

THE MOST IMPORTANT MENTAL SKILL – THE PATERSON FILE

When people make a list of all the mental skills they could be developing they tend to leave one off their list. The skill left off the list is really the one staring us straight in the face – yet we don't see it. OR...maybe we simply see all this other stuff and get lost in the jumble of thoughts. So what is that one skill. Let's make a list of what is not top dog on the list.

- **Relaxation skills** – because without it we could not focus clearly on our task.
- **Focus** – yup we need it, and yup you need to be able to control your impulses and relax before you can truly focus in a most productive manner.
- **Imagery** – so that we can direct our mental blueprint to where it is most beneficial.
- **Stress Management** – simply learning to handle distractions
- **Self Discipline** – making that commitment and sticking to it
- **Recovery** – learning to recover from a poor game, a series of head pins, etc.

All of the above we could work on and yes it would make you a better player. But...unless there is a grander picture the above won't net much gain. What is the one skill everything you do should be moving towards developing? It's the C word – CONFIDENCE.

To get to a stronger consistent mind set of confidence one must begin with AWARENESS. If confidence is the most important mental skill to develop than one very key element is Awareness. Awareness is about simply being aware in three main areas:

Physical

The physical part of awareness is really how it feels to execute correctly and when your game is a bit off being able to detect and correct by feel. Feel can be a subtle thing such as the extension you give each follow thru. Or it can be something basic such as knowing the feel associated with holding your follow thru. There is also the physical or feel component that results from when you are emotionally charged. – because this emotion has a ripple effect upon the quality and feel of execution.

Emotional

When playing well your emotional level sits at a certain point. It is essentially the degree of excitedness you feel when playing at your best. AND as importantly recognizing how to get yourself there when you are blasé, and when you are simply overly excited, possibly (overly excited, frustrated, or angry). Maintaining a perspective based on logic and focused on what you can control is important in getting your emotions back under control.

Intellectual

This is the problem solving side of you. Being ready and able to problem solve through the various challenges that come to you. And...doing so in a calm, rational, productive way. Once you solve the problem or at the very least have something you are going to try and do, the next job is to simply do it. In other words throw as if you cannot fail Here is where a sage piece of advice is '*don't get in the way of yourself*' is important.

A second part of the intellectual side is our ability to create our own perceptions. The vast majority of mental hurdles stem from a perceptual frame. How we choose to look at something plays greatly into our favour or disfavour. The key here is to bring everything to what you control. For example: I you may not presently feel that you can average 200, in fact thinking of this may create anxiety, and doubt in your mind. Maybe you are simply just not good enough. (despise

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the term 'good enough'). Instead of thinking of all the things out of your control begin to plot a map for how you are going to get to your goal. Maybe it includes improving your follow through, being more patient, taking your time on the lane so that you do not rush. A great resource to help you with framing includes a book written by Dr. Gio Valiante titled *'Fearless Golf' Read it and I am betting you become a more consistent athlete in whatever you choose.*