**Proven Blueprint for Golf Improvement**

Introduction

The Zone Golf Academy (ZGA) developed the initial golf improvement blueprint in order to help Lee Woodard get to better than scratch in his 60s. Then for the next 10 years, Lee did a trial-and-error experiential thing with research, study, experimentation, and instruction. Lee's findings allowed the ZGA Blueprint to be refined to the successful state that it is today. This process included hundreds of books and DVDs as well as mentoring PGA Tour trainers/instructors.

ZGA started with the details of what Tom Pernice , Jr. was doing as his PGA Tour career progressed over a 10 year span. Tom was the main mentor as Lee improved his game and the reshaped the ZGA Blueprint. Other mentors included James Seickmann, E. J. Pfeister, Chris Walkey, Dr. Joe Parent, Dr. Bob Rotella, and David Hobby.

Tom, as well as 90% of the other elite golfers, followed the new paradigm of focusing on all three main (Mind-Body-Technique) components for successful golf. The pros get the absolute best instructors/trainers in the mental game, the physical game of golf conditioning/training, and golf technique (for the full swing, short game, and putting).

This general blueprint includes the steps and pieces that allowed Lee to go from a 9 handicap to better than scratch (a plus 1) at age 63! The general blueprint is usually tailored for particular students depending on their strengths, weaknesses, and needs into a customized blueprint (with the assistance of the golfer's instructors) containing precise, detailed steps. The student merely needs to follow these steps. These exact steps plus the recommended tools have been successfully used (and are currently used) by Lee.

The customized blueprint gives the golfer the fastest track to successful golf. Most of us over 55 years of age need the fastest track possible. We need to 'front-load' lessons and other expenditures today. What are we waiting for?

This general blueprint does not take up space here with justifications and background for a particular tool or step. The justification is left to the student's instructors as needed.

Student's Objectives/Goals and Strategic Plan

This is a key step towards structured golf performance improvement. At this time, it is important to read the CHOICES page/tab in the ZoneGolfAcademy.com website and realize that you can control your own destiny.

For his improvement in golf, Lee made a job or a business out of executing the ZGA Blueprint for Improvement. He generated a simplified business plan and a strategic plan to accomplish the goals, and this is highly recommended for you before you execute your Customized Blueprint. The General Blueprint can be the bulk of your business plan, and the Customized Blueprint can be the bulk of the Strategic Plan.

You must make a written commitment and document objectives, goals, time allocations, budget, checkpoints, etc. in your business plan.

You must start a daily journal and a time log of where you spent time and how much each day. Stuff that Lee did when Lee had a real job as well as his golf improvement 'job'. You need these for accountability and monitoring progress. Most authors highly recommend keeping a daily journal and to record successes in a section of the journal.

Treat your performance project as a job noting when and how long you worked the prescribed hours in the allocated time slots for each of the assigned subtasks- whether you want to or not. One of the most important nuggets Lee learned on his journey to 'better than scratch' was to: "Learn to do what you don't want to do! And love doing it".

Assembling a Team

An integral part of every successful golfer is their support team of instructors, trainers, and 'raving-fans'. Do not include any person on your team that does not have bullet-proof optimism and unconditional confidence in you and your ability to succeed.

As all professional golfers do, hire only master instructors/trainers with PGA Tour lineage in the following areas: Full swing, short game, putting, mental game, and golf conditioning. Do not settle.

The ZGA offers top experts and instruction in the above areas. The ZGA offers the benefit of a synergy when all the experts are found in a single facility. Plus the ZGA will also assign to you a (free of charge) professional Project Manager to help chart your journey. ZGA's pricing is based on the ability to pay with significant discounts to veterans, juniors, and super-seniors.

If you prefer not to use the ZGA services, Lee can direct you to the instructors/trainers that he has used. If you want to find your own swing instructor, here are some tips and questions:

* + Observe a few lessons.
  + If they do not use video every time, they are not a master instructor- forget him/her. The PGA agrees with us on that fact.
  + Does the instructor have certification or a strong back ground in the mental game?
  + Is the instructor optimistic at every chance?
  + After the first evaluation lesson, does the instructor frame the lesson with just 1.5 concepts to work on?

All of your instructors/trainers must buy-into your objectives, plan, and blueprint.

Your collection of raving-fans starts with your instructors/trainers and includes your friends, family, neighbors, and anybody that is optimistic. Getting your team at least aware of your plan and efforts adds accountability and adds to your motivation. Your team helps you cope with the plateaus and even dips on your mastery path as described in George Leonard's landmark book "Mastery".

Golf Techniques

This section of the blueprint includes full swing, short game, putting, and trouble shots. The details for this part of the plan are the responsibilities of your master instructor you have hired in the particular area. These details will be part of your Customized Blueprint and your instructor will have a big part in the tailoring process of the General Blueprint.

Other than setup of grip, alignment, posture; getting instruction in a group setting is a waste. And getting instruction from a non-master instructor is also a waste. We, as senior golfers, need regular instruction from master instructors to make the fastest progress.

Lee can help you find master instructors/trainers either inside of the ZGA or outside of it. If you prefer not to use the ZGA services, Lee can direct you to the instructors/trainers that he has used. And if you want to find your own instructor, here are some tips and questions:

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Mental Game and The Zone

A strong mental game is the 'straw that stirs the drink' as far as golf performance and golf improvements.

The top major attributes of the mental game are:

* Unconditional confidence
* Motivation
* Commitment
* Perseverance
* More can be found in the "Mental Game Strengths" document.

Additional required reading is the "ZGA Mental Game Toolkit" as well as the "Motivational Nuggets" documents. The best book on the subject is Zen Golf by Joe Parent, and it is the baseline textbook for improving the mental game and getting to the Zone.

An important part of improving your mental game and getting to the Zone is mindfulness/non-judgmental awareness or meditation. Meditation can be as simple as breath counting.

Meditation teaches you how to:

1. Lower stress levels

2. Lower your blood pressure

3. Oxygenate the blood

4. Improve focus and concentration

5. Get into the zone

6. Control your thought processing

7. Improve sleep patterns

8. Better manage distractions

John Wooden had his championship UCLA basketball team using Transcendental Meditation back in the 1960s and 1970s. Simple meditation is a panacea for most, if not all, thought-based challenges in golf and life.

Many people are confused about meditation in that some think it is mystical, some think it is tied to a religion, some think it is complicated, and some think you might have to sit naked in a vat of chocolate facing the East. All of those thoughts are simply incorrect and not true.

Start by studying the Zen Golf book and direct questions to Lee who was co-founder and co-owner of Zen Golf International. Your instructor will provide you with additional training.

The ZGA Golf Conditioning Program

The Zone Golf Academy is pleased to launch the new ZGA Golf Conditioning Program, with two options to decide on depending on your objectives, budget, and time allocation for conditioning. Joining a gym in your area is a must as well as acquiring a few tools for home.

The ZGA is well known for improving golf performance by addressing a golfer's needs in the 3 main areas:

* + Golf Technique
  + Mental Game and The Zone
  + Golf Conditioning

Since 2004, the ZGA has handled the first two areas in-house but the Golf Conditioning efforts were outsourced to local PGA Tour trainers with TPI and/or CHEK certifications; trainers that Lee Woodard has personally used. This option is still available if the client desires that. But the ZGA now offers the detailed evaluation of the client's conditioning needs given their swing weaknesses and provide a detailed conditioning program for the golfer to follow- better swing evaluation for maybe just 10% of the cost of an outside conditioning provider.

*Why should I condition for golf?*

The more you move: the healthier you become in general. And the more you condition with cardio, flexibility exercises/poses, and functional strength building: the healthier you become, and you have an increased golf potential.

Many books site the benefits of golf conditioning: increases life longevity, minimizes if not eliminates the aging process, builds muscle tissue that raises basal metabolism, decreases risk of injury, allows more extended practice, and of course should lower golf scores.

It is even more important for seniors to condition as we lose about 2-3% of our strength after 45 years of age without resistance training. It is motivating to understand that a golfer can become more flexible and stronger at any age. Crowley and Lodge provide more detail about the benefits, and they maintain that proper exercise will, at the least, slow down the aging process and in most cases reverse the aging process to your state/condition at age 45!

There are a few caveats in starting a golf conditioning program: (1.) It must be well designed and customized for the individual by a conditioning expert. (2.) You must see an M.D. before starting any exercise program. (3.) For the first month or so is pretty light in intensity since it is merely readying the muscles, tendons, joints, and ligaments for the increased load in a month or two depending on your condition.

Another warning is to NOT retain a pure strength or body builder trainer because:

* + Major strength is not what golfers (especially senior golfers) need!
  + Senior golfers need more flexibility, better balance, and a bit more functional strength.
  + One author said that he has never seen a golfer improve performance because of a major strength increase whereas he has seen much improvement from increased flexibility and balance.
  + Finally, no senior golfer wants to be yelled at by a body building trainer. LOL.

The ZGA Golf Conditioning Program focuses on the following elements:

* 1. Cardio/Aerobic
  2. Flexibility
  3. Balance/Stability/Coordination
  4. Strength/Power (Resistance Training)
  5. Nutrition, Hydration, Breathing, and Stress Reduction

*Who is the Director of the ZGA Golf Conditioning Program?*

Lee Woodard, founder/owner of the ZGA, is the Director of the ZGA Golf Conditioning Program.

He started developing this conditioning program in 1978 (2 days after returning from the USVBA Championships in El Paso in need of improved strength and flexibility). He joined the perhaps first Nautilus facility, which was located in Manhattan Beach, at a time when he was playing competitive volleyball on the beach and indoors.

Over the last 41 years, Lee researched the latest in sports conditioning trends as he migrated from VB to competitive tennis to professional golf. And he made revisions to his conditioning program as a function of his current sport, injuries, surgeries, rehabs, and aging.

His conditioning research/development in the last 20 years was focused on improving golf performance. He was evaluated and trained by three PGA Tour trainers with TPI and/or CHEK certifications at different times. He has used several of the existing golf conditioning programs on the market. He includes pieces of different programs as well as some of his own exercises depending on the golfer and their needs/limitation.

*What are the two options?*

Option #1 -

($$$$$) The early ZGA conditioning concept was to turn the conditioning efforts over to a local TPI and/or CHEK certified trainer that Lee has had experience with. The results have been excellent. The option is an excellent choice and is still available. The main problem for most amateur golfers is that this option is a bit expensive compared to the other options. The hourly rate that I paid was around $200/hour for the evaluation and program setup taking 3-4 hours and subsequent training and adherence to proper form was $100-$200/hour. The second problem, is that there might be some travel time for the golfer as there are just a few trainers that Lee can recommend. But he is looking at two other trainers as potential evaluators/trainers.

Option #2 -

($$) This is the most popular, most-tailored, and most cost-effective option. Lee Woodard will evaluate your swing and conditioning to find any 'disconnects'. He takes your conditioning needs given your swing faults and adds them to a basic set of general exercises/poses that all golfers need to perform, and a written plan or blueprint is developed to best condition you for improved performance, lowering risk of injuries, compensating for any physical limitations.

Lee has used an excellent flexibility program by Roger Fredericks for years. His program is the basis of the flexibility area of the ZGA Golf Conditioning Program. You need to buy the Fredericks' book "Golf Flexibility" and his 3 DVDs (with poster guide of exercises) from FredericksGolf.com. Also recommended (but not necessarily required) is the "Younger Next Year; The Exercise Program", by Chris Crowley & Henry Lodge. An excellent book with general conditioning thoughts and exercises.

Depending on your needs, Lee will select additional exercises/poses from different trainers from TPI, CHEK, Joey D, Anderson (the stretch expert), and Yoga to be included in your development program notebook.

The cost will be your hourly rate plus $20 (needed for materials, etc.) for the evaluation, program development, customized notebook, and exercise form/technique review. If you are an individual who needs somebody to check on you each training session, we can make arrangements with a trusted Sun City trainer ($30/hour ??) or your trainer. If you want, we can go through each exercise/pose with the selected trainer to ensure that know the proper form. Most trainers will be familiar with the exercises.

Required 'Tools'

As a minimum, the following resources are required for a starter:

* Zone Golf by Joe Parent
* The Picture-Perfect Golf Swing by Michael Breed (Note: When you receive this book, please contact Lee to clarify some misleading photos in the book)
* The Flexible Golf Swing by Roger Fredericks
* Younger Next Year : The Exercise Program by Chris Crowley, Henry Lodge
* Wherever You Go, There You Are by Jon Kabit-Zinn
* Set of 3 (Flexibility Programs) DVDs by Roger Fredericks (see his website)
* Specific book summaries on LEESNOTES on our website (free)

Other equipment includes the following:

* Large mirror for garage or recreation room- see Lee for details
* IPAD preferably but an Iphone will be ok for self videos.
* HUDL Technique app (free) for IPAD and/or Iphone
* Impact tape (see Lee)
* Aim sticks
* Putting aim-line
* Putting mat or tile in your home.
* Physio or Swiss Ball (probably 65cm??)
* Join the nearest gym. The Silver Sneakers Program give super discounts.
* White swing fan.

The above tools will cost you little cash but it is non-recurring cost. 'Bite the bullet' as they say. Most of us over 55 years of age need the fastest track possible and need to 'front-load' lessons and other expenditures starting today. Remember the money we spend in the last 1/6 of our lives is just the kids' money anyway. What are we waiting for?