

CASE STUDIES OF TEACHER - STUDENT COLLABORATION

THE SHINGLE SAYS 'GOLF INSTRUCTION' –
SOMETIMES IT GOES WELL BEYOND THAT

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Over recent years a new golf coaching model has been widely discussed and adopted. Instructors have been educating themselves in the science of motor skill acquisition and supporting that process with group supervised practice and other new protocols. Seen through a business lens, the new mindset steers a teacher away from “just selling their time.” Their idea instead is to charge money for helping students climb a competency ladder, rung by rung—learning and training in whatever manner the coach feels is best.

So, you study this model and decide to go with it, then by some odd chance you find yourself watching Bo Moorehead receive his regular golf lesson from Proponent Group member Ty Walker. It's a twice-monthly ritual that's been going on without interruption for more than two decades, at Walker's GOLFTEC teaching studio just south of downtown Denver.

The classic private golf lesson that stays in the book seemingly forever is epitomized by this Walker-Moorehead “marriage,” as the two men jokingly refer to it. Every August, when GOLFTEC runs its August promotion on lesson series, Moorehead re-ups for an annual fee that currently runs \$2,200 and covers 26 sessions.

A person studies a subject or a skill—and receives instruction in it—in order to improve. So, has working with Walker made Mr. Moorehead a better golfer?

This particular teacher-student story is more complicated than that. In the first place, although he isn't particularly athletic looking, Bo was a very good player when he met Walker. “He was a 1-handicap or 2-handicap,” Ty explains. “He was a square-face, square-path, centered-contact machine. Now that he's in his 60s, he's more like a 5 or a 6.”

The business aspect of this coaching case study is ultra-traditional, but Walker has always been a cutting-edge instructor when it comes to technology for teaching—he's won all the teaching awards in his section and lowered

handicaps for legions of players. The two men met at a consumer golf expo where the newly rolled-out GOLFTEC formula and tech gear was being demonstrated, and Moorehead wanted to reap its apparent benefits. Thus began the partnership.

“I'll get down in trenches with a student for one degree of this or two degrees of that,” he says, referring to launch monitor numbers. “Sometimes that's all it takes to get their ball-striking cleaned up, and sometimes it's all they can do at that point in time, so we commit to working together from there to the next plateau.” That's starting to sound strangely like motor skill acquisition.

When a student stays in the book for years and years, something else is going on besides three degrees of face angle or six degrees of hip rotation. Walker's energy and

optimism is legendary, while Moorehead's temperament is placid and vaguely wary. “I get him pumped up,” Ty says. “Bo has a tendency to take a dim view of things.”

With Walker as his coach, Moorehead has won every tournament at his home course—against city-wide competition. When he wins, he will bring his latest trophy to Walker's studio tucked in a duffel bag, to be pulled out triumphantly. Very likely the experience of winning a title isn't complete for this student until he's shared it with his longtime teacher.

“I'm a life coach, not just a golf coach,” explains Walker. “I help my students make their bucket list and then I'll push them to go fulfill it.” Bo Moorehead, who won't get in airplanes, wanted to visit Bandon Dunes. With Walker's encouragement, he drove his Corvette all the way to coastal Oregon and back, clubs in tow. “He was thrilled—he shot a 67 on Bandon Trails and the caddie told Bo he'd never seen a round of golf like it.”

A person's connection to golf can bring them to a place where they are more themselves than in any other realm of life. If they find a golf teacher who becomes their guide to this place, and to a realm of experiences that seem to stand out from everything else, apparently what you end up with is the acquisition of something more than motor skills. **PG**



Ty Walker (left) with his longtime student Bo Moorehead.