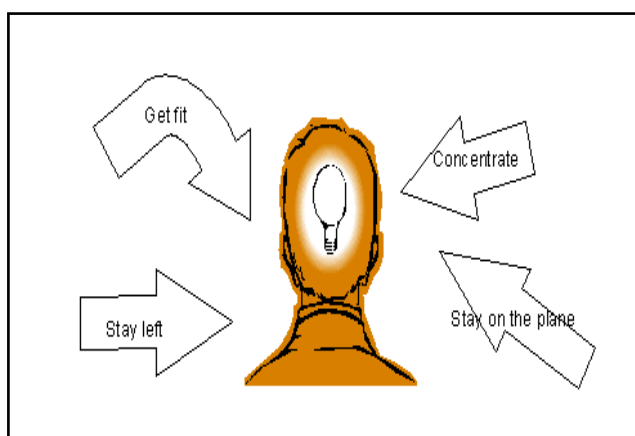


## INTRODUCTION

There is an endless supply of information on what golfers should do to improve. The monthly magazines are filled with tips, what to practice, how to practice. If you were to apply everything you read, you would need several hundred hours of practice time every day. The real problem for any golfer wishing to improve is to decide how they can make the best use of the practice time they have available. This may sound difficult. Certainly it is not simple. One thing is certain though, if golf practice is not handled in a systematic way, improvement will be haphazard at best. It is unfortunately true that most golfers waste most of their practice time. Worse than this though, is the confusion caused by the mountains of tips, theories, etc that golfers are constantly exposed to. How do you filter this information to find what you need?



The various parts of the improvement puzzle can be put together. It is important to understand that the solution is different for everyone. General principles have to be applied to every golfer. There are two key concepts which underpin successful training. One is an understanding of what elements make a good golfer. The Windmill demonstrates this graphically. The other is an understanding of how skills can be improved. Two improvement models to improve a golfer's skills are described. Individualised practice programs can be developed from these models.

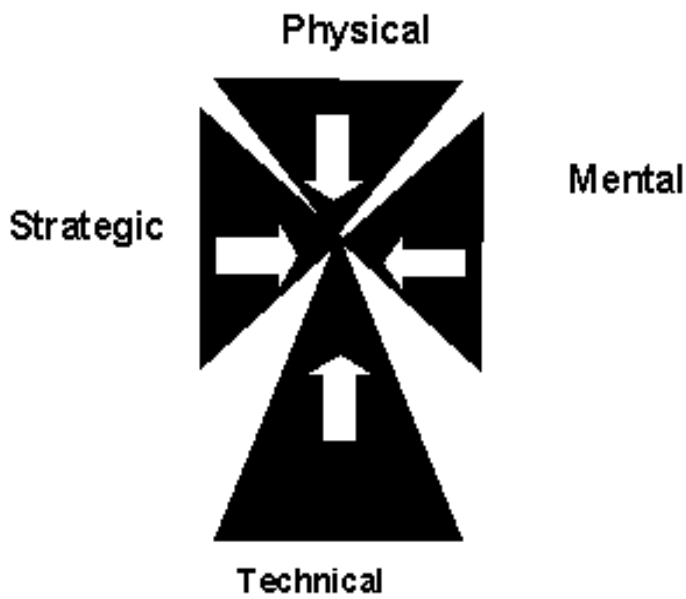
## THE WINDMILL

For any sporting activity, the success of the player is determined by four factors. For golf, these factors are -

1. The **technical** skill levels of the player (how well each shot type can be played)
2. The **physical** attributes of the player (strength, flexibility etc)
3. The **mental** skills of the player (concentration, etc)
4. The **strategic** skills of the player (course management).

A golfer improves only because one or more of these factors improve. Successful training is centred around the development of these four factors, usually called training factors. The relationship of each of these factors to a golfer's ability and improvement is shown below in the Windmill.

The Windmill is composed of four triangles connected together. Each of these triangles represents a training factor. The size of each triangle is symbolically important. The technique triangle is larger than the others because it is the foundation of the golfer. Nothing else matters if the skill to play the shot is not there. The beginner golfer is at the outside of the Windmill's arms. As the training factors improve, they move in the direction of the arrows, towards the centre. At elite levels the four factors merge, with the golfer having each training factor well developed and in harmony.



At any time during the development of a golfer, a point can be found on each arm of the Windmill that represents the level of expertise of each training factor. If the four points are connected, the area enclosed by these points is a measure of the quality of the golfer. The smaller the area, the better the golfer. It can be seen that if one of the training factors is less developed than the others, the quality of the golfer is disproportionately affected.

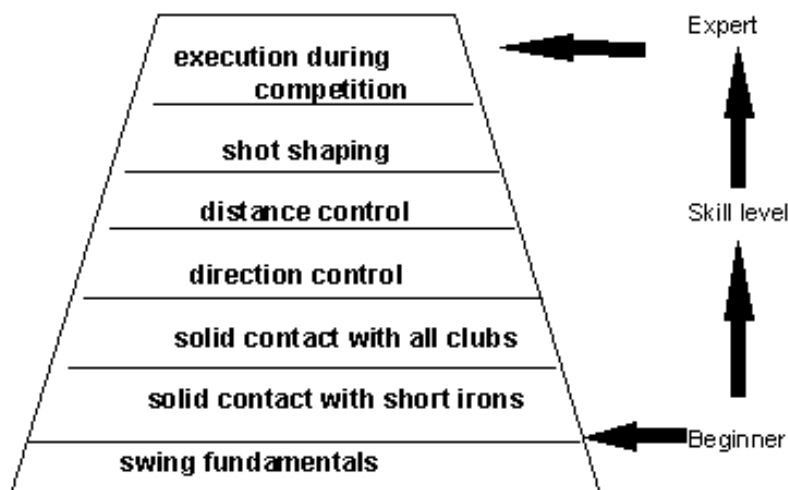
Although the development of each of the training factors is a continuous process, there are identifiable stages that the golfer goes through. Each arm of the windmill can be segmented into these stages. The lines between the stages can be considered milestones that are passed along the path of improvement. These segments are discussed below.

The smaller the area  
the better, the player



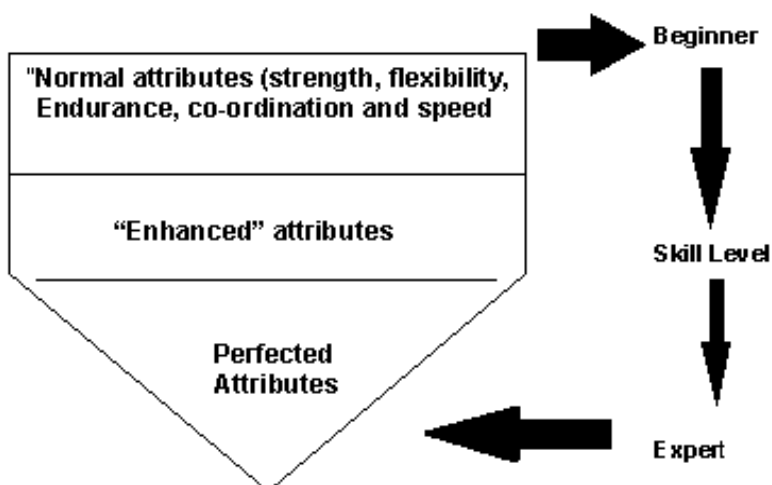
## Technical Skills

The seven identifiable parts of the technique triangle are shown below in the diagram. It is important to realise that each successively higher stage requires the golfer to be competent in each of the preceding stages. For example, working on shot shaping will be futile if reliable solid contact is not being made.



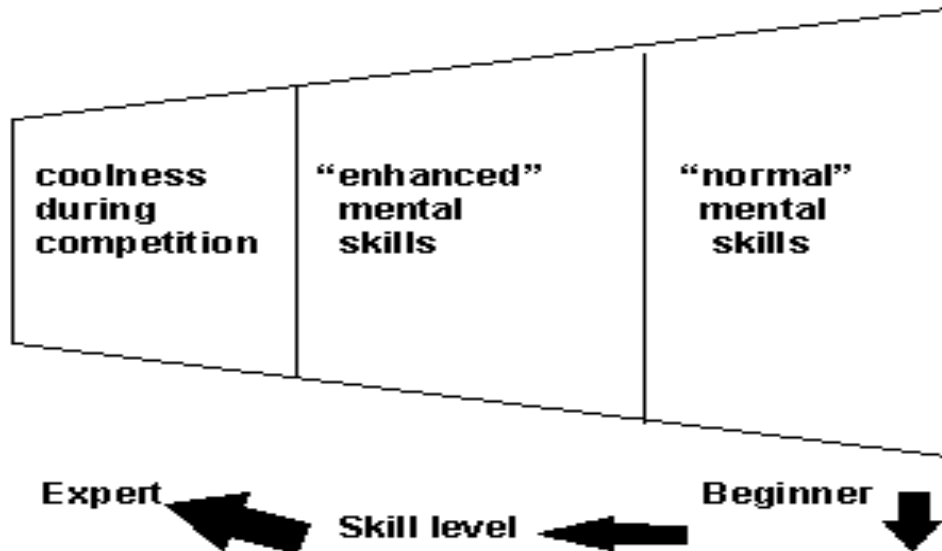
## Physical Attributes

The physical “machine” of the player is far more important than most golfers realise. Whenever a person begins to learn to play golf, they adapt their current biomotor capacities (strength, flexibility, endurance, speed and coordination) to their golf swing. These capacities will vary enormously from player to player. Eventually, this adaptation process becomes complete and stagnation occurs. Unless the golfer is a good athlete, it is likely that physical factors will be the ultimate limitation to improvement. If physically limiting factors are identified, specific training can be undertaken to enhance them. Many “average” golfers are only average because of their bodies. At the elite level, golfers have to be good athletes.



## Mental Skills

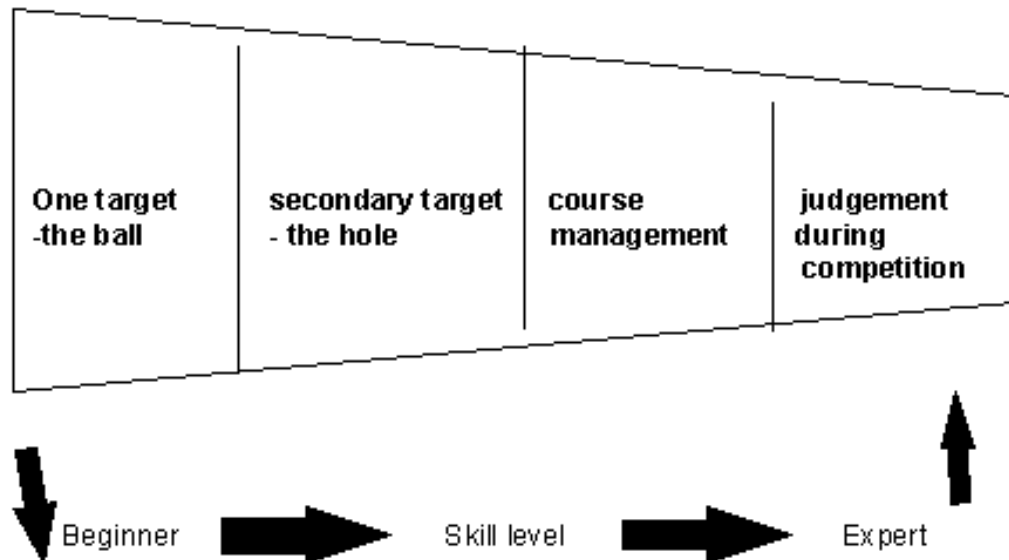
This arm of the windmill is similar to the physical arm. The current mental skills of the beginner adapt to their golf game. When the adaptation is complete, stagnation will occur unless specific training is undertaken to enhance them. Elite players devote large portions of their training time to the development of mental skills.



## Strategic Skills

When a person commences to play golf they have only one concern – to hit the ball. The hole is of minor importance. When the ball is being struck solidly, attention shifts to the hole as the target. As control improves, the target may no longer be the hole. Decisions have to be made as to what is the most appropriate target and how do you get the ball there. These strategic decisions are the nuts and bolts of course management. At the elite level, the golfer has to be able to make correct course management decisions whilst coping with the stress of competition,

# Strategic Skills



## THE EVOLUTION OF TRAINING

Not so long ago, golf practice only consisted of hitting millions of balls. The better players diversified the shots they practised to represent the shots they used in competition. This process was similar for most sports. Swimmers swam, runners ran. Then sports science emerged. The cause and effect of sporting performance was studied in a scientific manner. The results of this research has progressively been applied to athletes engaged in many sports, particularly track and field events. To a large extent this research was driven by Eastern and Western governments trying to demonstrate their political superiority by performance at Olympic Games. The success of the application of this research has been staggering. World Records are broken with great regularity. The sporting freaks who are head and shoulders above their contemporaries in one decade have their times bettered by many athletes in the next decade.

For maximum effectiveness, golf improvement programmes must be designed according to the principles of modern training theory. The associated document "Optimised Training for Golf" discusses this theory in relation to golf. Two training models will now be described

## TWO TRAINING MODELS

Stated simply, the problem of how to improve the skills of a golfer can be solved by –

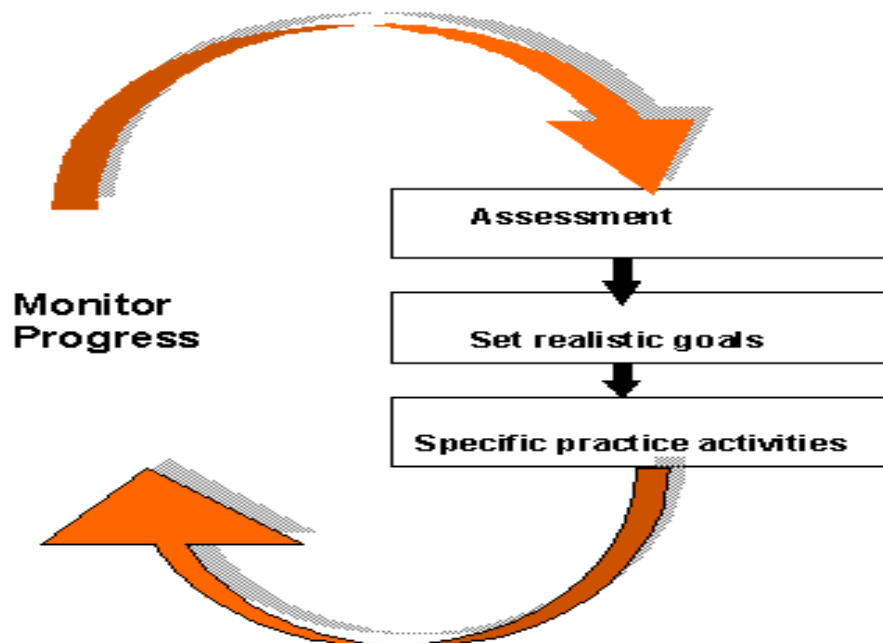
- (1) Identifying problems
- (2) Finding practice activities that target the problem and
- (3) Performing the activity long enough to cause improvement.

This sounds simple, even obvious. In practice, however, training theory requires that many variables are manipulated during the training process. The two training models, although designed to optimise a golfer's improvement, have a different emphasis.

The improvement cycle is primarily designed for golfers wishing to improve their skills as rapidly as possible. The competition cycle is oriented towards the golfer interested in preparing for particular events.

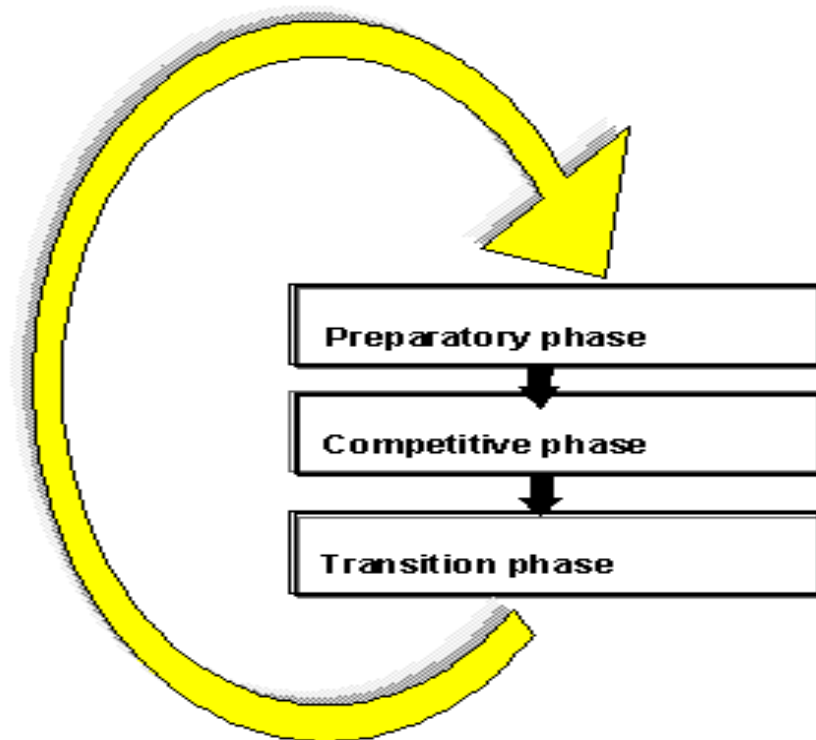
## **1. THE IMPROVEMENT CYCLE**

This cycle is designed to maximise the improvement of developing golfers. This cycle lasts for a month. It is important that the three stages process is rigorously followed. In the early stages of the month skills will often appear to get worse. Perseverance will be rewarded. The assessment can be handled by the "100 Ball Skill Test". The improvement goals should be based on weaknesses revealed by the skill testing. No more than three areas should be targeted in any month. Appropriate practice activities are then selected to attack the chosen weaknesses. These activities are then pursued religiously for a month. At the end of the month the assessment process is repeated and the cycle recommences. It is desirable that the same skill is not targeted for improvement in consecutive months.



## The Competition Cycle

This cycle is designed for golfers who wish to participate in competitions. As well as enhancing skills by the same method employed in the general improvement cycle, this programme targets a specific competition. Performance is designed to be maximised for this competition. The principles of modern training theory are employed to achieve this. The shortest period that this can be effectively employed is usually six weeks, although some success has been achieved using three week periods. As the cycle becomes longer, the maximum possible improvement becomes greater. One cycle per year will produce a significantly greater return than if the year is divided into a number of shorter cycles. (Some athletes targeted for Olympic competition have used cycles lasting over eight years!) The associated document "Optimised Training for Golf" discusses the operation of this phase-related training in detail.



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## DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING PRACTICE PROGRAMMES

All of the above should make sense. An intelligent golfer can apply the principles and do a lot to improve the efficiency of their practice. What is missing though, is the expertise to diagnose faults, decide on realistic goals for improvement, and determine the most appropriate practice drills to effect improvement. These are the functions of a golf coach. The better the coach, the faster will be the improvement. There will never be a substitute for knowledge and experience.