

The Inner Game of Golf

An Interview with Dan DeMuth

by Wes Hamilton

First of a seven-part series

I had an amazing experience last year while I was on my journey to learn how to play golf. I met Dan DeMuth, a golf professional, through a network of friends. When I was introduced to him, I felt like I knew him. We chatted for a few minutes and I recalled the full-page article that the *Star Tribune* did on this unique process of teaching people their “natural golf skills.”

I enrolled in the Discovery series sessions for Better Golf, and a few weeks later called Gary Beckman to ask if I could play golf with him. The lessons and the golfing with Gary continued through the summer and early fall.

The reason I am sharing this story with you is that after spending my summer training with Dan, two things of great impact happened for me. First, I ended the year shooting a very respectable golf score — started out shooting 125, ended the year shooting 96 (for those who don’t play golf — the lower the score the better). Second, my business increased 30 percent above last year’s sales!

A very exciting thing happened when I learned how to play “Better Golf”: my golf score got lower and my income got higher. What a great concept!

I asked Dan if he would be willing to share some information about his unique process for improving golf scores and unlocking the happiness. Dan agreed to do a series of articles so we can learn the process of personal empowerment through “Better Golf.”

Dan, why did you start Dan DeMuth’s Better Golf?

Dan DeMuth: The company started from my own personal breakdowns. When I was in high school, I could shoot in the mid to lower 70s and played as the No. 1 guy on the golf team for four years.

I went away to college to study professional golf management. Three years later, it became a game that I couldn’t do. I found myself shooting in the mid to upper 80s. As my travels took me around the country to see many top teaching professionals, I found my game getting worse and worse. It was like I was playing a game I had never played before. At that time, I was teaching golf the same way I was taught, using the mechanical and technical skills that golf pros teach, telling people how to hit the ball. It’s what helped my game go from bad to worse, but I just didn’t know any better.

A client of mine had introduced me to a different approach and that had helped me to take a look at many things in my life well beyond golf. I still couldn’t get the concept that my own natural ability is inside of me. I didn’t understand, until I had a breakdown, that my own natural ability was inside of me.

What was the breakdown you refer to?

DeMuth: During this time, my dad was dying from cancer. I didn’t know where I was going to teach during the winter that year, and my wife (at the time) and I filed for divorce. There was truly a moment in time where I wasn’t sure where to go or what to do.

It was my clients who helped me to recognize that my own studio would be a place to set up my practice to help with my identity of who I am and what I would like to do for people.

When I opened my studio, I shared the office/studio space with the Fairway Foundation (golf program for inner city and underprivileged kids). There were many awakening moments as I

drove back and forth between the St. Cloud Hospital to visit my dying father and my studio in Golden Valley. Part of myself was watching the pain of my dad lying in the hospital bed, and another part of me was working with my clients coming into the studio to golf and explore. You would think that many of those people would be in complete joy learning to play golf, but that was not the case. This is when my true learning happened.

I mean, what extremes I was able to observe. It appeared as though my Dad was more happy when he got a chance to get out of bed and walk down the hall of the hospital than it was when my clients had a club in their hand learning how to lower their golf score!

This is when my awareness set in about the possibilities, that we all have choices.

Each day, we get to make choices in golf, business, relationships, etc.

At this point in my life, the game of golf wasn’t the only interesting aspect of the game that was intriguing me. The inner concept of playing the game on and off the course fascinated me. I observed in my training that the white ball was always telling us something about ourselves: the way we choose to play, how we look around others. Why did these things matter? It’s only a game we call golf?

I remember a time when I left the hospital after visiting my dad. I was reflecting on a round of golf that I had with him and my mom. This round really was one that was the breakdown for me. Part one of my breakdown was in my mind. I had a visual fear of getting a double bogie (not a good thing) on the first two holes. That always meant to me that I couldn’t shoot in the 30s for these nine holes. Guess what? This round, I bogied (not a good thing) the first two holes! I remember walking off the course saying to myself, “Why waste any more time today? The round is over!” Looking back, I can remember that on any given day I could have birdied (a very good thing) the other seven holes! That would have allowed me a score of 33 (par is 36).

But I never thought of the possibilities!

Part two of my breakdown that day was that even if I shot a 45 for nine holes, and it took me 10 seconds to hit each shot, 45 shots times 10 seconds would be 7.5 minutes of actual hitting the ball. An average round of golf for nine holes takes two hours. I realized that I had 112 minutes to get to know my parents better and enjoy the beautiful landscape during the time that time I wasn’t hitting the ball. Those thoughts didn’t dawn on me. What a game!

What makes your golf school unique?

DeMuth: The school has been committed to helping people see the possibilities. We look at the inner game of life and the outer game of golf. We do a number of exercises to help illustrate many different ways to look at things. For example, club throwing, collages, and coin-moving exercises are designed to help people connect their natural flow with the power of intention.

NEXT MONTH: Awakening your own possibilities through golf, on and off the course.

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