The Method: A Golf Success Strategy


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The Method is a program for improving golf performance and is presented in an 11-page introductory booklet, a 125-page instruction manual, and a 35-minute audio cassette. Although both the physical and psychological fundamentals of the game are addressed, most of the material focuses on mental strategies to enhance practice and performance. The introductory booklet emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, personal responsibility, thought management, and mental control in golf as well as in life. These themes are repeated throughout the nine lesson plans in the instruction manual.

The first section of the manual addresses the physical side of golf. It presents information about the grip, stance, alignment, and swing, and it also offers a behavioral strategy for self-assessment and self-improvement. Especially noteworthy in the lessons on physical mechanics are the suggested feeling states that accompany a proper stance (rooted, bonded, centered, low, springy) and a proper backswing (stretched, coiled, extended, wound). The author also makes an interesting comment on the use of mirrors versus videotapes for obtaining feedback on the swing. Essentially, it is suggested that watching oneself in a mirror is better than using videotape, because the mirror highlights the link between the appearance and the feel of one’s swing.

The strategy proposed for self-assessment and self-improvement is based on a chain of 23 behaviors that cover the skills of putting, chipping/pitching, approaching, and driving. The player is instructed to master each step in the chain before proceeding to the next one. The initial behaviors are simple and easily mastered (e.g., making 8 consecutive 10-inch putts), but subsequent ones become increasingly difficult (e.g., hitting 6 of 8 pitches within 15 ft of the hole from 50 yds). The final behaviors in the chain are decidedly hard to achieve (e.g., hitting 8 of 10 approaches within 90 ft of the hole from 200 yds). We found this criterion based practice strategy to be one of the most unique and important features of The Method.

The middle section of the manual consists of four lessons devoted specifically to the mental side of golf. In the first of these lessons, Meyer asserts that self-image (i.e., self-efficacy) is an extremely important factor in golf performance. He also emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and commitment as precursors to changes in one’s golf self-concept. The next lesson begins by calling
attention to the difference between analytical and intuitive modes of thinking/acting and uses the label "inner body" for the intuitive mode. This lesson also introduces a number of drills that can be done on the practice range to make use of the inner body in golf. These drills cover putting ("contact point"), chipping ("left hand"), pitching ("trajectory"), and the full swing ("single part"). The use of mental imagery, cue words, and nonjudgmental self-awareness are also mentioned as part of the inner body approach. There is much overlap here with Gallwey’s *Inner Tennis* and *Inner Golf* books, both in terms of general philosophy and specific drills.

The third lesson in the section on the mental aspects of golf focuses specifically on visualization. Affirmations are introduced in this lesson as an adjunct to the effective use of imagery, and some simple but reasonably good guidelines are provided for creating and using golf related affirmations. There are also some comments about using key thoughts or images during the swing, but this segment is spoiled somewhat by an initial emphasis on what not to think about. This negative approach is in direct contrast to statements made throughout the manual about the nurturing of positive self-regard.

Although the audiotape reinforces material from a number of lessons in *The Method*, it is most directly related to the visualization section. The tape stresses the importance of relaxation, rhythm, balance, and tempo in golf and uses music as well as guided imagery to reinforce these qualities. The player is encouraged to visualize putts, chips, pitches, approaches, and drives in a sensory-rich manner and, finally, to imagine playing an entire round of golf. We found these visualization exercises to be effective in producing vivid images, and we were particularly impressed by the background music. The tape also contained some explanatory material on Side 2, however, that was rather simplistic and distracting.

The final lesson on the mental aspects of golf deals with the concepts of deep concentration and self-doubt. The mental consequences of self-doubt are said to include anxiety, fear, and disorientation while the physical consequences include shallow breathing, weakness, and trembling. Intense concentration is presented as an antidote to doubt, and an 8-step, on-the-course strategy for heightening concentration is then outlined. This strategy includes the admission and acceptance of doubt/tension, the rechanneling of this negative energy through the use of relaxation techniques, a reliance on inner body mechanisms to execute the shot, and the use of visualization to both preview and review performance. The lesson concludes with a useful visualization exercise designed to prompt rehearsal of this 8-step strategy.

Although not included in the section on psychological skills, performance analysis and goal-setting are also addressed in the manual. In the lesson on performance analysis, a chart is provided to monitor the results of each shot during a round of golf, and a system is presented for analyzing this information. Unfortunately, while the system provides for an excellent ongoing analysis of the physical aspects of each shot, it relies on a retrospective analysis of the mental aspects of each shot. We believe the shot-by-shot mental analysis in Rotella and Bunker’s *Mind Mastery for Winning Golf* is more useful than the one presented here, and we recommend combining *The Method*’s physical analysis with Rotella and Bunker’s mental analysis for a more comprehensive performance review.