

NOTE: The names and schools of the coaches have been omitted from this document to prevent any possible NCAA infractions. The following are the 4 questions the coaches were asked to respond to:

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)
2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)
3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.).
4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.

1. Of course each player is different. When I see a need for a correction in a technical move in their swing I will mention it. However, most of the time I will wait for the range to work on technical aspects. I mainly give distance, wind, pin location, safe spots to play to etc.

2. As I check on all of my players during the round, I give the majority of advice when they are struggling mentally (after a double or other). I try to help with their mental focus.

3. I encourage them to focus on the next shot. Visualize the shot, trust your swing, execute.

4. I haven't had a lot of parental interference, but I encourage parents to be positive with there son/daughter but during the round please let me work on their game. I always keep water with me and make sure my players stay hydrated.

DIII Men's Golf Coach

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.). We try and stay away from the technical side. If you notice a player swing is getting a little fast, long, or ball position we will make a small mention of that. The last thing you want to do is give a player mid round swing thoughts to work on. The course is to play the range is to work on the swing. We focus more on the layout of the hole. What is the wind doing, hole location, uphill/downhill, slope in the green. Avoid the comments of don't go right because of the bunker, use something like "your best leave is on the left portion of the green". Keep the conversation as positive as possible.

2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.) There is different ways to handle that. If you have seen the course before and your players have played it ask them where they need the most help. We typically get practice rounds for everyone of our events and after the practice round we will ask our players where they will need the most help. If you do not get a practice round look at the score card and get an idea of each hole be the hole handicap. Find the hardest holes and be there to help on those. If your players have a harder time with club selection then par 3's are good to be at. I found asking the players what they want on the course is the best indication on where you will be at for the round.

3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.) Don't bring up negatives on the course. If someone has a bad hole you just have to stay positive and get the players mind on rebounding from that hole. Talking about scores is not always the best either. Once players start to think about numbers they get way ahead of themselves. The best thing to do is stay in each shot. Take one shot at a time and get in the moment. If I notice a player is starting to get nervous while we are walking I will start to ask questions that take their mind off of golf. I will ask them about movies they have seen, favorite tv shows, music they are into at the

moment, anything to distract them while they walk to the next shot. Once we get close to the ball for the next shot we will go right back into talking about conditions and best place to put the ball. We have a think box around the ball, and once you enter the think box it is all about that shot.

DI Women's Golf Coach

My first thought is you need to make sure you know each of your players and get a feel for what they want/need from you. I think there are multiple ways of thinking and over my years coaching my thoughts have changed and adjusted and I have heard different philosophies from different coaches.

What is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)

I try not to talk to them too much about their swing, only to remind them of the verbal cues that we have talked about during the course of practice (I don't want to throw new things at them). I try to give them advice to where they want to hit their shots too, give them targets etc.

When should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)

This is a tricky one and again depends on your players. If there is a hole that I know there is hidden/blind trouble or they have to make a decision about laying up I try to be there. But if they know what they should be doing I started leaving them alone on the harder holes because they would see me and automatically think it must be a tough shot. I like to be on par 3's for yardage and club selection choices, but with the ability to use range finders that isn't as important anymore (unless the wind is impacting things)

What shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)

I really just try to keep them positive, forgetting about the rough holes, focusing on each shot, not being on a rollercoaster of emotions. There are going to be times when you walk a hole with a player and you being around calms them down and it feels more like practice which can help.

Anything else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.

Don't over coach during tournament rounds. Make sure your coaching style is the same at practice, nine-hole matches, invitationals and the state series. You can't leave them on their own during 9 hole matches and then jump in and try to coach them on every shot during the "bigger events" it makes the players feel the pressure and can negatively impact them. When a player is in bad position or having to decide what shot to hit, I always ask them what their "game-plan" is because I want to make sure that if it is teachable golf lesson we take advantage of that (if you are up against a tree and might be able to hit the ball backwards, wouldn't it just be better to take your penalty stroke and know that you will have a shot). We talk a lot about course management and the best way to approach the shots so they are confident about making decisions when I am not there. I have seen too many players who have been over coached and are afraid to or unable to make decisions without their coach right there. Don't slow they group down by over coaching, don't be so focused on your player that you are in the other players way. Most importantly know your athletes and what they want and need.

DIII Women's Golf Coach

I do more cheerleading than anything. I figure it's my job is to teach them how to play the game during our practices. I will help them with yardages on par 3's but other than that they have to learn how to get the ball in the hole themselves. My advice is to stay away from anything mechanical on the course. They really need to de-clutter their heads and learn to trust their routines and swings on the course.

DIII Men's Golf Coach

What is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.) It depends upon the player. I would suggest having a one-on-one conversation with each player before the stipulated round or at the beginning of the season. Ask them if they "want" on course help? I have some players who I will talk to in-between holes only. Others who will welcome any help at any time. And, I NEVER talk mechanics during a round. Practice is where this needs to happen. However, I will use simple check phrases and talk about the following:

1. "Let's check your alignment."
2. "What's your target?"
3. "Go down your line"
4. "Anchor and turn"
5. "Set the club at the top"
6. "Visualize the shot!"

Most of the time your student-athletes are over analyzing. Keep it simple and direct. Reassure them it doesn't have to be "pretty." Four good shots = four bad shots when a 4 is put down on the card.

B. If you have NEVER played the golf course, it's up to the coach to do the research prior to the tournament. Most golf courses have yardage books. Teach the kids how to use them. Have your best athlete type up a "cheat sheet" to use during the round. Sometimes kids will follow directions better when it comes from a peer who is experienced.

When should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.) If you clearly know there will be a "trouble hole" let them know in advance you will be there to get the whole team through it. You want to be a help and not a distraction. Typically young and amateur players struggle with emotions early or late in a round. If they are off to a bad start, typically they end up playing well at the end and vice-versa. You can help by challenging them to see "how low" they can go. Take the importance out of the round and reassure them their team has their back.

What shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.) After coaching for over 17 years I have found this varies with the dynamics of each team. You need to be part psychologist, mentor, teacher, coordinator and mediator. Find the most level headed player on the team and pair them with the best player on the team for your co-captains. Rely on your captains to give you ideas on how to reach your players.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR EACH PLAYER TO KNOW: Carry yardages with each club in the bag. The first day of practice is spent on figuring this out. I laminate the yardages for each player to keep in their bag. So when I ask what yardage do you have to the pin? We can figure that yardage +/- wind or firmness of the green.

Anything else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached. MAKE PRACTICE FUN! This is the number one way to improve moral and scoring. We use one day a week for team drills. One day we play a 9-hole qualifier and another day we use to work on personal goal setting. We have done everything from "Big Break" I-WU to Ryder Cup games. There are lots of ways to do this. We ended EVERY practice this year with a "no one leaves" drill of 9 up and downs. This means the first person stays until the last person makes their 9 up and downs. This fosters cheering and actual help with technique.

DIII Women's Golf Coach

I avoid technical swing discussions during competition and focus on each shot. Course management, facts about a hole, wind, course conditions, best places to miss, target/lines, framing everything positively and avoid negative thinking or any discussion about past shots or anything besides the present shot. Between shots, knowing your player is critical, some like to be quiet, most will talk about anything other than golf before refocusing on the next shot.

I talk to them on the hardest holes/shots or walking with each player essentially as a mental coach/caddie takes up the bulk of our on-course coaching. Par 3s in theory should be the easiest decision with a perfect lie and a good handle on the wind. We focus on knowing our players and helping in a variety of situations around the golf course. We try to inspire confidence to keep good stretches going and keep going further under par, and try to limit errors caused by poor decision making.

Emotion, team situation, focus on score, negative thoughts. We are big on Vision 54, think box, play box type framing of each individual golf shot. The most important shot in golf is the next shot and we try to coach on the course to help that next shot be great.

DI Men's & Women's Golf Coach

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)

I will focus mostly on attitude and strategy at that point. I avoid technical about swing and won't reference anything that already happened. My focus will be on them controlling their reactions and how they respond and having good course management. There is a lot of cheerleading at this point and reminding players to stay focused on the holes in front of them.

2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)

I vary this all the time. Anywhere that I can pick up information from watching groups play a hole is where I will focus. Quite often this tends to be on par-5's, some par-3's. It could also be on hole with a difficult hole location or a hole that is playing differently than anticipated due to course conditions or weather.

3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)

I never ask for score or discuss score. To ask a player his score has no value for the player. If they are playing well it can add pressure and expectation, and if they are playing poorly it just adds to the disappointment. I also won't ask about previous holes. The only time I would have any reference to score would be I thought it would be helpful towards the very end of an event to have an important outcome. Even then I am hesitant to reference score.

4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.

Mostly it is about showing enthusiasm and being a cheerleader. You are trying to keep players focused on the hole they are currently playing with no regards to past holes of score. Strategy, hole locations, attitude and reactions. Those are things you can help players control.

DI Men's Golf Coach

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)
Usually I try to stay away from swing techniques or thoughts as it usually only gets thinking about the swing and less confident in the swing during a round. I try to give them information on distances, how to play the hole, wind direction, and best angles to come into the green. We then work on swing changes after.
2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)
I would say depends on the player. I usually hang out at the par 3 or toughest hole to help. Some players get nervous if I hang with them too much and some get more relaxed to talk to someone. So I would say it depends on the player. If late in round I usually try to get them to focus on finishing the round and not think of the score.
3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)
Again depends on player. I find most of my players on women side I cannot have them focus on score. They see they are playing well and then they start to try to protect and finish with a certain score. I have one that I can tell I need you to beat the girl you're playing because the other players are struggling. She likes pressure and performs better. Some do not. Most of the time you can focus on emotion and have them try to put them in the situation it is them and the course and that is who they are playing and not the player in the group. You cannot control the other players score so you can only play the course and not the other player. The men like to know scores and how the team is doing but some cannot handle playing well and start a pattern of great starts but finish the last 3 holes struggling because I believe they get tighter trying to keep their score low.
4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.
Give them advice on club to hit, how to play the hole, wind direction and what a caddy would do for a player. When you see they are getting a little emotional try and calm them down or get them back in focus.

DII Men & Women's Golf Coach

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)
I really like to chat with the player between shots and try to keep them loose. When we get to the ball, I make sure they have the facts they need (actual yardage to the hole, carry to front of green, wind, elevation factors) and then tell them they need to hit a shot that needs to go ____ yards. I always let them choose the club, with maybe a suggestions about keeping the ball flight lower or higher to offset or take advantage of the wind. They need to make the club choice to be confident in it, and they must commit to the shot without question. Always speak of positives – “Hit it at the tree behind the green just left of the pin, because even if the wind pushes it right you’ll still have a putt at it.” Or “I like that little knock-down shot you hit, I think it will give you the best chance for birdie.” Do NOT mention the places they don’t want to hit it (bunker, lake, trees, etc.).
2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)
This will vary by team, but if they know the golf course, sometimes you can just ask them if they want help on the Par 3’s, or maybe on a hole that requires a tough lay-up or difficult choice on a Par 5 to go for it or lay-up. Late in the round try to get them to think about what got them to where they are if they are playing well without focusing on the score, never talk about “just getting it in the clubhouse”, that always leads to disaster. If they are struggling, try to get them to focus on each shot as if it was a lay-up, taking the “exact target” out of the equation and just try to get them to swing smooth and hit it at the middle of the fairway or green.
3. **What** shouldn’t we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)
If they ask about other players, always tell them “they’re doing just fine, OK, playing solid”, anything like that. Never discuss specific scores about other players and only talk score if your player speaks of specifics. I always ask, “You doing OK, need anything” and sometimes mention a positive they had going into the round, like “still driving it well, or still putting well”, etc. They will give you the feedback they are comfortable talking about. Emotion is important, don’t let them get too high or too low, after all “it is still just a round of golf and no one’s life is depending on it”. Always remain positive, they have enough negative thoughts on their own.
4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.
They are all nervous on the first tee, and will stay that way until they get that first par or birdie. Play the first hole strategically to give each player the best chance for par, even if it means hitting a fairway wood or hybrid off the first tee instead of a driver, get that first ball in play, it’s a great confidence booster. On cold, windy days give them a revised “team par” for each nine, pointing out that the majority of the field will bogey number 5, that long par 4 into the wind and number 6 the long par 3 into the wind, so our team par today on the front is 38, so don’t feel bad if you make the turn in forty if you normally shoot 1 or 2 over per nine. It gives them a feeling of comfort to know they are not worse than what they normally shoot. Last, after the round, in a team setting, give each player a chance to list one “shot of the day” and talk about it, then give each one a chance to talk about one “bad choice or bonehead play they made as well”. Keep it light with just a reminder to everyone to remember these “lessons” when they play next to avoid bad decisions.

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)

I think you need to know what your player needs at that time. In most cases I act as a caddy-helping the player obtain facts about the shot, conditions, course, etc. I still want the player to take ownership in selecting the shot and club. Sometimes I may steer her in a certain direction if I have knowledge that she isn't aware of but for the most part I want the player to hit the shot she sees. Practice is when the teaching takes place and when I have them practice shots I want them to use in competition.

2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)

I spend most of my time on the par 3's or on a hole with a challenging shot or layup that we have talked about during our practice round and team meeting. Again, some of my players are very self-sufficient and I just check to make sure they have a snack or drink and others want a lot of help. A few of my players like me to be there at the end of their round so I try to be available for that.

3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)

I try to keep them very present focused and having fun between shots. I don't let them know where others stand and always try to keep it positive.

4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.

I have them set a playing focus prior to the round in the team meeting the night before. This is something in their control that they feel will help them be successful. Examples: one shot at a time, smooth tempo, light grip pressure. Ask them what they have been thinking about/feeling when they have been successful. Have them keep a catalog of their best shots with each club. Amazing how they can recall good memories under pressure.

I would recommend any of Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott's books for coaches to read. Every Shot Has a Purpose is a great place to start.

DI Women's Golf Coach

1. **What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.)

First, I always believe that less talking is better and that most golf coaching should be done before the round and/or during the practice round. If the conditions change quickly it is good though, to keep the player informed.

2. **When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.)

Again, before is always better. It is very important to understand and know your players so that you can help them if necessary. Every player is different from each other and requires different coaching strategies. Ask them what they like to hear and cater to their wants and desires.

3. **What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.)

Never talk in the past or future. Always stay in the present tense and on what they have happening next. Pointing out bad shots or mental errors is better done after the round, than during it.

4. **Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached.

Quiet and peaceful minds are the best for successful golf. Confidence reigns supreme in golf, and along with a solid game plan, the chances for maximizing your team's potential is high.

DI Men's Golf Coach

- 1. What** is the best approach in talking to a player while he/she is actually playing a hole (more facts about the hole or more technical about their swing, etc.) *Personally, I talk more about the approach to the hole, such as club selection, course management/strategy, target to aim at, yardage to play, etc. I try to stay away from providing technical aspects about their swing, unless it is a small correction. I feel that when you try to discuss technical swing aspects, the player oftentimes becomes extremely overwhelmed with overcorrecting the swing and start missing shots both ways instead of consistently missing one way and just learning to play with the swing they have for that day.*
- 2. When** should we talk to them (before a par 3, hardest hole, late in round, etc.) *Typically, I sit on par 3's to help provide the yardage and club selection for the players. Most players find it extremely helpful to be able to know how far the hole is actually playing and what the other teammates used in terms of club selection. However, I will sit on a really difficult hole that my team struggles on to help assist with whatever the tough shot on the hole is, such as the tee shot, layup area, or the shot into the green. Again, I really harp on course management with my players because I feel that most players lose the most strokes on poor course management.*
- 3. What** shouldn't we say or focus on in our discussion (emotion, team situation, focus on score, etc.) *Overall, my discussion with my players varies from player to player depending on his/her personality. Most players just want a friendly voice to be able to talk to during a round to calm his/her nerves or release some frustration from a bad shot/hole. However, I typically avoid any discussion about score. I firmly believe that my players should avoid thinking about their score during a round. I think that when they think about their score, it serves as a distraction and never tends to benefit them overall. With that being said, the players always ask how their teammates are playing. I always respond by saying how they are hitting it and never provide any type of scoring or expected score.*
- 4. Anything** else you may have figured out as genius over the years you have coached. *Overall, I encourage the coach to be hands on and help the players. However, there is such a thing as being too involved. The players are used to playing without having a coach there for every shot on every hole. A player that is playing well without the coach typically prefers to continue the rhythm and routine they developed without having the coach there. In addition, some coaches become too involved and end up slowing down the pace of play. When talking to a player that is struggling, the best thing you can do for the player is to stay positive and give them a pep talk. The last thing they want to hear is technical swing advice. Oftentimes, I will take the player's focus off the final score and set a new goal for them, such as let's finish the last three hole at one over, no three putts the rest of the round, etc. (Anything that takes the focus away from the final score and more towards something positive and attainable)*

DIII Men's & Women's Golf Coach
