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Rick Young at SCORE*Golf.com*

ZOKOL'S MENTAL APPetite

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EQUIP AND BIZ



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Taylor Pendrith is one of Canada's rising young talents.

Currently, the Richmond Hill, Ont., native stands fourth on the Korn Ferry Tour's points ranking. While the PGA Tour's prime developmental circuit will not graduate players to the big leagues this year because of event cancellations amid the pandemic, Pendrith will earn 2020-21 PGA Tour opposite-field

starts and is in good position to earn a 2021-22 card at the end of the Korn Ferry wraparound season next fall.

The 120th United States Open is also on the Kent State University graduate's radar. He'll play in the year's second major at New York's Winged Foot Golf Club next month also by virtue of his top-five Korn Ferry ranking through the Portland Open.

It's fair to say Pendrith is enjoying some of the best golf of his life right now. But beyond the endless hours he's putting in on the range and his short game is another story to this good run. It involves the mental side of his game.

Just over a year ago, Pendrith, along with 2003 Masters champion Mike Weir, and members of Golf Canada's Young Pro program beta-tested Richard Zokol's new mental-game training system, MindTRAK. It helps golfers of all skill levels — amateur and professional — improve mental performance by keeping them "in the moment" on the golf course.



How? By prompting players to replace “results-oriented” mindsets. Effectively, MindTRAK is a hard reset of your thought process. Staying in the present as you play becomes a habit. By doing so it avoids what Zokol commonly refers to as, “going down the rabbit hole of golf insanity.”

“The mental game process on the course can be simplified down to controlling two important factors: One is the ability to assess the shot and the other is how well that shot is executed,” said the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame member. “There’s an inherent relationship with assessing and executing each golf shot in any given situation. You have to choose to make your score on each hole less relevant. Your thought process is then strictly about, first, picking the correct club, then assessing the lie, wind and other conditions and deciding what type of shot to hit and then executing that shot. You can change your playing perception and perspective to be more, ‘in the now.’ This allows you to optimize your performance.”

Zokol knows a thing or two about the mental side of this game. The British Columbia native spent 22 years on the PGA Tour, winning twice in 1992 at the Greater Milwaukee Open and Deposit Guaranty Golf Classic. Proudly he represented Canada multiple times at the World Cup and Dunhill Cup. Zokol is also a golf intellect. He remains fascinated by the intricacies of the game and admittedly has never stopped learning. Over 30-plus years and several conversations I can say this with certainty: Richard Zokol does not take a back seat to Mac O’Grady or Bryson DeChambeau, or anyone else, when it comes to being a golf “scientist.”

“Even the best players in the world can have a mindset gap and in-round mental habits that trigger anxiety and negatively conditioned responses. This disrupts their ability to perform to their peak potential,” he said.

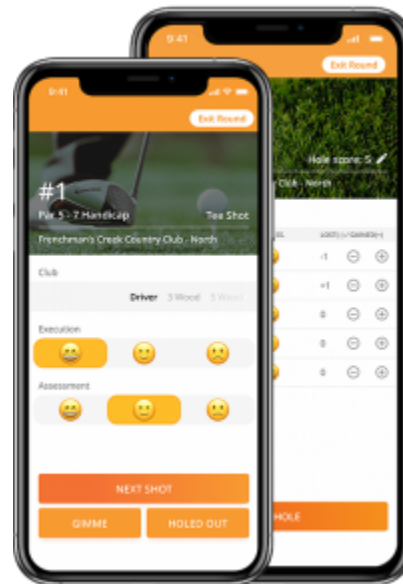
Pendrith’s run of golf on the Mackenzie Tour-PGA Tour Canada after implementing the MindTRAK protocol last summer was eye-opening stuff. He finished T48, T16, second, third, first and fifth in consecutive weeks before winning a second time two weeks later. And that victory was by a tour-record eight shots at the Mackenzie Investments Open at Elm Ridge CC near Montreal.

“MindTRAK absolutely helped me with my performance,” Pendrith said. “It got me back to the way I thought when I played my best. I don’t get attached to bad shots anymore.”

Neither does Zokol. Once he engaged the loose beginnings of the MindTRAK platform at the 2000 United States Open at Pebble Beach, he shot 30 on the front nine. That was a record for the national open when played at the iconic Monterey Peninsula course. And he had no idea about his score until his caddie told him.

A year later he won the PGA of Canada Championship on what was then the Nationwide Tour. He doesn’t believe either of those achievements would have been possible without the performance metrics he created in 1999 to track his mental performance. Those turned into the essence of MindTRAK.

“It changed my perception on how to play tournament golf,” Zokol told me during an interview. “It was a breakthrough. Suddenly I wasn’t obsessing about the result or my form. Instead I was playing with total freedom.”



In the new world order of data and analytics, MindTRAK sounds like it could be complicated. Actually, it’s the complete opposite. Once the app is downloaded a golfer enters clubs in his bag, chooses the course he is playing from a supplied inventory and enters the type of round being played — simulated, casual, serious or tournament. After or during the round players rate themselves on assessment and execution by clicking on graphical icons to record a grade. It takes only a few seconds.

Three reports are automatically emailed to the user and contacts on the user's share list (coach or swing teacher) after the round. It includes a MindTRAK scorecard showing every Shot Lost and Shot Gained; Key Performance Marker, which compares that round with a baseline standard from the user's rounds over the past month; and a Round Summary. That deciphers lost and gained shot events in the different Shot Types and Subtypes categories of each round.

These, according to Zokol, offer far more value than adding up your scorecard. Not only for the golfer but also the aforementioned coach or swing teacher.

"The feedback might show that a golfer hit great putts all day but didn't read those putts properly," he said. "So rather than work on a putting stroke, that player really needs to work on reading greens."

The app officially launched a week ago. Zokol and his consortium of MindTRAK business partners are looking for feedback so the company is offering the first 500 players who download the app and record 10 rounds of data on it MindTRAK Golf Founding Member status.

Founding members will enjoy free usage of the MindTRAK app for as long as they choose to remain active members. For all other players who download and activate the app, MindTRAK will be free until the start of the 2021 golf season.

Eventually the app will have a monthly fee.

“The mind is still the final frontier to perform better at this game,” Zokol told me at last year’s RBC Canadian Open. “That starts with a better mindset. Golf insanity is rampant. MindTRAK can help stop it.”

<https://mindtrakgolf.com>