

Developing a Golf Program – From Youth to High School

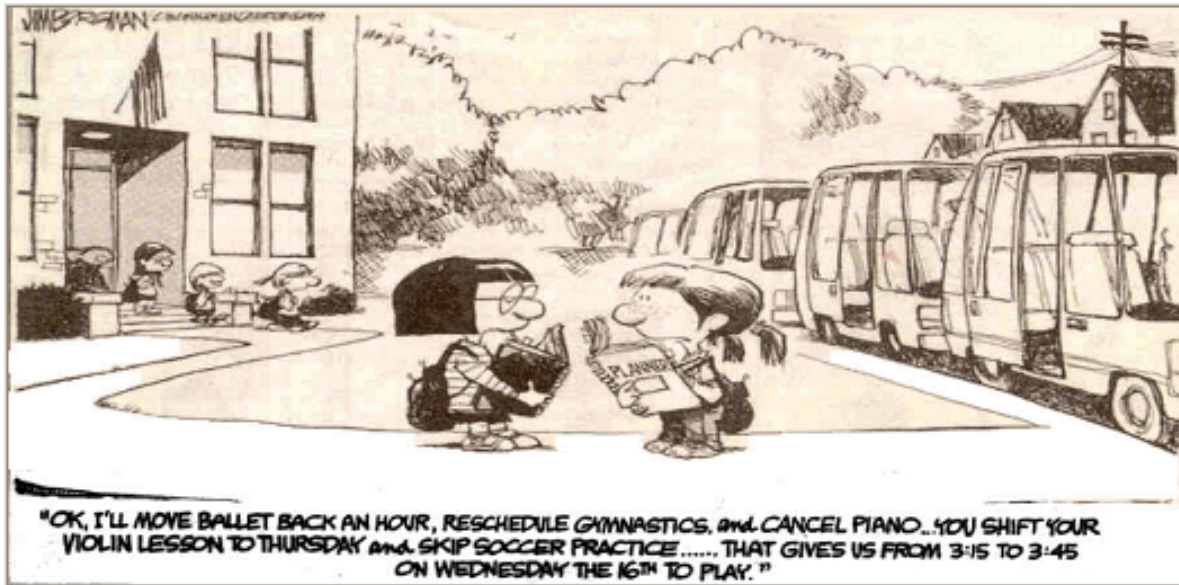
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Abstract

This paper will be used as a blue print for the process that will help me develop a golf program progressing from a youth camp to starting a middle school program and ending with the expectations of the athletes on the high school golf team. Multiple topics will be discussed, which include not specializing in just one sport for all ages, dealing with parents, "developmental assets" (Benson), and developing life skills. I give tips for how parents can respond after a competition with their athlete. This paper also covers the details of for the amount of support and challenge that would be present at each step along the way. At the end of each stage I will give an explanation of how I will evaluate the program as a whole, the youth involved, my volunteers/helpers, and, most importantly, myself.



(Harford)

First thing I want to do is give a description of myself and the type of coach/person I am. In my opinion, the first part of a successful program is for the participants to know who the coach of the program is. I am always looking for ways to improve my coaching and teaching skills, while expecting to see each of the participants improve throughout the course of the season or program. Improvement does not only include skills, but also developing ideas of how to become a successful competitor and building positive relationships with teammates. A competition is not meant to be about winning or losing, it is about developing your skills in order to move on to the next stage. My approach to what a competition is has changed due to coaching freshman girls' basketball, because not many people in the athletic program care about winning or losing at this stage. The more important part is getting them developed so they are ready to compete for the Junior Varsity or Varsity team.

A athletic program can be broken down into 6 stages according to Balyi in *Game On* by Farrey. First, the "FUNdamentals", these are incorporated in a summer youth program when the youth are just starting out with a sport. Next, "learning to train" after a year or two of the FUNdamentals the youth that want to learn more about the sport will enter into a new program that will change the focus, but still focus on the fundamentals of golf. Then, "training to train" will be the purpose of the next program, which could include a middle school program or a summer tournament series. "Training to compete" comes next, which will be implemented in the beginning years of the high

school team. It may require athletes to compete on the J.V. golf team to get experience to make the Varsity team better. The other way to train would be to compete in a summer tournament series. The final step of the program occurs in high school and leads into college, is "training to win". After the athlete is done with their career, whether it is high school, college, or professional, comes retirement.

Throughout all of these phases of a youth program personal athletic development can increase from "being taught or fostered, but not just merely by participating in the program" (Gould, 2008, pg 299). This means just by being a part of the program does not guarantee success.

FUNdamentals

FUNdamentals are used when youth athletes are just starting out and want to get experience with the sport. The development of their skills is not as important as them getting a good impression of the sport. I would use this first program to help build positive relationships between youth and the adults that are running to the program, which is one of Bensons Developmental Assets for children at this age. I would want to build in some sport specific information, which includes common courtesies when playing a sport like golf and skills that are required for the sport, chipping, putting, and making contact with the ball.

This program would be for youths between the ages of six and nine. This program would be three hours a day for a week, just to get the youth introduced to the

sport. With it being a few hours long I would include a snack and beverage for each athlete. This program would require a low athlete to instructor ratio, so I would need to have helpers to keep the ratio low. The athletes on the high school golf team would be the first people I would go to for help. To evaluate how this program went I would ask the youth for what they thought of the program and how they thought they improved during the program. I would also ask the parents what their children said about the program after they left each day. The cost of the program for each youth would be \$150 dollars, which would be \$10 per hour of instruction.

Learning to Train

Then for those that choose to move on there needs to be another program. This next step in the scaffolding of their skills would meet for five hours a day for a week. This program would be offered for youth between the ages of eight and twelve. Once again keeping the athlete to instructor ratio low would be most beneficial to help improve the youth skills and not make me feel overwhelmed. I think the highest ratio I would allow is 10 athletes to 1 instructor. This program would still focus on developing individual personal skills and building self-confidence while also focusing more on developing skills, which would now include some course management, full swings, tournament preparation, and how to practice to notice lifelong improvement.

I feel that keeping the price per hour the same for the first two stages is important, so this program would cost \$250 per week. This price would include lunch,

range balls, soft drink, and on Friday of the program a round of golf to put the skills into practice. Evaluation for this program would still include evaluations given to athletes and parents in the program, but now I could evaluate each athlete on their skill improvement, knowledge of the game, and making a recommendation for what I think the athlete should do next.

Both FUNdamentals and Learning to Train should have a motto that keeps the programs on track and I think the motto of the First Tee is a very good thing that incorporates a lot of good features. The motto for the First Tee is, "we help shape the lives of young people from all walks of life by reinforcing values like integrity, respect and perseverance through the game of golf."

In my opinion, "learning to train" requires 65% support, examples are with the rules, etiquette, techniques of golf and descriptions of course management, while also providing 35% challenge; putting contests, chipping contests and practical use of course management in a round of golf.

I got an approximate cost and length for these two programs from the Troy Sports Camps website. I know multiple coaches at Athens High School are in charge of the Troy Sports Camps for the sport they coach at the high school level. They are able to use the JV and Varsity athletes on their team to help coach, which gives the youth an idea of how caring Athens High School athletes are. This is an important Developmental Asset for middle childhood youth.

Two important conversations to have in the FUNdamentals and Learning to Train are to talk to parents about their roles in their athlete's life by participating and supporting the athlete. I will talk a lot more about the role of the parent in the last section of this paper. The other is to make sure the athlete knows that he/she can "be successful at a young age in one sport, but that does not guarantee them success at an older age" (Gould, 2010, pg 6). This is why I feel so adamant about being active in a wide variety of sports through their whole life, because you never know what you are good at until you have tried. See the table on page 10 to see the benefits and detriments to early sports specialization.

One problem that may occur with the first two phases of this process is the amount of funding for the athletes. On top of paying to participate in the clinic, golf clubs would have to be available for the athletes to use. I could go around to local businesses for donations for the program. The problem with golf clubs is they have to be the correct size, and I know the golf course I work at does not have youth rental clubs.

Some important pieces of information that I need to make sure to cover with these athletes is how to compete without becoming a decompetitor. I would explain this by telling them they need to worry about themselves improving and not about beating the other players (Shields, 2009). Other information that will be discussed is proper etiquette when on the practice range, putting green, on the course and the rules

of the game. Knowing the rules is so important, because golf is a sport where you have to self-officiate the round of golf, for yourself and your playing competitors.

The Benefits and Detriments to Early Sports Specialization

Benefits

- Better coaching and skill instruction
- Enhanced skill acquisition-deliberate practice accumulation
- Improved time management
- Structured use of time in a productive way
- Enjoy sport and talent development

Detriments

- Costs
 - Time demands
 - Burnout and motivation loss
 - Increased stress and pressure
 - Social isolation
 - Lost childhood
 - Premature identity foreclosure
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(Gould, 2010, pg 17)

Training to Train

The next stage in developing a golfer will be broken into 2 different parts, an after school golf program at the middle school and a summer tournament series. The middle school program would be offered to students between the ages of 12 and 14. The summer tournament series would be open for golfers between the ages of 10 and 17 to allow high school athletes to compete.

To get the after school program started I would have to get the okay from the school district, but after explaining the purpose of the program, which is not just about developing golf skills, it is about keeping the kids off of the street and out of the trouble. The school (policymakers) decide what is most important for kids, and this program is a short step to help control and "remediate" them (Hellison, 2000, pg 33). I could use the research from Coatsworth to help with my cause because he said, "after-school between 2 pm and 6 pm is the riskiest part of the day for youth" (Coatsworth, D, pg 58).

I would first start the programs at the middle schools that feed into Athens High School and see how it goes. I would offer it in the opposite season of my golf season, so if I am coaching girls the middle school program would be in the spring, so I would be able to work with both programs in the same school year. This would be an intramural sport to begin with and then possibly grow into being able to compete against the other middle schools. Parents would have to pay for this program, but for

any program at Troy the parents can request a waiver to not pay a portion of the price if the student qualifies for free or reduced lunch. A middle school program costs \$150 in Troy, so that would be the cost for this program. Now is the time when I would encourage parents to purchase their children a set of their own golf clubs so they don't have to use rentals or others athletes anymore.

When presenting the program to the school district I would need to have develop and explain how I would accommodate these nine factors "1) clear mission 2) high expectations and positive social norms 3) safe environment 4) supportive climate 5) small enrollment 6) trained personnel 7) appropriate pedagogy for children's needs 9) frequent assessments" (Coatsworth, D. pg 61).

This program would have practices that are enjoyable so the stress of the program is not too high for the athletes. The program would focus on teaching the rules of the game, how to be a true competitor, and work on the skills that are needed to train like chipping, putting, hitting the ball, course management, and etiquette of being on the golf course. I would have to make contact with a golf course in Troy to see if they would be willing to allow a group of us out on the golf course. I would make sure I did not have too many students at the golf course at one time, so if needed I could have an assistant that had part of the group at the school teaching rules, etiquettes, and putting, while I had a group at the golf course.

I would have the athletes set a goal for them to accomplish in the program. By making the athletes use goal setting it "helps individuals identify the successes of achievement, both positive and realistic" (Gould, 2008, pg 294). In order to keep improving I would promote my summer tournament series for those that want the competition to see how they can improve their skills. And if they don't want to participate in the summer series they need keep practicing over the summer. I would make sure they know that golf is not a sport that you can just show up during the season and expect to be just as good as when you stopped the season before.

I would really encourage the athletes in this program to participate in other athletic programs throughout the year in order to not obtain overuse injuries, which "occur when tissue is injured due to repetitive pressure on the body" (Halford, 2011). By being a member on another program other muscles, tendons, and tissues are used in order to strengthen those muscles while also giving the muscles a break that are used in golf. Being involved with any athletic program will allow "improvement in both physical and psychosocial health outcomes for youth" (Coatsworth, D., pg 59)

Another important part to this program is the relationships that could be formed due to a similar interest, golf. I witnessed this happen this year with a new student from Colorado. She joined the cheerleading team and it seems like she has always been one of the cheerleaders. The girls have taken her under their wings, which has made the

transition to a new school much easier. I still have friends from when I started competing in a travel summer golf league when I was 9 years old.

In my opinion this stage it is important to provide 50% support, examples are with the rules, etiquette, techniques of golf, building relationships and importance of being a diverse athlete, while also providing 50% challenge; putting contests, chipping contests and an ideal contest against others of similar abilities in a set number of holes of golf. (Shields, 2009, pg 31)

The evaluation process for this would allow me to give the athletes suggestions for different things to work on during the offseason. I could start quizzing the athletes on different scenarios that happen on the course to see if they would apply the rule correctly. I would still allow the athletes to evaluate me and the program for things that I could change for the next year.

Training to Compete

The summer tournament series could be included in this phase of the developmental process, too. In particular the first few years of high school are used to develop an athlete's skills to be ready to compete in a contest with other athletes. This step will be very similar to the training to win, except it will require more development of their golf skills.

In this phase, I will still focus on building positive relationships between competitors. I will also keep teaching proper etiquette and the rules of the game that

are required for the athletes to know, because in high school golf it is very important that you know how to apply the rules for yourself and your playing partners. If you do not know what the rules are, then it will cause delays and incorrect score submissions.

Just like the previous phases, I would still encourage athletes to compete in multiple different sports in order to prevent overuse injuries by just focusing on one sport. I would promote taking time during all seasons, including when our season is off to go practice once or twice a week at the driving range or dome during the winter to keep the muscle memory fresh, but to not overdue it.

I will require this phase and the next to come help me work the youth clinics and middle school program when needed. This will allow the younger athletes to see what happens when the time and practice are put into the sport. By being involved in a high school sport it "could supply motivation for athletes to go to school, while teaching them hard work and hope" (Gould, 2006, pg 2). Like I said in the previous section the sport could build bonds between teammates that will make sure that all members of the team want to be in school to help the team after school.

This phase I feel requires a lot of support and a lot of challenge, but more support to develop into being an athlete that moves on to the next stage. The percentages that I put with this phase are 65% support and 35% challenges. Ideally all of the athletes will already have the support from me through all of the previous stages,

but people move and people decide they want to take on a new challenge or develop a skill for the sport later in life.

Training to Win

At this stage in the process I believe the athletes need 25% support and 75% challenge. The support comes when they are on the driving range hitting balls to make little improvements to their swing or helping them make the correct choice in whether they want to pitch the ball or bump and run a chip shot. The challenge comes from the different scenarios I will set-up for the athletes to simulate the competition the players will be facing. This may mean competing against each other or competing against themselves by improving from day to day. It will not just mean beating their score from the day before either, I may take a day and focus on the small things that mean a lot like hitting a specific number of fairways with their tee shots, hitting a specific number of greens in regulation, or the number of putts in a round.

With the competition that I chose to involve in our daily practices I have to make sure that I am leading the athletes to become true competitors and not giving them material to turn into decompetitors. And if I have a decompetitor on the team I will make sure they change their approach so they know that in order to help the team they have to help themselves first.

It is important for athletes when they are training to win to know that I do not want them to train so much that they get burned out. I was talking with a soccer coach

this year about how much soccer the girls play throughout the course of their career.

The girls do not play volleyball or basketball so they can play soccer year round. He said by the time they get a scholarship to go play at a university they are tired of playing soccer. This is why I want my athletes playing at least one other sport to take a break and work their muscles differently to prevent the risk of overuse injuries.

Being the leaders on my team will require them to make the newcomers feel welcome, but that does not mean following old "traditions" or making new traditions of hazing the new members. Some may see hazing as a way to welcome a teammate to the team, but really it makes the new teammates shut down to the rest of the team. To make all members feel welcome and have a say on the team I would allow the team to come up the expectations and consequences for when a member of the team does not follow the expectations.

I will still need to implement in my program things that were taught in the training to compete sections, which are the ability to self-officiate themselves and the other people in their group. In order to self-officiate each member on the team needs to know the rules of the game, but also the etiquettes that come with the sport of golf, like not walking in another player's line or talking in another athlete's backswing. I want to develop a team that knows what is right and does the right things when a coach is or is not present.

Parent Involvement

The last part that is just as important, as any of the other stages, is the contact that is made with the parents of the athlete in my program. It might be as simple as telling a parent in the FUNdamentals group your son or daughter had a great day, he/she accomplished this today. As the child gets older and the competition gets tougher there is a lot more to talk to the parents about, like if they are going to come watch a golf meet they can't help or distract the athlete. I would require a parent meeting with me where we develop expectations together for the season for them and me. When I see a parent out supporting their athlete and doing what is expected I will have a positive comment or conversation with the parent to build a strong bond between them and me. The expectations would allow the parents to know that I am interested in having their child be successful during a competition and after a competition.

I would also want to make sure to let the parents know if they are having negative impacts on the team chemistry. There is a parent on the Varsity Girls' Basketball team that thinks he knows more than the coach, so during halftime he has a conversation with his daughter. After practice he makes her practice more, but expects at 4:30 to be able to work with her even when the team is not done with what they are doing. He affects her attitude when he is around, she usually works a lot harder in practice when he is there and is lazy when he is not. The father undermines the head

coach by making her defend the starting lineup she has chosen, which she feels will give the team the best chance to win. I want to be able to know that if this is happening with a parent I am able to tell the parent that he/she is ruining the team chemistry with them knowing that I am saying it with the best interest of the team in mind.

Two tips I will give parents about the interaction with their athlete is to keep the conversations positive and allow 24 hour cool off period if the parent wants to critique the athlete on their performance. The cool off period would go for me talking to parents also, if a parent has a complaint it may be better for both of us to have time to cool off before we talk so things are not said that are not meant. The table on the next page is a good source for parents to see what things they should and should not do when they are talking to their athlete.

I would want to have a post season meeting with the parents regarding how they thought the season went, not just by what our team record was. The post season meeting would allow me to know what things they think I need to work on in terms of communication with them and getting the most out of their child. It will not be a time for the parent to complain about playing time or how I ruined their athletes experience with the sport.

The progression from one stage to another will allow the optimal opportunity for each athlete to become the best competitor and athlete. The stages will allow each athlete to build relationships with people that have similar interests and find a role

model with a good head on their shoulders. The whole way through this process the athlete needs a support system, which I am going to try to provide them, but they also need their parents to support and encourage them.

List of Dos and Don'ts for parents

DO's	DON'Ts
1. Hold emotionally intelligent sport discussions (e.g., allow child to have space to cool off after a competition)	1. Focus majority of conversations at home on child's sport/performance
2. Provide love and support regardless of the outcome	2. Criticize child for sport performance
3. Act calm and confident during competition	3. Critique child immediately after competition or in car ride home
4. Provide ample opportunity and resources	4. Discourage child if he/she does not have immediate success in a sport
5. Make child responsible for preparation	5. Allow sport to dominate child's life
6. Hold realistic expectations	6. Exert pressure to win
7. Emphasize player development and fun over winning and rankings	7. Treat child differently depending on outcome
8. Have a stable home life	8. Focus on short term results/ rankings over long term development
9. Expose child to many different activities and sports (don't specialize too early)	9. Consider child's sport an investment for which should receive a return
10. Keep success in perspective	10. Put own interests ahead of child's
11. Display a positive and optimistic parenting style	11. Never allow child any "say" in sport decisions
12. Hold child accountable for poor behavior during competitions	12. Coach child when it hurts the parent-child relationship
13. Push child to practice when lazy	13. Get too caught up in sport and make it overly important
14. Encourage child to seek out opportunities and challenges	14. Tell child opponent is not good enough to beat him or her
15. Model an active lifestyle and healthy eating habits	15. Consider son or daughter an athlete first, and their child second
16. Emphasize core values such as "if you're going to do it, do it right!"	16. Show no interest in child's sport
17. Emphasize the importance of hard work	
18. Provide transportation, logistical and financial support	
19. Recognize and encourage child when doing something right	
20. Help make sport fun	

**Adapted from a study of junior tennis parents' roles in tennis success (Gould, Lauer, Roman, & Pierce, 2005)*

(Lauer, 2005, pg 12)

External Assets

Support

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. Caring neighbourhood
5. Caring school climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment

7. Community values youth
8. Youth as resources
9. Service to others
10. Safety

Boundaries & Expectations

11. Family boundaries
12. School boundaries
13. Neighbourhood boundaries
14. Adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations


Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities
18. Youth programs
19. Religious community
20. Time at home

What Teens Need to Succeed

40

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS!



Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement motivations
22. School engagement
23. Homework
24. Bonding to school
25. Reading for pleasure

Positive Values

26. Caring
27. Equality and social justice
28. Integrity
29. Honesty
30. Responsibility
31. Restraint

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making
33. Interpersonal competence
34. Cultural competence
35. Resistance skills
36. Peaceful conflict resolutions

Positive Identity

37. Personal power
38. Self-Esteem
39. Sense of purpose
40. Positive view of personal future

http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/40_Dev_Assets/

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