

# Eliminate Tension Improve Game

*Suzanne Noblett*

LPGA class A teaching professional Suzanne Noblett sees tension over the ball as one of the biggest drawbacks to a successful game. "As golfers, we've been told over and over to keep our head down, arm straight and bring the club back slowly. Though these are important elements of a good swing," says Noblett, "when a player stands over the ball too long concentrating on these things, tension builds and bad things can happen.

"Keeping the arm straight tends to lock up the forearm, and the wrist, fingers and shoulders which could affect a player's range of motion. And keeping the head down sabotages one's game by resulting in an improper weight shift also known as a reverse pivot. I like to have my students approach the ball with loose arms, not floppy, but rather extended or long. Definitely not rock hard or like a two-by-four, but more like a pitcher has his throwing arm, rope-like. When the arm is locked the tendency is to hit the ground, resulting in elbow injuries. When they're more relaxed they're able to have full extension for an unrestricted swing.

"This is probably one of the most difficult things to do, but when the golfer understands how tension destroys his or her game, they can have a better range of motion, have a more fluid swing, greater club head speed and the ability to create better contact, which adds up to straighter shots and greater distance.

"Another thing that I've found in my 15 years of experience is that people have never been told where to look at the ball," says Noblett. "If you look at the top of the ball, that's where **you'll** hit it, If you look at the side, you normally blade the shot. But if you have a specific focal point, the lowest point of the ball, you increase your chances of getting the ball airborne by ten fold. I learned this from my dad when I was six years old. He would place dime beneath the ball where I could see half of it, and if I could make it fly, I got to keep the dime. I never forgot that, and now use plastic stars instead of dimes with my students. All of a sudden, people who have played for years are not just poking and hoping, but find they can get the ball in the air on a consistent basis and are having fun again".

Noblett, who teaches more men than women, says it's important to be able to communicate in the client's language in order to make the transfer of information. "When we find a common learning ground, then we can communicate and a whole new world opens and the student learns faster. I look for the simplest and clearest way to impart information and strive to make it easy and fun. That's why I take the time to learn about my client's background, goals for their game, career, hobbies and interests so I can develop an insight into how they learn and how I need to communicate with them. With this information we can design their lesson to match their needs and help them reach their goals much faster.

"Clients come to me to receive help, and my responsibility is to find out how best to solve their problems and make golf fun. The most effective teaching is that which makes sense to the client."

The Evansville native got her first taste of golf from her father who allowed her to ride along on the cart with him, tend the flag, fix ball marks, make sure everyone had tees, clean the clubs and ring the bell when the foursome had hit their second shots on the blind holes. "Dad taught me until I was 10 and then Rolling Hills Country Club professional and former Fort Wayne Country Club assistant, John Conroy, continued". She was a two-time Indiana State High School Girl's Golf Individual Champion, captain and MVP on the Western Kentucky University team, played on the Futures Tour and attended the LPGA Q-School. She left the tour in 1996 to return to teaching full-time and studying under some of the country's top teaching professionals, including 2001 National PGA Teacher of the Year, Craig Shankland.

Before Noblett joined the staff of the U.S. Golf Academy in Plymouth, Indiana, where she taught for seven years, she was an associate professional at Fort Wayne Country Club. Following her tenure at the Academy she began teaching independently at Bobick's and Colonial Oaks Golf Club. Bobick's winterized practice facility allows her to teach despite cold conditions, and students to see the ball's entire flight.

She has been asked by the Indiana Golf Foundation to join other Indiana teaching professionals to instruct a junior clinic for 500 youngsters September 5 at Bridgewater Golf Club near Carmel, Indiana where the junior Solheim Cup will be played.

Three years ago Noblett founded Noblett Golf Services, Inc., (NGS) which not only includes giving instruction and clinics, but arranges special events and does golf vacation planning, as well. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005 she took a bus load of golfers to the final round of the Solheim Cup matches at Crooked Stick Golf Club. To learn more about NCS, check out [www.noblettgolf.com](http://www.noblettgolf.com) on the internet, or call (260) 479-1126.

She still enjoys competition and plans to play in several regional and national events this summer.