



## Great Golfers Lose Swing, Not Skill

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One of the more common things I hear from competitive golfers as a sport psychologist is how they struggle with their swing not being in the place they would like. They state “I could not get my swing to where I wanted” or “I could not get it and I tried to figure it out all day!” The problem is golfers simply expecting perfection in their swings. This is a common mental error that even affects the best golfers in the world. Golfers must realize that this is a game of managing mistakes and that perfection is not possible. When someone shoots a 54, then I will believe that perfection is possible. Until that point, however, golfers must learn to mentally focus on *skill*, not just *swing*. Golfers might lose their swing in any given round, but that does not mean losing their skill.

The difference between skill and swing is the following: Swings are fickle and can come and go at times, but skill is long-lasting. It is like love and commitment. Love is a feeling and is affected by various circumstances, but commitment is something that stands through turmoil and change. When golfers remember this simple fact, they will be able to stay in a better place mentally and not feel such intense pressure to make “their swing perfect.” Golfers must realize that skill – which involves much more than just the swing, is most important.

Skill in golf encompasses numerous things, such as touch with putting and chipping, mental toughness to bounce back from mistakes, being creative in shot selection, knowing the course, decision-making skills and also actual swing mechanics. Golfers must realize that even though their swing may not be perfect on any given day, this experience does not mean their skill disappears and it certainly does not mean that they cannot score. When a golfer’s swing is not quite there on any given round, he or she must realize that this is only one component of their *skill*. Most golfers unfortunately allow their swing to dictate their entire mindset instead of skill. This works fine when the swing is perfectly in place, but spells disaster when it is not. Skill in golf is broad and encompasses many qualities, swing being just one of them. We all know golfers that do not have the greatest swings and maybe do not even practice as hard, but they still score and win. These are the golfers who realize what it takes to score – skill.

Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!