

## **PREFACE**

You can acquire *knowledge* of how to swing a golf club from thousands of sources. This is the only book describing a universal process that helps you transform that golf knowledge from any source into improved *performance* on the golf course. The objective is to lower your average score, then sustain the improvement long term. The emphasis is not on what you *know*, but on what you *do*. The process is new, tested and successful. We call that process *Behavioral Golf Instruction*.

The process produces a higher probability of improvement than traditional instruction, achieves it sooner, produces a larger reduction in average score and sustains the improvement longer.

In my many years as president of a management consulting company serving large corporations, I would focus like a laser beam on the end objective of increasing their profits and then analyze backwards from that goal to find out what was most important to achieving and sustaining it.

I use a similar approach here. I want the instructor and player to focus on the end objective of lowering the player's average score, then trace backwards to find out what they have to improve that will maximize that score reduction and sustain it.

Unlike conventional golf instruction, this book does *not* tell the players how to swing, nor the instructors *what to teach*. It does correct the weakest links in the instruction process. It tells you how to *give, take, practice and apply golf lessons*. Hence our web site name: [ApplyGolfLessons.com](http://ApplyGolfLessons.com)

Players can drown in the flood of available golf information on *how to swing*. There are thousands of golf books, hundreds of videos, CD's, dozens of magazines and many golf web sites. Telecasts of more than a hundred tournaments annually exhibit the best golfers in the world. The seven-day, 24-hour-a-day Golf Channel broadcasts excellent advice from numerous top instructors. Friends, relatives and strangers add solicited and unsolicited advice telling players how to swing. Digital cameras and swing analysis software can compare your swing at the same point in the swing to any professional you choose.

In this book, I list the benefits of our Behavior Golf Instruction process, the key concepts behind it, the procedures to use, and examples and proof that they work. At each step, I state what the differences are in our process versus traditional instruction.

### **PLAYER BENEFITS FOR USING THIS APPROACH**

From many tests so far, I know Behavioral Golf Instruction creates the following benefits for players:

1. Their average scores decline.

The percentage of students who state their average score declined with this approach is about triple what students taking traditional instruction reported to me in my 150 in-depth interviews. The drop in average score for amateurs using Behavioral Golf Instruction is commonly three to seven shots, and sometimes more for those with high handicaps. That is far greater, on average, than students who took traditional instruction report in my interviews. They measurably improve in the high-payoff stroke reduction areas, which are the targets of the instruction.

2. Their improvement occurs *on the golf course*, the only place it really counts, not just in the practice area or on the lesson tee.

3. **Players achieve measurable improvement *rapidly*, often *immediately*, without the tendency for it to worsen for many months after instruction, as it often does with traditional instruction.**

**Most traditional instructors tell their students to expect their game to worsen following lessons, often for months or a year. That is a tribute to their honesty, not to their methods. Based on experience with our process, I expect our students will measurably *improve immediately*, which is what I usually observe and they report. And why not? When the players begin to make *less of a swing error almost immediately* in an area of their game that offers a high potential for stroke reduction, their average score should decline. And it does.**

4. **Players are more apt to maintain their lower average score, because I give them a specific program to maintain the improvement long term. Maintaining performance long term is a subject rarely addressed in private lessons or in instruction materials. However, I do because I had to design and install such systems in hundreds of large organizations that had to continue for many years.**
5. **Players have measurable *proof* they improved from the data they collect before, during and after instruction. This causes them to continue to use the techniques that got them there. Players rarely collect the type of data they need to improve and maintain performance. Data on greens and fairways hit tell the golfer nothing of the misdirection in ball-flight or even distance hit.**
6. **All types of golfer improve with this process. They can be young or old. Skilled players and very high handicappers who have played for decades. Athletic players and those suffering from chronic injuries. Those who strongly believe they will improve and those who are certain they will not. Those with horrendous swings that other pros said they could not change and those with smooth swings. Rank beginners and PGA Tour players.**

**While all types of players improve with this process, I am especially interested from a research standpoint in having players apply our process who failed to improve after taking 30 to over 100 golf lessons from instructors using traditional methods. If they improve, and they do with Behavioral Golf Instruction, it is unusually strong evidence that the process works.**

7. **The reactions of players to this process are positive:**
  - **Players enjoy the instruction experience more because they receive positive consequences by seeing improvement quickly and hearing instructors enthusiastically praise every small improvement.**
  - **Players say the process is “very logical,” or it “makes sense,” and “it works.”**
  - **They like the greater clarity of the golf instruction, their note taking, the breaking of a swing change into multiple, small-advance, easy-to-achieve shaping steps, the self-correction procedures, data collection, and the more effective practice methods. Most of all, they like those lower scores.**
  - **In making a swing change, a small percentage of students want to learn by immediately making a full swing at full speed. They do not immediately accept our premise that virtually no one can learn to make a swing change when the clubhead at impact is moving from 70 mph to 115 mph. from zero mile an hour at the top and when that occurs in just one-fifth of a second. However, they eventually accept it when their results show that our small shaping steps during the learning phase produces measurably better ball flight than does their full-and-fast approach does.**

## INSTRUCTOR BENEFITS

### 1. AN INCREASE IN LESSONS AND REVENUE

- The income of the instructor rises due to an increase in word-of-mouth endorsements brought about by a higher percentage of their students lowering their average scores and by a larger number of strokes.
- The data the instructors collect before, during and after instruction on the players' improvement provides the proof that attracts new students with a similar problem. It distinguishes the instructor from competitors who rarely collect such data.

### 2. THEIR STUDENTS IMPROVE MORE

- Average score drops with this process for many reasons. One reason is that the process helps the instructor and the player identify what the largest potential stroke-saving area is for that player. That occurs because of recording performance data and comparing it to measurable standards, instead of relying on the student's opinion, which I found is usually inaccurate.
- It enables the instructors to improve players they could not change in the past.
- It enables them to help the player "take the lesson to the course."
- The instructor corrects players' swing problems with a much higher rate of success and sooner, without the traditional post-lesson slump.

### 3. THE INSTRUCTORS IMPROVE

- Every golf instructor, whether a novice or one ranked in the Top 100, will produce better student performance using Behavioral Golf Instruction.
- The instructors learn effective procedures for creating behavior change in students. They need to know and use such techniques, because traditional instructors complain to me about the students not doing much of what they want them to do, such as practicing or using drills.
- Many traditional instructors *ask* players what method of teaching works best for them. Do they learn best by observing, listening or feeling it? The problem is that very few players really know. They may know which method they *like*. However, they have never conducted any scientific tests to measure the effects of different teaching methods on their golf game.

Instead, we give players and instructors *universal* learning procedures that thousands of tests show produce measurable improvement in *all* golfers, on any continent, in all areas of their games.

## WHY YOU CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THIS PROCESS

You can have a high degree of confidence that Behavioral Golf Instruction produces a much higher probability of success, because of our case histories. Here are additional reasons you can have confidence in the *process*, including the reactions of leading instructors to it:

### 1. WHAT HAPPENS IN TRADITIONAL GOLF INSTRUCTION

- I interviewed 150 players in great depth who took what I label “traditional” golf lessons to determine their experiences, their reactions to them and what effects they had on their average scores. I also interviewed players who had *not* taken lessons to explore why they had chosen that route.

These players were located around the United States. The locations of the interviews were at public and private courses, driving ranges and in airplanes, restaurants, stores and the players’ homes. They were young and old, male and female, beginners, star amateurs and professionals playing on a tour.

- I interviewed 50 instructors in person and by phone as to why they did or did not use certain procedures during a lesson. These teachers ranged from those rated in the Top 100 to apprentices.
- During hundreds of traditional lessons that various instructors gave, I stood at the lesson tee, observed and took detailed notes on what the instructors and players did and said.

## 2. I COLLECT DATA ON THE PLAYER’S PERFORMANCE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER LESSONS

- While I listen to what players say about traditional instruction, I want to measure what they *do*. In all cases, I measure the player’s performance before the lesson, during the lesson and after the lesson. This includes what happens to average scores and to measurements appropriate to the content of the lesson. After the lesson, I took these measurements during solo practice and play on the course.
- When I test the Behavioral Golf Instruction process, I also measure performance before, during and after instruction, even more intensely than when observing traditional instruction. Thus, I do not rely on what the player or instructor thinks the results are, but on what did happen in terms of measurable results. I want to see what happens a year or more later after the lessons end. I do not rely on attitude surveys, which are too subjective.

## 3. I BUILD THE PROCESS ON TESTED, PROVEN BEHAVIOR-ANALYSIS PRINCIPLES

- The behavioral-change principles I recommend have a *scientific* basis. Researchers discovered them in conducting behavior-change experiments in carefully controlled laboratory and in real-world settings. Thousands of behavior analysts apply them around the world in everyday settings and instruct managers, parents and teachers to use them with great success. They judge success based on whether the targeted behavior or result occurs as desired — more often, less often or not at all — compared to prior performance.
- Behavioral experts can now *guarantee* that students can meet reading tests, children will be toilet trained in less than a day, smokers will their rate of smoking in half within a day, businesses will improve productivity, industrial accidents will decline, and so much more.

## 4. LEADERS IN GOLF INSTRUCTION REACT POSITIVELY TO THE PROCESS

- I phoned the CEO of an organization that has trained and certified more than 10,000 golf instructors worldwide, seeking an appointment to tell him of my process. He said, “We are happy with our present training program.” I told him, “If we meet to talk about this process, ten minutes later you will not be happy with your present training program.” He laughed and agreed to meet. After 10

minutes of our meeting, he said, “Wow. You have much to offer. I want you to attend one of our six-day courses where we train prospective instructors and certify those who pass our knowledge and playing tests. After it ends, I will hold the staff over to hear what your recommendations are for improving our training and I will fly from Florida to Pennsylvania to hear what you have to say.”

I did. They liked my recommendations and soon began to put some of them into practice. When one of their key people who trains and certifies instructors throughout the world began using my concepts, he said, “I thought your ideas on data collection and shaping swing behavior gradually would work. However, *I was surprised at how well and rapidly they worked*”.

- One of the Top 100 instructors who appears on the Golf Channel and runs a large golf-school organization said, “You have incredible insights into instruction. You are definitely on the right track. I want to train the instructors in our organization in this approach.”
- One golf instructor who runs a golf school and has taken \$19,000 worth of lessons from one of the teachers listed in the Top 10 told the Head Professional, “Ed Feeney is way ahead of anyone in the instruction field.” I do not believe that I am for a minute, and I do not want you to believe it, but it does show you what the reactions of bright instructors are to Behavioral Golf Instruction. Incidentally, the son of one of the top officials in the PGA of America, who has taken lessons from many of the game’s top instructors, thinks that this pro gave him the best lessons he ever received.
- While taking lessons from professional instructors, including three rated in the top 15 nationally, I observed what they did that was effective or, in my opinion, could be improved.

One such was Butch Harmon, rated the No. 1 instructor in the country by his peers. He gave me a lesson during an eight-hour filming of a LaserTrainer infomercial, in which I appear with him, along with other players. He had just flown in from the U.S. Open, where he coached six of the top players in the world, all of whom improved after beginning to take lessons from him.

In my opinion, he is very deserving of his high rating. For example, I can still hear his enthusiastic yelp of reinforcement from 30 yards away when I — finally — executed a swing change he suggested. When I briefly mentioned that I was writing a golf book suggesting a different approach to changing a golfer’s performance, he instantly said, “I want to keep in touch with you. Whenever instructors stop learning, they are dead,” With such an open mind to learning, especially when he is already so highly rated, it is no wonder he excels.

## OUR LOFTY OBJECTIVES

Our objectives for Behavioral Golf Instruction are indeed daunting. They may appear idealistic to some people. They do not appear that way to me. An instructor and student can achieve them by following all the steps correctly and completely in behavioral Golf Instruction. I designed the process to produce those very objectives.

Here are the objectives:

### FOR PLAYERS

1. Reduce the average score of players using Behavioral Golf Instruction while taking, practicing and applying lessons.
2. Reduce the score of *every* player who applies Behavioral Golf Instruction, in taking lessons, regardless of their past performance or physical condition.
3. Produce a measurable before-and-after improvement in the subject area of the lessons for each student.
4. Improve performance quickly, without the downturn so often predicted and experienced for students making a swing change.
5. Sustain the improvement long term, preferably for the rest of the student's playing career.
6. Make the experience of learning to play a positive one, especially for beginners, so they continue to play golf.

I find many benefits by stating the ideal objectives you want the process to produce:

1. We have a better chance of meeting objectives when we think through clearly what it is we wish to achieve.
2. Once we state the objectives, we then analyze backwards to determine what precisely it is the instructor and student have to do to meet them. It also prompted me to think through how I should design Behavioral Golf Instruction to help them achieve the objectives.
3. Even though we may not meet the objectives for every student, we will meet those objectives more often than traditional instruction when we take dead, solid aim at producing them. I know that to be true from our research.

### CONFLICTING GOALS

Surprising to me, and perhaps to you, some leaders in golf instruction do not agree with some of these objectives. For example, some do not agree that the objective of golfers is to lower average score after taking instruction. One leader told me that students only want to hit the ball longer. That was not what I wanted as a student.

As a result, I asked 50 golfers which instructor they would choose, instructor A who would lower their average score by three strokes or instructor B who would cause them to increase the distance of every full shot by 20 yards. The vote was 92% for the instructor who would lower average score by three shots. Some said that score was everything. In fact, the four who voted for Instructor B did so because they thought that 20 additional yards would lower score *more than* three shots. In effect, all of them were for lower score. A few said they would give up distance to lower their score. That is smart.

Another instruction leader said the objective was to “swing better.” That is also askew. The objective and payoff is to score lower. At the end of the round, they do not ask you how you were swinging; they ask only for your score.

Still another believes that the number one objective for the player is to have fun. His staff says, correctly I feel, that scoring lower is fun, the most fun. Besides, “fun” cannot be objectively measured. Congratulations, your fun increased 6.7% today.

## **BEGINNERS**

Today, the number of golfers who quit playing golf each year is about equal to the number who begin playing. That is a huge drain. My research clearly shows that a high percentage of beginners quit because they performed badly. That happens because of three major reasons. One, there was a flawed process for taking, practicing and applying golf instruction. Two, beginners tried to learn on their own. Three, friends or relatives gave bad advice when it came to instructing the beginners and there was a flawed process for taking, practicing and applying instruction.

The biggest error is having beginners attempt to hit long shots immediately. The beginners fail because they have no idea what the path of the clubhead should be at impact, nor the direction of the clubface at impact. The full swing is too fast for the beginner to see or feel the direction the club is moving on at impact.

Instead, I design and have them apply a process where the conditions for the shot and the required responses the beginner makes are engineered to produce almost certain and rapid success. For example, I start them off by stroking one-foot putts. They quickly hear and see the ball go in the cup, which is very reinforcing. The beginner must meet a measurable standard before advancing to gradually longer distances.

Each of the next “shaping” steps that follows are only small-advance, easily achieved steps of improvement that builds on the prior success. It is close to foolproof.

For research purposes, I go out of my way to find students who have the worst swings and produce the worst results, especially if they took a large number of lessons from multiple instructors, including well-known ones.

## **DATA COLLECTION BY STUDENTS**

To help players make better decisions on how to improve their games, I want them to have access to data that tells them which swing techniques, instructors and instruction methods worked best for others in lowering their average scores.

Players, instructors, providers of instruction materials and practice aids need to gather data before, during and after the introduction of the instruction or practice device to determine whether performance improved or worsened, the amount of change and in what time frame.

With the rarest of exceptions, golf books, magazines, videos and TV shows do not report any data on the measurable before-and-after improvement in players who applied the instruction. Did their average scores decline, stay the same or increase? How long did the effect continue? What percentage of golfers improved? Which instruction source offers the best solution? With a lack of data, who knows?

Some advertisers, while hawking the sale of golf equipment and instruction, present data that to me seems suspect. You know the hype that appears, “Let us tell you the secret of how a one-legged man could hit drives over 300 yards. Your handicap will drop 10 strokes.

You can learn to do this by merely watching our video and hitting less than one bucket of balls.” Sure.

Eric Alpenfels at the Pinehurst Golf Club and Dr. Bob Christina conduct excellent databased research on groups of golfers to determine which swing and training techniques are most effective in solving common problems. *Golf Magazine* publishes their studies.

They measure the prior performance of a large number of golfers before trying a new swing or training technique, such as reducing the frequency and magnitude of shots curving to the right. They measure their performance while using the new technique and months later to see if any improvement continued. I tip my hat to them.

Our objectives continue:

### FOR INSTRUCTORS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- To stimulate the brighter instructors and school coaches to adopt these ideas to provide further proof that this process works. They can become pathfinders, lighting the way for others in their profession to follow.
- To have the larger organizations that train and certify instructors throughout the USA and the world introduce these concepts and procedures into their training programs and certification tests.

### FOR PREPARERS OF INSTRUCTION MATERIALS

- Increase the percentage of instruction materials that tell the players how to *apply* their instruction and *maintain* performance improvement long term, rather than merely *telling them how to swing*.
- Increase the percentage of instruction materials in every format that document the effectiveness of their instruction by measuring performance before, during and after instruction, preferably with a group of players.

### FOR EVERYONE WHO NEEDS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

- Pique the interest of players whose golf games benefit from this book into learning how they can apply behavior modification principles in their business and personal life, such as are provided at [Behavior.org](http://Behavior.org). This is the Web site of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies, a group of leaders in this field who have taught me so much during the several decades I have served on their Board of Trustees.

The day I wrote this, one of the excellent instructors I helped train in this golf process told me that he and his wife just learned that a psychologist diagnosed their three-year old son as being borderline autistic. The U. S. Government, in response to a huge increase in reported cases of autism, recently recommended the use of behavioral therapy as the most effective way to treat children with this problem.

To get assistance, I immediately referred him to [Behavior.org](http://Behavior.org), which has, in the opinion of many experts, the most useful Web site on how to create measurable change in autistic children, among many wide-ranging topics.

We use the same basic principles in treating golf maladies, which are, fortunately, a much less serious problem for a family.

## **WHAT IS GOLF BEHAVIOR AND WHAT IS BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION OR BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS**

What is behavior? When many individuals hear the word *behavior*, they erroneously think it applies only to what a person *thinks* or what that person's general *personality traits* are.

Behavior is much more than that. In golf, it is *everything* you do taking a lesson, practicing or playing a round. It is your grip, stance, aim and alignment, body movements, club selection, shot strategy, visualization, commands to your body, swing analysis, swing corrections and practice habits.

It is to your benefit to think of all that activity as *behavior*. The reason is that there are *universal principles* for changing *any behavior* that is the *same, regardless of which behavior you are changing. It applies in all settings* — golf, business and the home. So once you learn how to change a golf behavior in one setting, you can begin to design your own solutions in another, perhaps not perfectly to start with, but better than you did before.

In the behavior modification approach, we describe what you are to do in your swing so precisely that you will know exactly *when* you are to do it *what* you are to do and to what *degree*. You receive a feedback system, so that you can self-correct your performance when the instructor is not present during solo practice or play on the course.

What is *not* a behavior? Instructors are *not* stating a behavior when they mention a *general personality trait* ("Be aggressive"). They are not stating a behavior when they are vague: "You are not releasing" or "You are coming off the ball".

Golf instructors are communicating a behavior when they tell players what they should *do, not simply know*, in terms that are *observable, measurable and objective* (everyone will agree on whether it occurs).

There are many advantages for being so specific. You can see whether you did it correctly. You can measure whether and how often it occurs. You eliminate misunderstanding. You will correct problems when you measure swing behaviors and results and begin to receive timely and accurate feedback about them, especially those you never tracked before.

What is *behavior modification* or *behavior analysis*, as it often named? It is a process that causes new behaviors to appear and existing ones to increase, maintain present levels, decrease or cease. Instead of basing it on someone's *opinion* of what works, experts base it on what *did work* in thousands of experiments in laboratory and applied settings.

## **WHAT PROMPTS THIS NEW APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION**

### **1. TOO MANY GOLF STUDENTS DO NOT IMPROVE**

After the initial learning stage, when utilizing traditional approaches to golf instruction, many golfers do not improve or achieve only a small percentage of their potential. I want to offer a remedy. Nor do golfers as a group improve their average handicap index, which has lingered around 15.7 for several decades.

This failure of players to improve occurs in spite of many of them playing a large number of rounds over their career, and, for some, hitting tens of thousands of practice shots.

It occurs in spite of huge advances in golf club and golf ball design and manufacture. In addition, in golf today, we have videos and computers that stop your swing and examine how it compares side-by-side to any one of hundreds of men and women on the professional tours. We understand how to better condition players. We have hundreds of clever practice aids.

This failure to improve occurs in spite of a tidal wave of readily available information about *how to swing* that comes at golfers in so many different formats. Golf instruction pours out from winners of tournaments and from instructors who are true students of the game. The failure of players to improve is not due to any lack of availability of information on how to swing. The problem lies elsewhere.

## **2. I KNOW HOW TO ANALYZE AND IMPROVE AN INSTRUCTION PROCESS**

I worked for years analyzing why large and medium-sized organizations could not design and deliver an instruction process that improved the on-the-job performance of employees and sustained that improvement long term. I would redesign the process, help install it and measure the substantial improvement that it produced. Usually the process was different from what conventional wisdom in the industry thought it should be.

I knew from my interviews and field observations that golf instruction needed a different process, not as to the *knowledge* instructors choose to impart, but in turning that knowledge into improved *student performance*.

For example, I wanted to know why a bigger percentage of golfers did not improve when taking lessons. What steps in traditional instruction were present or absent that caused the players not to improve or sustain it? From the many instructional successes, what factors caused those outcomes?

I also wanted to know why many more players who needed effective instruction did *not* take lessons. After all, many of those golfers invest considerable time and money playing golf. Yet, they have obvious and long-lasting but correctable swing faults.

Would a different system of instruction based on behavior modification be more effective and how much so? What exactly should the steps be in a process containing improved instruction and bolstered by proven behavior-change principles? How would I teach players, instructors and producers of training instruction to use those techniques?

## **3. CHANGING A GOLF SWING IS CHANGING BEHAVIOR**

I want instructors and players to apply to golf instruction what I, and many behavioral experts, find works in measurably changing behavior in business organizations, the home, schools and all settings for human activity.

As the president of a management consulting company for 30 years, the concepts and procedures I use in successfully changing the outputs of behavior in hundreds of organizations transfers easily to changing golfer's performance. When the president of a large Canadian computer company heard about my ideas, he said, "I like the idea that you are bringing a *business-like approach* to giving and taking golf instruction."

I was one of three people awarded a Career Achievement Award by the Organizational Behavior Management Network for applying behavior modification in business.

Often a field of activity improves greatly when it imports ideas from a very different field. Dave Pelz, a physicist, golf instructor, author and one of my heroes, brilliantly imported experimental methods from physics to study the effect of *physical forces* on swinging the golf club. As one of many powerful examples, he determined that any error in *club face angle* of the putter at impact causes 4.5 times the amount of misdirection on the putt as does the same degrees of error in the *path of the clubhead* at impact. If you have not yet purchased and read *Dave Pelz's Short Game Bible*, do so.

In a similar importing of ideas, I want to bring in experimental methods and procedures from Behavior Analysis to study the *behavioral forces* causing the players to succeed or fail.

As one example, I wondered how much students recalled at the end of the lesson of what the instructor said during the hour lesson when the player did not make an immediate written note of it during the lesson. My research shows that at the end of the lesson such players did not recall 50% to 90% of what they heard. If they cannot even recall it, what are their chances of applying it? I agree. Zero.

A minority of instructors write notes at the end of the lesson and give them to the student. Unfortunately, I found their notes also omit most of the lesson content. This occurs because they forget how much rich detail they provided during the lesson or because of a desire to make it easier for the student to recall it. However, when they provide complete notes, the student can read everything in the future to refresh memory.

In designing this process, I borrow from my decades of experience in applying behavior analysis to improve the outputs of human performance in organizations. In applying these principles, I have over 50,000 case histories showing measurable improvement in every type of organization and job function.

What has this all have to do with golf? Everything.

## **SIMILARITY OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN BUSINESS AND GOLF**

- Golf instruction involves communicating precise information clearly and having the student retain it for many years. I know how to do that from my extensive work in, for example, designing sales training programs and then testing and revising the material extensively until the students would perform successfully both in the classroom and on the job.
- Golf instruction requires changing the behavior of the instructor. I knew how to do that from the many programs I designed and wrote. For example, I produced training and behavior-change programs that measurably changed what the sales manager did to change the behavior of their sales people. It lasted 25 years so far in one large transportation carrier.
- Golf swings are like physical movements that have some similarity to the movements that manufacturing workers must make repetitively and precisely. I had experience in designing, writing and installing such programs in organizations.
- Golf instruction requires changing a player's behavior and maintaining it long term at high levels. I knew how to do that by writing clear procedures, by designing data collection and feedback systems and by providing positive

consequences. In business, when feedback was absent or faulty, veteran employees and managers did not know what their performance was. I found the same problem in golf.

- To change golfers' behavior, some of whom regard their prospects for improving as "hopeless," one key step is for the instructors to reinforce them often and specifically for any tiny improvement.

I knew how to do that. In one company on the New York Stock Exchange, 10 managers notified 10 employees they viewed as "hopeless" that they would be dismissed in 30 days if they did not improve. This was a legal procedure to protect the company when they terminated them, which the managers were certain would happen.

After they had done this and I heard about it, I suggested a different approach. I customized a behavior-change program for each employee and taught the managers to reinforce any tiny improvement in the problem area. As a result, the company did not terminate the employees. They retained nine of the 10 employees and promoted eight of those within a year. The improvement occurred in less than three weeks. The amount of improvement they created in such a short time in dealing with long-term employee problems dazzled the managers. The same process works wonders in golf.

## **WE EMPOWER THE PLAYERS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE DELIVERY AND APPLICATION OF THE LESSON**

Experts *empower* consumers to take more control of their purchases in many fields today by providing readily available information. This has had major impacts on the consumer in buying airline tickets, cars and books.

We empower the golf students to take control of *how to turn golf instruction from any of a number of different sources into* improved performance on the course. Those players who study this book will have more knowledge of how to change golf behavior than 95% of the instructors and other instruction providers.

## **WHAT WE EMPOWER THE PLAYER TO DO**

- Set performance goals that are measurable, observable and objective. Fewer than 10% of student goals today meet those three criteria.
- Choose the type of shots that the players want to improve that have the highest stroke-saving potential. Instead of guessing what this is, the players do this by gathering pre-lesson data on their performance and calculating the potential number of strokes they can save by type of shot. In contrast, traditional golf instruction teaches *five* times as many long game lessons as short game lessons. Yet in a poll, 76% of the Top 100 instructors stated that the player should take short game lessons to reduce average score the greatest number of strokes in the shortest time. It is a major disconnect.
- Players might offer to pay the instructors based on how much their *average score declines*, rather than how much *time* the lessons take. If the average score declines, agree in advance to pay the instructor his fee plus a justly deserved, healthy bonus. If the average score does not decline, the player pays nothing or a reduced amount.

Alternatively, you can suggest a combination approach of paying for time *and* results. (I have thousands of examples that paying for performance

improvement in all types of activities produces better results for the customer and the supplier.) The better instructors like the challenge and the increased income, much like the better player likes to have a bet on the match.

- Improve the clarity of the instruction. Probe the instructors whenever they use jargon, clichés and vague language that is not observable, measurable or objective. Ask the instructors to take *10 times as long* to demonstrate the swing or move your body, while explaining or pointing out the key differences between right and wrong.
- The moment the instructors state or demonstrate what to do, the player should make an *immediate* written note of it during the lesson. That occurs about 2% of the time now.
- Ask the instructors to break the swing change into much smaller steps of improvement that are easier to perform correctly and quickly.
- Request that the instructors provide a self-correcting feedback system for each swing behavior they teach so that you can make adjustments when practicing or playing without the instructors being present. Today, all the emphasis is in telling the golfer how to swing. Providing the golfer with a self-correcting feedback system for each key swing behavior almost never occurs.
- Record data on *each key* aspect of the performance that players wish to change. This can be on what they score in a segment of the game, on ball stopping position in relation to the target, on ball-flight patterns, on club path and clubface aim at impact, on measurable body positions and movement and even on specific thought processes. (I tell you how to do this later.) Recording data on these performance areas is extremely rare during lessons, practice and play on the course, though it does occur indoors when instructors use video, computers and sensors attached to the body.
- Change practice habits in the many ways I will later describe. Ask the instructors for specific home drills. I never see a player, including the top tour players, use all of the most effective practice techniques. For example, only 1.5% of amateurs on the practice range will place a club on the ground as an aid and alignment tool. Yet most amateurs unknowingly aim and align off the target in directions and distances that surprises them, once they receive accurate feedback on the misalignment.

Virtually no one records data on practice performance, though behavioral experts know that data collection and the resulting feedback is a powerful tool for detecting and correcting errors.

- Ask the instructors for a written long-term maintenance program to sustain what they wish you to do for the rest of your playing career. In traditional instruction, I have never seen one.

## **WHAT I BRING TO THE INSTRUCTION PROCESS**

I believe all players and instructors will benefit by reading this book and applying its principles to golf instruction and the application of it on the course. They should consider studying this behavioral process because it works so well in organizations, homes, schools and in playing golf. I wish I could also say that you should listen to me because I won national golf titles. Alas, I have won none.

On a much more modest scale, I did win about 20 plus club championships of various types. One year I was the club champion and the senior champion at two clubs simultaneously.

For three years in a row, I was one of the four finalists in the Super Senior championship for the state of Virginia. One year, I reached the 18<sup>th</sup> hole of the championship match one up. I had not been down in any matches during the tournament. I hit my shot on the green, 20 feet from the hole on the par-3 hole. My opponent, a former Virginia Amateur Champion, shocked me with a *hole-in-one* on the last hole of the regulation match and won the state championship on the extra hole. That event was extraordinary enough to make the monthly magazine published by the USGA.

My lack of titles notwithstanding, I do provide the readers with something I believe is more valuable to them than tournament wins on the Tour: a process based on scientific behavior-change procedures that will help all golfers turn *knowledge* of how to swing into measurably improved *performance* on the course, producing lower average scores and maintaining it long term.

### **A LOWER SCORE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LONGER DISTANCE**

I often hear instructors say that players taking instruction have other objectives that are more important than lowering their average score. Some instructors state that players primarily want to hit the ball longer. I doubt that. It is true that students often state lesson objectives that omit mention of lowering their average score. However, when you give them a choice between hitting longer shots and scoring lower, they almost unanimously say they choose the instructor who would help them score lower.

To find out, I asked 50 golfers with widely differing handicaps which of two instructors they would choose. The first instructor would increase the average distance of their shots by 20 yards. The second would lower their average score by three shots. Forty-six of them (92 percent) said they would choose the one lowering their average score. A typical reply was, "Are you kidding? I would *give up* twenty yards in distance to lower my average score. *Score is everything.*"

I was puzzled why the other four (8%) choose longer distance. Later, I went back to those four and asked them why they choose the instructor offering 20 extra yards on their shots. All four said that they thought that an extra 20 yards would lower their average score *by more than three shots*. Thus, even for those four players, their real objective was also lowering their average score.

### **NEW EQUIPMENT, MORE INSTRUCTION OR BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

It is possible that buying a new set of clubs will help lower your score. However, it is extremely doubtful that new clubs will produce anywhere near the scoring improvement that improving your swing will do. In addition, lessons are normally far less expensive than purchasing first-rate golf equipment.

How I wish that scoring improvement could come so easily by simply buying new equipment. If buying new high-tech clubs and balls has so much benefit, as many argue, average handicaps would have plunged in the last 20 years. Unfortunately, they have not. In the past 20 years, according to the USGA, average handicaps have gone down only about a stroke.

Let me make one point clear. If you have one or more clubs that are inappropriate for your swing, buying clubs that fit your swing will definitely help. I had a five-wood that caused me to hit nasty hooks that I could barely contain, in spite of a number of compensating contortions. Finally, I took it to an expert who switched me into a club that did not have that same hook face. That fixed the problem immediately.

Find out for yourself what difference new clubs make on handicap index at your club. Find ten experienced golfers with a legitimate established handicap who have purchased a set of new clubs in the past year. Make sure they are not newcomers or players who have radically changed the number of rounds they play or the amount of time they practice. Look up their handicap index now with what it was before they started using the new clubs. If the handicap index went down for most purchasers, find out what they bought and buy a set immediately.

Check their handicaps before and after they played 20 or more rounds with the new clubs. Be sure to check what the handicap computer says because the player's memory may be faulty. Perhaps the golf pro keeps a copy of the handicap report for past months. If not, the company processing the reports probably can generate old copies. Except for single-digit handicappers, if their average handicap has not declined by over three strokes, they will probably do better taking instruction using our approach.

For the group as a whole, you may or may not find little, if any, net reduction in the average handicap.

If players can afford both new equipment and lessons, they should take lessons first, using our behavior-change process to help lower their average scores. It will produce a larger improvement much faster than only buying new equipment. After you achieve lower scores, then consider new clubs.

In summary, unless your equipment badly matches your swing, buying equipment produces a minor scoring benefit, if any. Nor will you lower your score by simply acquiring more information about *how to swing*.

The biggest potential for lowering your average score comes from learning *how to apply golf knowledge to lower your average score and sustain the improvement*, which are the concepts and procedures in this book.

I hope you are now ready to learn Behavioral Golf Instruction.