

NEWS NORTH FLORIDA PGA



The
Newsletter
of the
North
Florida
Section

200 Forest Lake Boulevard • Daytona Beach, Florida 32119

February 1999

THE MENTAL SIDE
BY
PATRICK J. COHN, Ph.D.

Variety is the Spice of Practice *Patrick J. Cohn, Ph.D.*

I bet most of your students know how to beat balls, don't know how to get the most out of their practice. Focused, quality practice will help any player play better. Wouldn't anybody want to get more from practice in less time? How can your students' practice be more effective without spending more time? The answer is by integrating proven methods of motor learning and sport psychology into practice to speed learning and retention, which ultimately improves performance. Here are some ideas for improving the quality of practice:

Take all your clubs to the range and hit wedge to driver! You use all your clubs when you play so why not practice with all the clubs in the bag! You might have a favorite club or two you prefer, but how well will you hit a non-favorite club when you have to on the course? If you are practicing hitting golf shots, don't hit more than 10 shots in a row with same club.

A main principle in motor learning is to practice your sport in a variety of settings and conditions. In tennis, players are forced to play an infinite variety of shots. A player must hit a return shot with the ball bouncing in any direction or height – low, high

behind, curving, when running, and when off balance. In golf, you don't hit shots while running and the ball is not moving, but you do face an infinite number of conditions and circumstances in which you have to hit shots. You are forced to hit uphill, downhill, sidehill, and flat lie shots. You also get various lies on the course. Be creative with practice so you can be confident with any shot you encounter during play. This is what makes golf so interesting; you never have the same shot twice on the course.

You can vary practice in many ways. Besides switching clubs often on the range, you can vary the lie of the ball. Practice shots from perfect lies, buried lies, perched lies, divots, and sandy lies. Vary the trajectory and curve of the shot. Hit high and low shots, right to left and left to right shots, specialty shots, and half and full shots. You can change targets on each shot. Vary the terrain where you hit shots. Hit shots from uphill, downhill, and sidehill lies. You get the picture. Don't just hit balls from a flat, perfect lie on the range. You hit all kinds of shots on the course, so why not get good at them in practice first?

Editor's Note: Dr. Patrick J. Cohn is a leading golf psychologist who consults with Tour Pros and Amateurs. He is the author of *The Mental Game of Golf* and *The Mental Art of Putting*. He also is the leading talent in the video *Make Your Most Confident Stroke* and the audio *Great Putting – Right Now*. For more information call (888) 742-7225, or write to Peak Performance Sports, 7380 Sand Lake Rd., Suite 500, Orlando, FL 32819. Visit their web site at www.peaksports.com.