



A TYPICAL DAY ON THE LINKS

It's a beautiful day. The sun is shining brightly and you've finally taken some time off to play golf with some business associates that have been after you for some time to play a round with them. You're a perfectionist and a competitor. Although you espouse the saying that "a bad day on the course is better than a good day in the office", it doesn't always work out that way. You're a little rusty so you decided to see a pro in order to improve your swing and overall game. You even purchased a new set of clubs, went to the golf range and practiced hitting balls for a couple of hours and it all seemed good. So, you're all set...or so you think.

You have committed everything the pro taught you to memory. Your grip, swing, stance and everything else should result in your being able to hit that little white ball a "country mile". You're the last to tee off although you are a little nervous. "Butterflies" are a good sign...or so you think. You remember to take your time to practice swing your club with the correct tempo. Your stance and grip are copasetic...and now it's time. You address the ball, concentrate and "let 'er rip".

Well, you ended up in the heavy rough bordering the woods but that's ok...at least it didn't go in. and as you're walking to retrieve your ball, your talking to yourself saying " I need to be philosophical about this...it's only a game...don't take it too seriously...don't sweat the next shot...everyone's probably watching...I should be able to beat Jim but he hit a perfect shot...relax...relax...relax."

The rough grass is much longer than it appeared from a distance. What club should I use...should I hit with an open or closed fact...should I play for distance or play safe? ...that branch could impede my swing...my hands are awfully sweaty

and I'm really feeling anxious now...oh, what the hell, **JUST DO IT!**"
SWISH...the ball goes about 15 feet into even deeper rough...your wrists hurt from the last shot...there was just too much high grass...you hit the branch...the club was at the wrong angle...that damned pro doesn't know what he's talking about! Maybe the next shot will be better. You try clearing your mind but just can't shake what just happened. It the group laughing at you? Your breathing is short and fast. Now you're getting very angry...mostly at yourself. It's only a game! It's only a game! And on...and on...and on.
Maybe this is you or maybe, even as an accomplished golfer, you experience some of the same disruptive thoughts and feelings that interfere with your game. The **MENTAL SIDE OF GOLF** has little to do with the technical aspects of the game or one's ability to play the game. Of course, those aspects are important but not essential in how well or poorly our minds operate enabling the use of those facilities. Even with the latest equipment, technical aspects of the game and our ability being intact, those aren't enough to allow ourselves to enjoy and play our best round.

The Mental Side of Golf has to do with how well we can operate under pressure in any endeavor. The calmer, focused, positive and clear-headed we are, the more capably we can play the game in a relaxed, enjoyable and effective manner. After all, it is **YOUR MIND**.

Being able to mentally differentiate between social and competitive play and to learn the secret to "rebounding" after making a mistake is very important. Rather than letting your "mind get away from you" realizing that it's *your mind* and that you can be more in control, focused and positive is a key to any endeavor. Mental blocks emerging from previous experiences often result in negative thinking resulting in our putting undue pressure on ourselves and deny our ability to maintain focus and feel relaxed.

All of these facets are "*learned attitudes and behaviors*" which, with training and practice, are achievable for most athletes. Toning down our perfectionistic tendencies in order to realize another part of ourselves can come from some simple but effective exercises. One needs to bear in mind that *learning is both a mental and emotional experience*. If one is determined and willing to spend some time reframing their thinking and feeling in order to replace old patterns, they can accomplish their end result.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a "mind game", he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is "seeking alternative methods to happiness" and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: "enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.