



The New Coach Approach

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President Lonergan's Message

Here we are – mid September. Only a few weeks into the school year and our girls golf season is coming to a conclusion. In the Milwaukee area, it seems that we have several good conference races and battles forming for a trip to Madison. Good luck to all!

One topic that has bothered me is “Major Sport vs. Minor Sport”. My belief is that to each athlete, parent, and coach, whatever activity they are involved in, it should be major! Please do not put your sport down because of what others think. Try to promote your sport within your school and community. Call in your results and write stories for the paper. Golf is a major sport. How many people play golf as a lifetime activity? How many of you have had former students come back years later stating that they wish they had played golf in high school? We all coach because we love the sport and want to share our expertise with others. We need to promote and recruit so that we can teach and coach as many of our young adults as possible.

On our web site (www.whsgca.com), we have our all-state playing, academic all-state, and hole-in-one nom-

ination forms. Without being part of the association, your athletes will miss these opportunities. Please join so your athletes can be recognized for their accomplishments.

We have several other forms on our web-site for recognition of coaches, golf courses, etc. Again promote our sport by nominating your club pro, golf course, former coach for one of our awards.

A few points of emphasis about the All-State Nomination form. We wish to have our best golfers recognized on our All-State teams. We need accurate information to make the best choices. Please, please fill out the entire form. All the information is important. We have modified the form to include a “special consideration” section. Please list overall conference place, any special honors, injuries, etc. that would assist us in making our decision.

I hope your school year is off to a good start. Good luck this year and I hope to see many of you at our Spring and Summer Clinics.

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QUESTION: A player signed her scorecard and handed it in to meet management. Before the final results were posted, it was determined she had recorded an incorrect score for one hole. The score on her scorecard was higher than the actual score she received on that hole. Is she disqualified?

INTERPRETATION: No, she is not disqualified. USGA Rule 6-6 d. indicates . . . "If he/she returns a score for any hole lower than actually taken, he/she is disqualified. If he/she returns a score for any hole higher than actually taken, the score as returned stands. In this situation, the higher score is her score for that hole. There is no disqualification.

QUESTION: We would like to sponsor a "Ryder Cup" style tournament over two days of competition. Can we combine two school programs where School Team A and B compete against School Team B and C?

INTERPRETATION: First, WIAA regulations allow the host school team and/or conference to determine the style of play that will be used during the regular season. This allows a "Ryder Cup" style of tournament to be organized. Keep in mind that WIAA Season Regulations prevent meets from continuing more than two days (WIAA Season Regulations, 6., b.). Consequently, WIAA member school teams and approved co-op programs can compete in these events. However, combining two school teams to make one competitive golf team is not allowed. WIAA membership Rules of Eligibility require student-athletes to be full-time students enrolled at the school within whose attendance boundaries his/her parents reside, within a given school district.

QUESTION: If a girl's cell phone goes off during a competition, is there a penalty?

INTERPRETATION: No, it is recommended that cell phones not be allowed to be turned on during competition. In the event a cell phone does go off during competition, it is handled similar to a "backfire" of a car in the distance, or a similar disturbance-it is part of the environment. A warning can be given to any competitor whose cell phone goes off during competition.

QUESTION: I would like some clarification regarding an issue we have at our school. Our school has set up through a local foundation to pay for our golfers, greens fees for the season and golf membership for the summer. Several of us coaches wonder how that can be since student athletes aren't allowed to receive free hats, t-shirts, food etc. We would like some clarification on this issue since something like this has a cash value of around \$200 per person if they were to pay for it themselves.

INTERPRETATION: One of the dimensions of Amateur Status interpretations is the starting point that an athlete may not benefit directly or indirectly by virtue of athletic ability, potential, performance. So, in part that translates to mean that they may not receive a benefit which isn't available to every other student. So long as any student can go out for golf and receive the same access to the course. No cuts, etc. It then is a benefit available to every student at your high school. At least that's my understanding. Good golfer/bad golfer, if you enjoy the game and go out for the school's program, every student in school could golf all summer, too. It becomes more of a perk for students in your school and district and not so much a benefit that's based on performance/achievement in athletics. Some parallels to shoe discounts for basketball teams, it becomes a problem if "only the varsity team" gets a discount. Now it is clearly a performance based benefit. If any/every kid in school shows up for day one of the season and gets the shoe discount, we consider the "benefit" to be available to any student interested in receiving it.

QUESTION: Are parents (and others) who are not the school coach allowed to talk to competitors during that period between holing out and teeing off?

INTERPRETATION: WIAA Season Regulations as found in #15, f., page 25 indicates advice may only be given by the Head Coach designated for that match. The Head Coach must be a person under contract with the school as a golf coach. As far as spectators talking to competitors during WIAA tournaments, spectators are allowed to cheer/clap/encourage competitors and relay positive comments. In addition, if they want to carry excess clothing, water, a snack, lunch, an umbrella, towels, etc, they may do so. Positive, brief encouragement may take place while they exchange these items. Spectators are not allowed to provide advice/instruction, converse and/or speak in private with competitors.

QUESTION: If a JV team is playing in an invite including varsity teams would they be subject to the varsity coaching rule or the JV coaching rule or should it be up to the discretion of the tournament director?

INTERPRETATION: WIAA Season Regulations, #15, j., page 25 indicates JV players while playing in a JV competition, may accept verbal and hand signal advice from their school's designated coach only. If a JV team competes in an event with other varsity teams, they are not allowed to disallow the advice rule in place for varsity competitions. Tournament Directors/Hosts are not allowed to determine whether or not the advice rule can be used.



The following article is a compilation of more than 40 years experience teaching the game of golf to youngsters. It is carefully devised plan for creating a fundamentally sound golf swing that will stand up under the pressure of competition, allowing players to produce consistently fine shots. This article may present to you a very different approach for creating good golf shots. It is based on my experience teaching over 10,000 different golfers. Over the years I have experimented with a number of different plans for introducing golfers to good swing fundamentals. This article will focus on the plan that I have found to be the most successful. This plan starts with a beginning golfer and progresses through the most important fundamentals until arriving at a reasonably proficient finished product. You will have golfers who are somewhat experienced players. Begin with them by applying the first set of fundamentals. If they meet the necessary criteria, then move quickly along to the second set of fundamentals. Do not assume they will automatically meet the first or the first and second set of fundamentals because they may be fairly good players. Develop a checklist for each set of fundamentals. When you are assured that the player can meet all the criteria for step one, begin teaching and checking him/her on their step two fundamentals. Obviously, the truest test of mastery is in a competitive situation. This will require you to watch your golfers during matches or tournaments. As each set of fundamentals is conquered under tournament pressure, the golfer will be closer to achieving their potential. Each set of fundamentals is not necessarily more difficult to master than the fundamentals at the previous step, but there is a very logical progression that should be followed. Lets begin the journey toward rock solid swing fundamentals with step one. (All instructions assume that the golfer plays right-handed.)

Step 1: Making solid contact and getting the ball airborne.

The ability to get shots into the air consistently requires that the ball be struck reasonably solidly with both metal woods and irons. In order to achieve this first step your golfers will have to understand and be able to perform several fundamentals.

- Start with a neutral grip. This will require the left thumb to rest on or near the top of the grip. (Picture the club being held in a horizontal position with the toe of the club pointing upward.) The back of the left hand and the palm of the right hand should face in the direction of the target. The thumb of the right hand should cover the left thumb. Your golfers should employ either an interlocking or overlap grip depending on their hand size and strength. Players with stronger or larger hands will, in most cases, find the overlapping grip to be preferable. Golfers using a strong grip, that is one in which the back of their left hand and the palm of their right hand face skyward, will struggle to hit their middle and long irons and woods into the air. When making the change to a neutral grip most players will hit a number of shots to the right because they have previously not been properly releasing the club. If they had been properly releasing the club with a strong grip the ball would start left and then go further left. That is always a dangerous ball flight. Golfers with a strong grip will unknowingly block the clubface from releasing back into a square position at impact. When taught to use a neutral grip they will continue to block the clubface from releasing, which results in shots hit to the right of their target. Continued practice with a proper grip will allow the golfer to learn and feel a proper release, which will produce straighter shots. However, you can use a successful teaching technique to impart the feel of a full release. Have your players place their left hand on the grip in its proper position. Next, have them place their right hand at the bottom of the grip, then swing the club using this split hand grip. They will be forced to release the clubface with this teaching grip. Have them hit several shots using this grip and they will soon begin to hook their shots. Then have them alternate using the split hand grip, then a normal grip. They should try to produce the release they feel with their split hand grip using the normal grip.

- Proper posture at address is the next fundamental necessary to consistently produce solid shot-making and an elevated ball flight. The amount of spine curvature and the angle at which the spine is tilted toward the ball will have a strong influence on a player's swing plane. Because of their need to clear their arms from their chest, females usually have a much better golf posture than do males. A proper posture will require a relatively straight spine tilted towards the ball so

the arms are in front of the chest. The arms should hang in a relaxed fashion from the shoulders. This will result in the upper body feeling quite free from undue tension.

- The ball position is a relatively easy fix. Have your players position the ball two inches inside the left instep with the driver and three inches inside the left instep with the remainder of their clubs.

- Stance width should be consistent. The feet, from the middle of the left foot to the middle of the right foot, should be shoulder width apart. Having the feet wider will inhibit a proper swing and will usually encourage a number of improper swing movements.

- An upper body tilt is necessary in order to be able to impart proper force to the back of the ball. This is the final part of the first step. In order to increase the speed of the clubhead coming into the ball, it is imperative that the upper body be tilted slightly to the right at address. This will put the player's head slightly behind the ball. It should remain there until just after impact.

Step 2: Developing a proper swing plane and maintaining balance.

Each individual golfer has an ideal swing plane that fits him/her best. Which swing plane they use will be determined by you or by a competent golf professional if you feel unqualified to make that determination.

- There are two swing planes. In order to determine which is best for each student, you will need to watch his or her hips on the forward swing. After watching many different golf swings, I have determined that hip speed on the forward swing is the most important determiner of proper swing plane. A golfer whose hips always seem to outrace their club through impact should be taught a one plane swing. To teach this swing, the golfer should generally have their club on a flatter plane than does the two plane swinger. Ideally, the shaft of the club going back will remain at the same angle as it was at address. The only obvious difference will be that the head of the club will be higher than the grip as opposed to the address position where the grip is above the clubhead. When the club is being swung back, the clubface goes into an open position. The timing mechanism that brings the clubface back to square is the right hip. The hip should move through the impact area at the same time as the clubhead. The hip will literally pull the clubface back into a square position at impact. Think of Tiger Woods' swing. In the past his biggest complaint was that his hips spun out too fast on the forward swing. He felt that the club was always getting stuck behind him. This generally forced the face into an open right position at impact causing the ball to go right. With his new flatter one plane swing, he actually tries to spin his hips as hard as he can in order to pull his clubface into a square position at impact. Remember, with a one-plane swing, the timing mechanism is the clubhead and right hip moving through the impact area in synchronization.

- Golfers using the two-plane swing have the ability to slow their hip movement on the forward motion so they can turn their sternum and clubhead through the impact area in perfect synchronization. In the two-plane swing, the club is moved on a more upright plane during the backswing as compared to the shaft angle at address. This swing has the added advantage of being able to maintain the club on the target line for a longer period of time than with the one plane swing. Thus, at least in theory, the two plane swing should be more accurate than the one plane swing, but, because of the differences in abilities, some one plane swingers are more accurate than two plane swingers. Remember, with a two-plane swing, the clubface is moved from an open to square position by using the forearms to release the clubface, whereas, in the one-plane swing, the right hip is rotated toward the target in order to pull the clubface back to a square position. Therefore, golfers with faster rotating hips should be taught the one plane swing while those whose hips do not reach the impact zone before the clubhead should use the two plane swing.

- Balance is vital to producing quality golf shots. Without question, the most common balance fault is caused by improper weight distribution at the address position. When a golfer places more than 25% of their weight on their heels at address, the player will move their weight onto their toes sometime during the swing, usually during the forward swing. This will result in the ball going to the right or, if the player is an experienced golfer, they may swing left in order to catch their balance resulting in a pulled shot. Proper weight distribution requires about 80% of the golfer's weight on the balls of their feet at address. During the backswing, the weight is moved into the right heel. Then, during the forward swing, the weight is moved into the left heel. Thus proper balance is maintained and the player will feel the freedom of motion resulting from good balance.

This plan has 6 steps, we will publish steps 3 -6 in the next two issues of the Coach Approach.