



Links Players

Pre-Thought Routine

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact, you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV)

Have you ever played with the unaware-people-pleaser who says “nice drive” whether your ball is in the fairway or the forest? I know they mean well, but if you’re in the middle of a frustrating round, it can be annoying to hear (in essence) “good job” for hitting it off the planet.

On the other hand, I am deeply appreciative when someone offers me a tip to improve any of my many swing flaws. Take this recent example from a Links Player, no less.

As I warmed up for the second round of the fourball tournament at Bayou DeSiard (Monroe, LA), I ventured over to the practice green to hit a few chips. My playing partner Bob patiently waited for me to inevitably flub my first few attempts before offering the following advice, “Do you mind trying something? I noticed you were decelerating during your chips yesterday. Try accelerating instead.”

To give his suggestion some context, let’s review the first round. When I missed a green in regulation, I might as well have gone on to the next tee. My chipping was bad. Like really bad. So bad that Bob felt the need to coach me up on day two.

(Side note: How do you finish even par with one bogey, 16 pars, and two birdies? By making your only two birdies on the same hole! The fourball format doesn’t reward over-achievement; it only cares about one score per hole. Ha!)

The funny thing is that the fix was that simple. It took five chips with acceleration, and my chip yips were a thing of the past. Thanks to Bob, I now confidently approach chipping by thinking about acceleration before stepping into the shot.

My pre-shot routine helps me execute shots on the course. I now have a pre-thought habit to help me avoid bogeys in my speech.

As a caddie’s goal is to build up his player, I aim to encourage others and be a positive influence.

Because thoughts lead to words, I am protective of my head space. Not only am I careful with what I allow in my noggin, but I also try to filter my words through Scripture. After all, we are warned that “no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8).

Verses abound, but here are three I have incorporated into my pre-thought routine:

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV).

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

Thinking back, Bob could have taken the easy route and joked about chili, but he chose to build me up rather than tear me down with sarcasm.

Our tagline at Links Players is “helping you change the conversation where you play golf.” What would it look like if we could shift the standard from salty language to language seasoned with salt?

Prayer: Lord, help us encourage one another and build each other up. Let our love for one another confirm to others that we are your disciples.

—

Drew Hamilton

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