



**HOW GOLFERS GET AHEAD: A STUDY ON THE LESSONS TO BE  
LEARNED FROM THE GAME OF GOLF**

**Prof. Dr. Savitri Kulkarni & Ms. Sridevi Nair**

*Capt S.G Warudi*

**Abstract**

*Serious green takes on a whole new meaning when you do business on the golf course. Golf isn't merely a leisure sport. It's the martini lunch of the modern workforce; the buoyant venue where business gets done. A lot of the modern leaders have accepted and promote the game of golf as a way to move forward in the professional world. This rising importance makes one think. Why golf? What is it that makes golf such a favourite? What can one learn from golf that when applied to life and business, can provide a step up? This paper aims at identifying the key lessons that can be learned and borrowed from the game.*

**Keywords:** *Golf, Business, professional growth.*



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**Introduction**

Known as the game of the kings, golf is one sport that has lasted for many, many years. From players during the reign of Caesar in golf's earliest stages to players like Phil Mickelson and Rory McIlroy of today. Golf has endured the test of time and has come through as an important sport in each part of the globe.

**History of Golf**

Golf dates back to the time of Julius Caesar. Although it was not the golf that is played today, it was a similar game. They played by striking a feather-stuffed ball with club-shaped tree branches. Golf was also traced back to the Song Dynasty in China during the years 960 to 1279. The games of these times were not exactly the golf that is known today; the roots of today's game can be traced back to Scotland in 1457. The game was then outlawed by King James II of Scotland, as it detracted from the training for the military.

Golf became a pastime in Great Britain in the seventeenth century, and that was a familiar theme throughout the world. In 1860, the first British Open, a tournament that is still played

today, had taken place. The popularity of the sport then began to spread throughout the entire world. The first permanent golf club in North America was founded in Montreal, Canada, in 1873 and was named “Canada’s Royal Montreal Club.” The US caught wind of this and decided to embrace the golf craze as well. The first 18-hole course in the United States was in The Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Illinois, in 1893.

The governing body of golf began as the United States Golf Association (USGA) in the year 1894. Then the current governing body of today, the Professional Golf Association of America, was founded in 1916. Both amateurs and professionals are allowed to play in open events like the US Open and the British Open, which are “open” to the public. However, there are certain events that amateurs are not allowed to play in, like the world golf championships—the Accenture Match Play Championship or the Arnold Palmer Invitational. These events are examples of professional events only.

Beginning in 1981, the name of the pro circuit was officially changed to the Tournament Players Association (TPA) Tour. The name was changed again to its current name of the Professional Golfers Association or the PGA tour. Tournament golf had become a well-established spectator sport in the United States by the 1920s and has been gaining popularity ever since. Golf is known around the globe and has gained popularity, as it is becoming more televised and marketed. Golf seems to be a sport that will go on to live forever.

### **Why Golf?**

As a form of corporate entertainment, golf's first virtue is that people of any age can play it. The sport's second strength is that, thanks to the handicap system, people of widely differing abilities can compete against each other. This makes the game more fun. Golf's third asset is that you only spend a small portion of a four-hour game actually hitting the ball, so there is plenty of time to talk shop.

Let us look at some **Golf Business Stats**

- 97% of executives view golf with a business associate as a way to establish a close relationship
- 92% use golf as a way to make business contacts.
- More than 50% say there is no better way, to get to know associates and clients. The second best way is a business meal.
- 45% say clients are more likely to give you their business if you golf together.
- 43% of executives say some of their biggest deals have been made or started on the golf course.

- 59% believe that the way a person plays golf is the way he or she behaves in business.
- 67% of respondents say that a person who cheats at golf would probably cheat in business.
- 57% say a hothead on the golf course is probably bad tempered at work.
- 92% say people stressed at work would get more relief if they golfed.
- Executives who play golf make 17% more than those who don't.
- 54% of business professionals see golf as the perfect networking tool, only 8% selected football
- An estimated 90% of Fortune 500 CEO's play golf 50% of golfers agreed to the statement, "the way a person plays golf is very similar to how he or she conducts business affairs.

### **Discussion**

Golf is a game that can be played throughout life as it teaches us skills and values that will prepare us for what life brings our way. Amongst other things, the game teaches us honesty, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, focus, patience, social etiquettes and concentration. As you climb the hilly, uneven terrain aiming to reach the goal—getting the golf ball into the hole we learn valuable lessons on how to become better players of the sport and of life.

Taking a look at the journey through the nine holes, the following major skills come to mind.

1. Golf is often compared to how life works. We must be willing to take a close look at ourselves, **our performance**, receive and give feedback so as to improve.
2. The game helps develop **social skills of networking interacting** which leads to lifelong friendships.
3. The game teaches us to accept **personal responsibility**. As sometimes the ball doesn't bounce or roll the way we want it to, there is no blaming our teammates for the games' results.
4. The game requires one to maintain an **emotional equilibrium**, thereby highlighting the skill of handling and managing emotions and maintaining a positive outlook.
5. There is no referee in our day to day life same as in golf; the players are the referee and so the need to be **honest and deal with integrity**.
6. One needs to have **vision** in golf and at work. The goal needs to be in mind as one works out a plan to achieve it.
7. Failure is a part of any strong leader, on the golf course, bad shots happen. The question is "are you going to hit another bad shot because you are busy thinking about the shot

before?” In leadership it is the same, you have to quickly **learn from your failure and put it behind you**. If not, the mistakes become exponential and as a leader it can cost you dearly.

8. In life as in golf, you just have to **take risks**. If it works, well and good if it doesn't, it is a learning experience. Risks make life exciting and eventful. Success follows.
9. Golf is a tough game and you can have your best and worst days in succession. In leadership that results are never a guarantee, and sometimes a little luck can make a big difference! You have to learn to **take in the bad with the good**.
10. Rain, wind, trees, multiple sand traps, and deep rough can make for a challenging day of tournament play. These are a normal part of golf and can be an amazing opportunity for **clever problem solving and personal growth**.
11. The most important lesson that any game teaches is to be **gracious in loss and in victory**.

An estimated 90 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs play golf, and according to Barrons, one quarter of the 25 million golfers in the U.S. are top management executives, and a full 80 percent of that number agreed that the game is an important business development tool. Golf was traditionally a male dominated sport. However of late, the benefits of golf and the networking opportunities it provides have caught the interest of women. Most women have claimed that Golf has helped their professional careers in more ways than just networking. Condoleezza Rice, the former secretary of state is an avid golfer. But even she didn't take up the game until she was 50. Rice says she enjoys golf because it is a thinking-person's game. "I find that I enjoy walking from shot to shot and deciding how I'm going to get out of this or that trouble. I just enjoy the strategy of it," she told Golf Digest. *"It's taught me to be more patient, and it's taught me to try to rein in my tendency to always go for it."*

### **Conclusion**

Golf has for long been associated with the business world. The association has now gained more importance with the endorsement of the top CEOs. Like any other game, golf develops a sense of discipline and the length of the game represents life, sometimes your ahead and sometimes your behind. A company can invest money into trying to instil the same values into its employees but if the studies of Gamification are to be believed, the leisurely environment, the structure of the game and the state of flow can be greater teachers than any corporate trainer.

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