach 54 concept of "Keeping your *Attention* on the *Intention*" in combination with a dividing decision line. From behind the decision line, that is located approximately 6 feet behind the ball, the student focuses his *attention* on the shot he wants to hit and then, once crossing the decision line, shifts his *intention* to the target. The authors suggest that *attention* is a conscious mind activity and *intention* is a product of the unconscious. This technique used by the authors is very similar to the concept of "self one" and "self two" (Gallwey, 1974) and well grounded in the numerous pre-shot routine strategies available (Albaugh, 2002; Rotella & Cullen, 1995).

While the author's *attention/intention* application is easy to understand, it may not be thorough enough to be an effective description of what appears to be a pre-shot routine. For example, there was no mention of the difference between a practice "technique" swing, from behind the decision line, and a "feel" swing executed after crossing the decision and addressing the ball. Additionally, body, clubface, and mind alignment with the target were not discussed. Our sense is a more complex description of *attention/intention* and pre-shot routines would be included in a more advanced DVD.

In another interesting self-discovery clip, a student asked Mariott how to hit the ball lower. Mariott responded, "If you would like to hit the ball lower, what would you do?" The student began to explain a change in ball position, a change in body position, and a swing change that could produce a lower ball flight trajectory. With consummate expertise, Mariott led the student through the process of self-discovery and into experimentation. This is a very effective self-discovery method every performance enhancement consultant can use to affect changes in technique without specifically explaining the technique, and the process is most effective when the teacher/coach/consultant has the inductive skill, as Nilsson and Mariott do, to lead and to allow the student to engage in the experimental process.

In the second half of the DVD, Mariott and Nilsson use performance situations with which to demonstrate their approach. Just prior to beginning a round, Mariott has a conversation with a golfer concerning his goals for the upcoming round. Using the same inductive questioning method, Mariott skillfully guides the golfer from an outcome-focused goal (shooting par) to a process-focused goal (envision each shot before swinging). As an alternative to the traditional scorecard, Mariott shows the golfer how to keep a process scorecard. This was an effective integration of process goal setting into an applied setting.

In the final segment of the DVD, Nilsson catches up with a group of golfers just after they finished a round. Nilsson uses a series of self-reflective questions to help the golfers move away from judging their performance to embracing their experiences, to identifying room for improvement, and to committing to a plan for