

What is a golf lesson?

Reeves Weedon has embraced a more holistic approach to coaching at his Hertfordshire club Hartsbourne and it's paying dividends he tells *The PGA Professional*.



Is it purely about game improvement? Does it matter if a student understands what the coach is trying to get across? Is the pupil prepared to put in the work to achieve their golfing desires? Are they looking for surgery or a band aid? Do they want a confidante or a crutch?

These issues matter. Too many PGA pros spend countless, soul destroying hours on the range with pupils who demand they fulfil their unrealistic expectations. Worse - far worse - the pro gets the blame when those hopes turn to dust.

Let's examine one or two species of pupil. There's the new convert to the game who has given up cricket, tennis, football etc with an injury and wants their name on the club honours board ASAP.

The conversation invariably starts with "I've got a spinal injury/cartilage problem/neck constraint but I've taken up golf and I'm a pretty good sportsman. Translation - 'when can I be as good as my mate who's been playing since he was five-years-old?'

There's a deeper issue here. How can the PGA pro detect if a physical ailment will impede the progress of their pupils? More importantly, will my tuition make the ailment worse? If I am going to get the blame, for their bad golf/chronic back spasms, should I be teaching this person at all? Will they ruin my reputation, take me to court etc?

And then there's the kind of golfer we all love to teach. The perfect student, who listens, understands and improves. The kind who can fade and draw the ball at will, who others stop and watch on the range. The kind who walks away from a lesson, steps on the

tee, takes a gorgeous practice swing and tops it all round the course.

No wonder we all scratch our heads from time to time and wonder why on earth would anyone would want to teach golf?

It's all too easy to reach one of several conclusions. Our pupils either: a) don't want to get better; b) are physically incapable of improving; c) have the mental resilience of a gnat.

Or are we missing something?

The answer is yes. PGA professionals need to truly, deeply accept what many have known all along.

Being a great teacher is simply not enough. Improving technique is simply not enough. Helping your students fulfil their golfing potential demands a far more comprehensive approach.

At Hartsbourne we take that approach.

Alongside myself and my highly trained staff of PGA pros are a couple of experts that provide golf tuition with an entirely new dimension.

James Short is a biomechanical analyst. Before having a lesson with me or my team, students are invited for a session with Short to identify physical strengths or limitations.

Armed with this information, the coaches are able to make a realistic evaluation

of a golfer's potential and construct lessons accordingly.

Attempting to teach techniques that are beyond a student's physical capability to put into practice is a waste of time, effort and money. Biomechanical analysis enables a coach to design a programme that is suited to the physique and ability of each individual golfer.

Gary Leboff is one of the UK's leading golf psychologists. Working with stars on the PGA European Tour and Challenge tours, he is also the sports psychologist for *Golf Monthly* magazine.

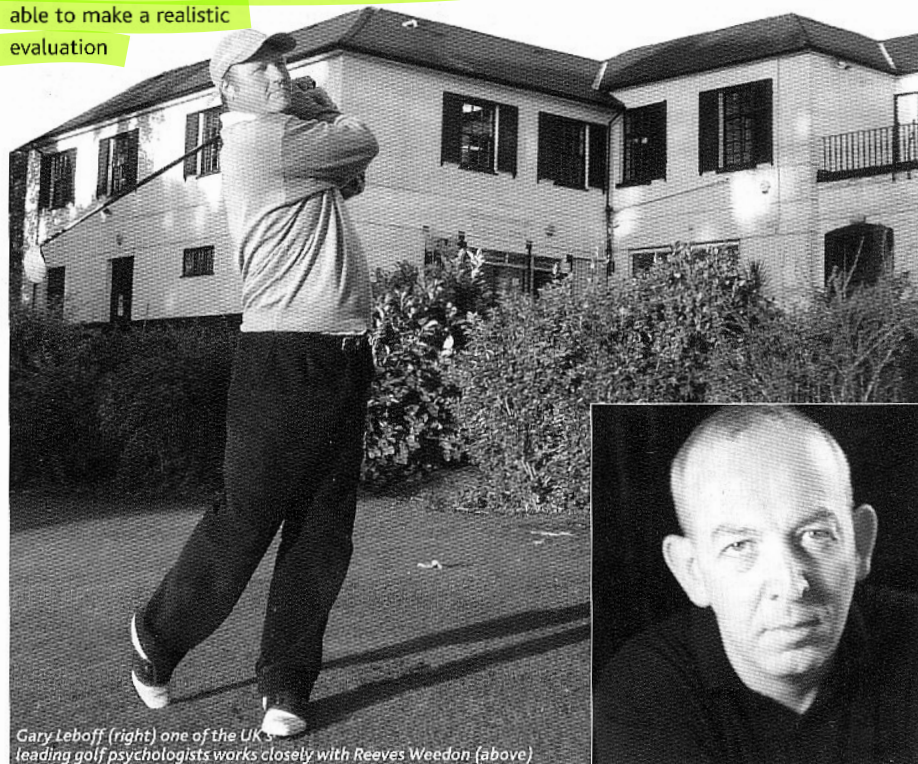
Leboff has achieved notable success at all levels of the game. He has transformed the mindsets of golfers of all abilities, from scratch players to 28 handicappers.

Confidence, resilience, self belief, dealing with setbacks, breaking through barriers, handling pressure, overcoming the yips - Leboff deals with all these and more.

It's a cliché but it's true. No amount of lessons, practice or technique can compensate for a fragile mind.

Putting a golf psychologist at the disposal of pupils may be what enables all the hard work - by teacher and pupil - to pay dividends.

Golf really matters at Hartsbourne. It matters how our students learn, perform and improve. It matters that they get value for money. It matters that their handicaps come down, their shots fly straighter, further and closer. Financial success is born of results. Ours is born of the work that we do.



Gary Leboff (right) one of the UK's leading golf psychologists works closely with Reeves Weedon (above)