

Playing Styles

This idea of playing styles evolved from studying the best players in the world and from noticing certain tendencies with my clients. It proved to be an excellent way for players to really notice why they do certain things while they play. Why they make certain decisions that hurt their scores and what's going on when things are working well.

We've all heard the term managing your game and/or course management as major keys to consistency in scoring. What you're about to learn here is a methodology you can use to ensure you ARE managing your game and making the proper decisions. Proper decisions flow from knowing your playing style.

This really is a great breakthrough in how to transfer the idea of course management in a simple and powerful way so that ALL playing levels can manage their game effectively.

Understanding your playing style lets you play *your* game. In fact, this IS what playing your own game is about. It is about your *playing style*.

There are **five playing styles**. When I use the term "style" I'm not referring to personality or ego. I am talking about a fundamental manner in which you perform at your best and are able to access your own potential without struggle.

I'll list each style and provide insight into their character. Then I will show the names of a few players on tour that fit each style. Your goal is to identify your style among these five. Find the one that most accurately matches your approach to the game. Not the style you'd like to have. It is not about ego.

Notice which style gets your attention the most. Mastering this area alone will improve your consistency and keep your scores down.

Conqueror

This player enjoys dominating the golf course. Getting the most joy from blasting the driver as far as humanly possible and then hammering the shortest possible iron to the green. It is interesting to me how so many players play as if they are conquerors yet how few of them actually are. The conqueror gets the most joy from the game by trying to shorten the hole and every shot they have. Going for broke at key times in a round is what they will do. It matches their style. Having a long carry over water to reach a green in two on a par 5 has the conqueror salivating. This is what they want. Sink or swim. This ignites their potential and inspires the best from their game. The conqueror often has to fight him/herself to not go for it! It is difficult for the conqueror to throttle back sometimes. Yet in the end this go for broke attitude is what keeps them interested and allows them to hit those truly amazing shots!

Players who are conquerors are – Arnold Palmer, Greg Norman, John Daly, Bubba Watson (Tiger used to be here yet he has evolved into a hybrid of a Strategist as well).

Magician

Here we find the thrill seekers of the game. The trouble shot artists. They seem to get the best of themselves when challenged. When presented with an opportunity to test themselves. When a shot is out of the ordinary they gather all their attention and find a way to hit the shot.

Finding a ball deep in the rough beside the green with little green to work with doesn't rattle the magician. Missing fairways and greens is their method of operation. Routine fairways and greens is boring to these players.

They actually lose focus and begin to allow poor swings to show in their game long enough to miss fairways again! This way their interest returns. They have incredible imaginations and are able, more than any other style, to transfer it directly into their game.

Spraying tee shots hole after hole doesn't necessarily unnerve the magician. They seem to roll with the punches better than most other styles. Maybe because they have so many shots it doesn't matter as much where they hit it!

Players who are magicians – Seve Ballasteros, Tom Watson, Phil Mickelson.

Technician

These are the left brain players. Keenly aware of their swings. Knowing it intimately. They will rehearse things during a round and work on certain aspects of their swing that they feel needs their attention. They can move from hitting shots to analyzing their swing and making adjustments throughout the round unlike any other style.

The technician can think swing while playing and play well. Most every other style would find this disconcerting and would lose their personal rhythm if they followed this approach. This player excels when tinkering. They feel most confident when relating their game to their swing mechanics. These players prefer a low stress type of game. Fairways and greens all day suits them fine.

Players who are technicians – Charles Howell III, Nick Faldo, Ben Crane.

Performer

In this playing style we find the consummate showmen. These players like to feel and see their way around the course. Preferring to shape shots as much as possible and work the ball toward their target. How the shot will look is important as this stimulates their great imaginations.

The performer is the player who says “watch this” as they carve a shot around a tree and have it check near the flag. Of course other styles can do this occasionally but the performer thrives on it. These are the show-offs of the game. Not for ego reasons but for personal interest and motivational reasons. Wowing the crowd and playing partners is some of their greatest joy. They are the shot makers in the game and move through their round seeing each shot as another opportunity to perform.

Players who are performers – Lee Trevino, Corey Pavin, Chi Chi Rodriguez. Phil Mickelson is in this camp as well as the Magician. (There aren't as many Performers nowadays for a variety of reasons...)

Strategist

These are the chess players of the game. Gaining the most satisfaction from plotting their way around the course from point A to point B to point C. Content to hit fairways and greens and two putt all day and maybe dropping the odd birdie. Positional golf is their forte. Their games tend to suffer when their fairways and greens hit go down. Certainly this may be true for many golfers yet as we have seen the magician thrives on missing fairways and hitting trouble shots. This isn't the case with the strategist.

These players get the most from their game when they are thinking clearly and using their mind throughout the round. They're not the type of player who excels when gambling on par 5's. Comfortable with laying up to their favourite short yardage and making birdie the old fashioned way. Nothing flashy about their games for the most part. These are the players who seem to have a decent all around game with no one area of their game that stands out clearly above another. Though they tend to be good ball strikers.

Players that are strategists – Ben Hogan, Jim Furyk, Bernhard Langer, David Toms

While it is true we all have aspects of each of these styles in our game, we definitely have a core style that suits us best. A style from which we are "playing within ourselves". This allows us to remain centered and clear when faced with key decisions during a round.

It doesn't hurt to imagine playing like another style would when you have nothing on the line. This can provide insight into how playing your own style is a superior way to score! We can all benefit from the influences of a given style that isn't our own, yet identifying your own and trusting yourself is the key to playing great golf and scoring well.

Styles in Action

A player from the recent past, Tom Kite, was sitting in the middle of the fairway after his tee shot on a long par 5. Water fronted the green and he had 243 to the green. A bit out of his comfort zone. Being a Strategist his choice should have been to lay up to his favourite wedge yardage.

He was always known as one of the best wedge players in the game, so why not rely on his strengths? He could still make birdie.

Reaching the green in two in no way guaranteed birdie either, since the pin was tucked near the front and a bunker was at the back. If he hit the green he would be left with a 30–40 foot hard breaking putt, at best.

Well, as he pulled his 3 wood from the bag the commentator voiced his disagreement with Tom's decision. Sure enough the ball came up short and he made bogie instead of birdie or a par. Losing his chance at the win.

It is when we are at a critical decision making point in our round that our playing style is most important. Listen to it! Your inner voice will definitely be directing you towards the most prudent play. You will notice a different inner tonality to your thoughts when you are thinking from your

core style. You will learn to know and trust it. This brings incredible confidence and clarity, freeing your mind to focus on your shot with complete commitment, confidence and focus.

When you commit to playing within your style during a round you will consistently shoot your lowest scores. Your best swings flow from the state of certainty that playing within yourself generates.

For players who have a + index, or are scratch and low cap players, being clear on your style will cement your game at your highest level. A new level of consistency is what you'll gain. Once and for all you'll actually have a specific method for knowing when you are playing your own game or not. A manner in which to remain on track and certain of what you are doing on each shot and throughout the round.

High handicappers can drop several strokes per round simply by employing this strategy. With no improvement in your swing at all you can expect to lower your scores immediately just by identifying and playing within your style.

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