REFLECTIONS ON TOUCH



Twenty-Five Letters on
Golf, Feel, and Learning

BY THE GOLF MYSTIC

VOLUME ONE

Reflections on Touch

Twenty-Five Letters on Golf, Feel, and Learning

VOLUME ONE

by The Golf Mystic

Gary Battersby

Learn Touch Golf
learntouchgolf.com

A Note Before You Begin

These letters began at the urging of my dear friend and student, Mike Roberts. I never felt I could keep up with his idea of writing a letter a week to our subscribers. He never pushed; he was confident I could do it. I was not. But as I leaned into it, I realized there was a treasure trove of ideas, somewhat buried in my mind, and so I went to work to meet the challenge Mike had presented.

Also, there is really no specific order to the letters. I simply put pen to paper and wrote them as the thoughts sprang up in me.

I have pondered, and continue to imagine, the various ways we may be able to help golfers reach their potential. The letters are purely my perspective on learning, infused with my various interests and the continued learning I do to satisfy my curiosity. Our hope is that you, too, will find them interesting and thought-provoking as you work toward a better you, in golf as well as in life.

Gary Battersby

Contents

PART ONE: THE HANDS

1. Your Hands Are Your Vision in Golf 8
2. Meet Homunculus: Why Your Hands Run the Show 10
3. Framework, Not Conductor: The Real Role of Your Body 13
4. The Cell That Saw a Hand 16
5. I Don't Care If I Hit It Square 22

PART TWO: FEEL, NOT MECHANICS

6. What the Greats Really Thought About When They Swung 26
7. Touch Is Not Old School 29
8. The Wave Does the Telling 31
9. Yardage Is the Last Question 35
10. Can AI Teach Feel? 37
11. The Cassandra Complex in Golf 40

PART THREE: LEARNING AND CHANGING

12. Changing Habits, You Can Do It 44
13. Changing a Habit: Take Away the Cue 49
14. The Simplest Exercise in Golf 54
15. The Eagle That Wasn't There 56
16. A Lesson for a Visitor from Mars 60
17. Why You Swung Better as a Kid 63
18. A Sure-Fire Way to Start a Child in Golf 66

PART FOUR: THE MIND UNDER PRESSURE

19. The Self-Image Blueprint: How to Actually Get Better 69
20. The Imagination 72
21. Choking, Labels, and What to Do About Both 75

22. Why Wyndham Clark Didn't Choke 80
23. When Fear Grabs the Club 84
24. Freddie and the Railroad Tie 89
25. Cancel. What Do I Want? 92

References **94**

About the Author **99**

PART ONE

The Hands



LETTER 1

Your Hands Are Your Vision in Golf

Dear Friends,

One reason golfers have difficulty is that they rely so heavily on vision. The great assumption is that if you're concentrating and looking hard at the ball, you should strike it well with the club. It seems logical. But it is not true. Concentrating on a golf ball with your keen eyes is exactly how you lose your sight in golf. You become blind, blind to your swing. Your hands tap into the feeling brain, not your eyes. Your hands are your vision in golf. Ergo, why our lessons are a lot of Eye-Clo.

Yes, the eyes ultimately supplement your hands, but in touch golf, they are not your primary source for developing a better swing and better ball striking. The primary focus needs to be on the club through the hands. The reason? Unlike tennis, baseball, or virtually all other stick-and-ball sports, the golf ball is not moving. In tennis, you track a moving ball with your vision. That makes sense; you're constantly responding to the moving ball. In golf, you know where the ball is all the time. Besides, the ball contact is such a small part of a swing. There is so much more to a swing than just the instant of impact. So much more to enjoy and feel.

So, how do we develop a complete, effective swing? One, you need to feel a rhythm pattern. A pattern that is smooth and consistent in tempo. Daa Daaa Da. Then create a travel path with energy. Using a Pathfinder will do that. Match that travel path to the target, and then match the whirling clubface to the ground and target as well. So that's flow, path, and timing. The three pillars of touch golf. Do you think concentrating on the ball will get you those qualities? I'm sorry, but no. You need to go through that process daily for about 20 minutes. In about three weeks, you will know your swing by feel, and it will be effective. The reward? You will have developed a touch swing. And that lasts for a lifetime!

Good golfing,

The Golf Mystic

LETTER 22

Why Wyndham Clark Didn't Choke

Dear Friends,

Following up on my last letter about choking and the remarkable emotional and psychological control Wyndham Clark showed at the U.S. Open, I would like to offer some insight into what may have been the main reason he succeeded against fairly large odds. I'm sure world number one Scottie Scheffler, who had the closest view, was most impressed.

I've read Keegan Bradley's remarks that it was hard to believe an American player would be so poorly treated in his national open. But that isn't the real issue, is it? If it were Justin Rose or Rory McIlroy from the UK, or back in the day, Seve Ballesteros, would that fan behavior and disrespect be OK? I don't think so. In my opinion, we need to remind ourselves: it's not OK, no matter the player's country of origin. Let's face it, it's not life and death. It's just a sports competition, and we need sportsmanship, like Nicklaus at the Ryder Cup. We need to respect and appreciate all the players and their skills. Do we have any idea what it took to qualify in the first place? You wouldn't believe it. The guys who went home after Friday are amazing, too. So, I'm glad Clark succeeded and didn't choke. He played remarkably well under the circumstances.

Why was he successful? I surmise he was well prepared emotionally and psychologically, and, of course, he has a hell of a swing and a game to back up his mind. I would say he was

operating on all cylinders. I would guess his success was largely due to his decision to change and grow over the past year, a year in which he had to learn from his mistakes. And he did.

So, we are back to not labeling and limiting people. Let them grow; life is all about change and how we deal with, mostly, our mistakes. Character does not reveal itself when things are going your way. You discover the true character of someone when they're thwarted, even if it's by their own doing. And Clark has developed his character; that was self-evident on Sunday at the U.S. Open.

Now, I don't know Clark. But I surmise that, by making the choices he made to get help and change, and by doing the work necessary, he was better prepared to deal with anything that came his way. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that he made a conscious decision, especially on Sunday, not to let anyone or anything bother him, and that if things didn't work out, he would move on, staying present to the task at hand.

I hope someone will interview him and get his detailed account of how he changed. It could provide a strategy for others to follow. I'm pretty sure he would tell us that he decided (that's right, he made a decision) and that, coupled with a lot of work, both internal and external, we have this new, better version of Wyndham Clark. He is a strong example that disproves the naysayers who sit on the sidelines, label, and criticize, all talk and no action.

Sorry for the off-topic detour.

Back in the 1980s, Roy Baumeister studied choking. He concluded that, as circumstances become more important, a person who chokes reinvests their conscious attention in technique. This

explicit thinking disrupts the flow of automatic, learned sequences, leading to choking.

Later, Rich Masters developed the Conscious Processing Hypothesis and Reinvestment Theory. It holds that, under pressure, performance degrades because the player reinvests in the rules they used to learn the technique. He even created a Reinvestment Scale. This is a direct ancestor of Learn Touch Golf.

Gabriele Wulf, Nancy McNevin, and Charles Shea followed with the Constrained Action Hypothesis. It fit extremely well with the finding that more explicit thinking during learning is associated with reinvestment and degraded performance under pressure. Reinvesting in explicit instructions constrains the automatic skill's action. On the other hand, if you learn implicitly, as we do in Learn Touch Golf, without accumulating explicit rules, there is nothing to reinvest. With nothing to reinvest, interference is absent from the performance equation. Remember our formula?

Performance = Potential minus Interference

No interference, and you get your potential.

The conclusions drawn here are the direct neurological ancestry of our Learn Touch Golf framework.

Sian Beilock is well known for research in this arena as well. She found that golfers who performed well under pressure were operating on autopilot and often could not recall what they did. Conversely, those who learned various techniques, built a large inventory of things to do, and paid attention to their form while trying to make a swing or a putt under pressure would choke. Non-chokers don't pay attention to mechanical details, but they seem to have a global awareness. They are more goal-oriented

and allow the learned sequence to play out without getting involved, while the automatic brain stays in high gear.

It's amazing, really. The mindset of a non-choker in sports is similar to that of a person who performs a heroic act. If you were to ask them what they were thinking that allowed them to do this extraordinary thing, they couldn't tell you. In a sense, they were not thinking; they just did it. They were prepared long ago, perhaps by their upbringing, and performed the heroic act automatically. Interview someone recognized by the Carnegie Hero Fund and ask what allowed them to act, and they can't point to any thinking. "Before I knew it, I was in the middle of it, and I just did what needed to be done."

So, to improve your performance? Do your exercises! Let them play out. Close your eyes, lighten your pressure. Use your Pathfinder and pay attention to your Daas, your tempo. The thinking has all been done for you; all you need to do is rely on the exercises and trust the touch they create. And, like Clark, you will be prepared not to let anything bother you, and to handle pressure with aplomb.

Good golfing,

The Golf Mystic

End of the preview

Reflections on Touch

All twenty-five letters, with references and an About the Author section.

learntouchgolf.com/shop