

THE GOLF WHISPERER: AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN DEMUTH

by Wes Hamilton

Fourth of a seven-part series

Golf seems to be a game of skill, creativity and frustration. How can I do so well sometimes and then look like klutz with next shot? I have noticed that I still continue to enjoy the game very much! I feel like I am playing better, however my scorecard is not improving at a consistent rate. I know at first I was only counting the good shots I hit (my theory was, why count the bad shots? It's not what I wanted the shot to do, so it didn't always get counted.) Now I count all the shots. OK, so I admit my score is improving, and I feel like I am able to feel the shot, connect to the ball and put the ball where I want it to go on a more constant basis.

I had more questions for The Golf Whisperer.

Dan, what coaching skills do you use to provide a space for your clients to practice their awareness skills, feeling the shot and playing the game of golf and on and off the course?

Dan DeMuth: The first tee is usually where the anxiety of the

day's golf game starts. This is the arena that the story of your game begins to take on a life of its own. Here is where you need to look at the story of today's game.

Is today's game about you playing for enjoyment and being with friends, is the game about beating your partners, are you going to beat your lowest score, is the game for the day about what new technique you have been practicing? Whatever this story is, it becomes the energy of where your game starts.

Next, be aware of the outside influences that may be distracting you and causing interference. Is your attention being pulled toward the clubhouse, the pro shop, your golfing partners, other players?

The action I suggest to my clients is to begin visualizing the player you will be today! Try making up a different name for yourself if you can't see yourself any different. With the new identity, you give yourself permission to move past your limitations.

The game of golf has always been known as a game of mental skills, mind over matter, focus, intentions, etc. If this is true, how is it that the game deals so much with our feelings?

DeMuth: Feelings in the game of golf can range from joy to rage. Every time we try to use only one of our natural abilities, such as our mind, our other skills and feelings seem to want equal attention. We need to work with these natural abilities equally. Notice what triggers your feelings. Are you nervous, confident, timid, aggressive? Then become aware of what

feelings best support your success. What feelings best align with the story you want to create for today's golf game?

When you become aware of non-supporting feelings, take a few moments, take three deep breaths, release those feelings, then recreate your visual of today's you, playing today's game, and connect to the supportive feelings. Then step into the visual and take the shot.

You said take the shot. I would like you to talk about course management. How you teach your clients to choose their target?

DeMuth: The target is one of the key factors in golf. I ask my clients if they see the target. It might sound silly, however in a huge field of green if we don't have a clear picture of what we are going to do with the golf shot, we may end up with a not so good shot.

I like to encourage my clients to verbally call out the shot of where the ball will travel and where it will land.

How do I deal with expectations I have for myself and my game? It seems that my expectations are the frustrating part of my game.

DeMuth: We golfers expect to make most, if not all, of our shots perfect. In reality, there are very few perfect shots. Even with

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some of our clients who shoot under par, they don't shoot all of their shots perfect. Be real and honest with yourself and accept the misses as an opportunity to learn and be creative.

When you're "in the flow and shooting low," be cautious about getting attached to the outcome. Why not choose to stay connected to the target and to the present moment!

Another key factor in course management begins with choosing your golf partners. Which partners are able to be helpful by supporting your game? Which partners are critical and damaging to your game? Are your playing partners there to be "helpful" by critiquing what you're doing wrong? Or are they there to allow you to play your own game?

Creating conscious choices of who your playing partners are will dramatically affect your golf game.

What type of coaching do you use to connect your clients' intentions with the course they are playing?

DeMuth: I ask my clients if they are taking the time to think and feel through each shot, from tee box to the green. I encourage them to actually map out several different options of approaching the green. Doing this opens the door to creativity and begins the process of creating your own game, on and off the course.

This map of a par 5 hole will show how options can be created for your game.

NEXT MONTH: "Who's moving your coin on and off the course."

DAN DeMUTH is the Golf Whisperer inspiring people to play "Better Golf" on and off the course. The Better Golf Studio is located in Golden Valley, Minn. Contact Dan at (763) 513-9285 or e-mail dbgolf@qwest.net

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