

Getting the most out of your golf lesson

-Owen Dawson

If you've never had a private golf lesson before, this could be an intimidating first experience for you. There are so many stories out there about "the teaching pro who changed my entire swing and I couldn't hit a ball for weeks...." - many of which are true, I'm sure. As a potential student, it is incumbent upon you to do your homework to see which swing coaches would be most compatible with you. Choosing a credible swing coach can take some time. Where do you begin? Most golfers' first choice would be the Internet. Picking the first swing coach on the search engine list may or may not be your best choice. Internet listings can be a bit of smoke and mirrors. If you're looking to get the most accurate information about how to fix your swing, then selecting an experienced swing coach who continues their education is a must. Some coaches list this information on their website. Check out any certifications they may have and what technologies they are using in their teaching. Take a look at any swing video tutorials on their website. Simple swing videos will help give you some insight into their personalities, teaching styles and swing methods. Look for lesson testimonials to see what other students are saying about their swing coaches. Of course, if you have a friend who highly recommends someone, that could also be a good starting point. Next, pick up the phone or send an email to potential swing coaches. Let's call this the interview process.... A few questions I would be asking if I were the prospective student:

THE INTERVIEW

- How long have you been teaching golf? Unless you are a rank beginner in golf, you probably don't want to learn from the new assistant who is just starting to teach and utilizes you as his/her guinea pig. Why? Because they are most likely going to be teaching you what they are doing in their own swing (which may or may not be correct) or what they just read in golf digest at lunchtime. How do I know this? Well, I did the same thing when I first started teaching 20+ years ago.
- Ask them how many lessons they give during a week in the golf season. If they are giving over 30+ lessons a week, they are most likely doing something right. Like any business, if you're not good, you're probably not very busy.
- Lastly, do they send lesson video and practice notes after the lesson is complete? This is an important part of the lesson. Having video and notes to refer to during your post-lesson practice can be an invaluable tool.

YOUR FIRST LESSON

So, you've found the right swing coach and you've booked your first 1-hour lesson. Don't be late! Make sure you show up at least 15-minutes early to your lesson. A 1-hour lesson will go by in a flash, so being late will put you and your swing coach behind from the start. The 15-minutes also allows you to warm up. Be prepared to

step out of your comfort zone. It's not in your swing coach's best interest to teach you something that's going to make you worse, so listen up and go with it. If you don't understand something, make sure you to have your swing coach clarify it for you. When your lesson is complete, your swing coach should be able to remotely send you lesson notes along with the video from your lesson. Schedule your next lesson before you leave your current lesson. Frequency of scheduling lessons varies; I like to see students weekly when just starting a swing change.

PRACTICE

Try to get to your practice facility as soon as possible after your lesson - immediately if you have time. Making swing changes can be difficult. In most cases, your swing coach is trying to instill in you a very new feel to your swing. When you practice, you still need to be out of your comfort zone. Allowing one's self to fall back into what's comfortable is a common practice among new students and is counter-productive to the learning process. Remember, learning to make the necessary swing changes is more of a journey (take a look at any tour player). Don't expect miracles, set realistic goals for yourself and work hard to achieve them.