

English translation of - Course management and tacticts.

SWEDISH GOLF TRAINING – COURSE MANAGEMENT AND TACTICS



by Magnus Sunesson

CONTENTS

Swedish Golf Training	1
How to Use as Few Shots as Possible	3
Course Management	4
Course Guide	10
Practice Round	11
Adaptation	13
Attitude, Mindset and Other Mental Factors	18
Conservative Strategy – Confident Swing	20
Strategy in the Short Game	21
Golf Course Architects’ Different Philosophies	22
Some Practical Advice for Lower Scores	24
Training Strategy	25
About the Author	27
Recommended Reading	27
The Game of Golf	29

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SWEDISH GOLF TRAINING (page 1)

“TO FEEL GOOD AND REACH THE TOP!”

The vision of The National Teams

In this booklet, Course Management, national team coach Magnus Sunesson shares his experience.

The Swedish Golf Training booklets are aimed at elite players and those who genuinely want to invest in their golf. They are intended to support talent development and long-term improvement. At the same time, the booklet challenges all golfers, regardless of current playing standard, to improve their golf game.

In many sports, game understanding is mentioned as an important ingredient for the active athlete. Is there a corresponding ‘game understanding’ in golf? If so, what is it, and how can it be trained? Is it possible to learn the game of golf in a way that improves your playing skills while also increasing your understanding of how these skills should be used and developed?

You can observe that tactical awareness and, for many, the planning aspect are prerequisites for the game even before technical ability is presented. That is what the Swedish Golf Training series wants to focus on!

Swedish Golf Training follows, in most booklets, a given model. You will find the model described in the last pages of the booklet.

To work with this model requires certain conditions. To develop strategic and tactical ability, it is not enough to just stand and hit balls on a driving range. Swedish Golf Training naturally takes this into account and provides many important insights in training and development — together with a great portion of practice advice to help you on your way toward your first 54.

Good luck!

AS FEW SHOTS AS POSSIBLE (page 3)

After a tournament round on the US PGA Tour in August 1999, Tiger Woods came in with a score of 72 strokes. His playing partner that day was Nick Price, who had managed to get the ball through the course in 67 strokes.

In a TV interview immediately after the round, Tiger says to Nick:

- I played much better than you did today, and yet you beat me by five strokes!
- How many pins did you go for?
- All eighteen.
- I went for seven!

Tiger is said to have gained a new perspective on golf after that lesson. The game of golf is so much more than a good ball strike and spectacular shots.

Golf is about getting the ball through (or around) the course in as few strokes as possible. I would like to add: it does not matter how you do it! Provided, of course, that we stay within the rules. To use a worn-out cliché: there are no style points in golf.

A skilled player is one who has control of the whole. A player who knows when he or she should play with “full throttle” and when not to. A player who plays with sufficient margins for error, depending on the game he or she has “in the bag” on that particular day.

That Sunday in August 1999, Nick Price was the better player! He planned his game based on the conditions he had that day. Based on how his body felt, how his swing felt, and which shots he could execute, he weighed opportunities and risks against each other and then made his decisions.

We now move into something that I have translated into Swedish from the English term Course Management, to Game Strategy. A direct translation would be course strategy, but it is our game we need to plan in order to be able to play the course in the best possible way.

COURSE MANAGEMENT (page 4)

Strategy is defined in the Swedish Academy Dictionary as:

1. The art of military command; the art of generalship. The art of planning on a large scale and for the long term.
2. An art, method, or technique of (through skilful manoeuvring) leading something in the long term and in an overall way (for example a business, a development), someone or something in a desired direction.

If we apply this to golf, it means the art of planning our game.

You are both the general and the leadership who decide how you want to play. The tools at your disposal are your mind, your body, your clubs and your ball. You want to make lots of birdies and no bogeys. Planning your game is therefore of great importance—meaning where you choose to play the ball and how you want the ball to get there.

Sometimes you feel that you are in very good form and can handle every shot. It can also be that the course you are playing suits your game and your shots perfectly. To achieve as low a score as possible, you can in these circumstances use one type of strategy.

At other times your form is not as good; you may be hurting somewhere, you only master a few shots, and not even those work 100%. Your opponent in golf can also be wind, rain, cold, heat, the length of the course, and so on. To lose as little as possible—which can mean giving away as few strokes to the course as possible—you need another type of planning, or an adaptation of your play to the weather, than in the example above, where you were in good form.

(page 5)

FACTORS THAT AFFECT YOUR CHOICE OF STRATEGY

- Knowledge of yourself
- Ability
- How the ball lies
- Daily form: How does the swing feel? Which shots work?
- Weather
- Knowledge of the course – firm, soft, wet, dry, altitude (height above sea level)
- Hole layout – dogleg right, dogleg left, long, short, uphill, downhill, side slope

- Hazard placement – water, out of bounds, rough, bunkers, trees?
- Green design – grain (direction of grass growth)
- Pin position

EVERY SHOT IS A TASK FOR YOU TO SOLVE!

The longer you play golf, the more experience you gain. You learn what usually works under certain circumstances. What solves the problem in front of you? Every shot, short or long, is essentially a task you must solve. The ball is here, the hole is there, and the ball should get into the hole in as few strokes as possible.

Most good players usually choose to curve the ball toward the target, because that often provides the greatest chance of success. A completely straight shot is sometimes the hardest thing to execute in golf.

By shaping the ball you can “hold” it against the wind, avoid hazards and, to some extent, use the green’s surface structure to make the ball finish where you want it to.

In Jack Nicklaus’ book “Golf My Way” he writes:

“It is very rare to see a professional player hit a perfectly straight long shot. It may look straight many times, but if you look carefully, from behind the player and out toward the target line, you will see that the ball curves either from left to right or from right to left at the end of its flight. The curve may be very small – often just a hint of draw or fade – but it is there in 99 percent of the best players’ long shots.”

Good golf requires the ability to play percentage shots. By that I mean consistently getting the ball to the target by shaping it from left to right or right to left. In most cases this is the easiest way to reach the target and provides the highest percentage chance of success – hence the term “percentage shot”.

(page 6)

By drawing or fading you can “hold” the ball against the wind, avoid hazards and, to some extent, use the surface structure of the green to make the ball finish where you want it to.

Ben Hogan’s four theories:

1. If the flag is on the right side of the green, I play the shot from left to right (fade).
2. If the flag is on the left side, I play the shot from right to left (draw).
3. If the flag is short (at the front of the green), I play a high shot.
4. If the flag is long (at the back of the green), I play a lower shot.

I do not believe that Ben Hogan always followed these “rules”, but I am convinced that he had them as guiding principles. If, for example, it was raining and the green was soft, I can imagine that he also chose a high shot even to a flag far back on the green.

If he missed his drive and ended up on the left side of the fairway, sloping away from him, and the flag was placed on the left side of the green, it is hard to imagine that he would choose a draw.

There is both a tactical and a technical reason why a smart player rarely, or more accurately, never tries to hit the ball perfectly straight. Imagine the flag is in the middle of the green with ten meters of putting surface on each side. If you try to hit a straight shot at the flag but slice it ten meters, you will be left with a ten-meter putt or perhaps a chip.

Most good players have a preferred curve that is their most natural shot (which also has a technical explanation): draw or fade.

If you prefer to play a fade, you can aim five meters left of the flag. If you (by mistake) hit a straight shot, you will have a five-meter putt. If the fade works as planned, you will be next to the pin, and even if you slice the ball ten meters, you will still have a five-meter putt – provided the distance control is correct.



STRATEGIC PLAN (page 8)

Strategy is explained, among other things, as the art of planning on a broad scale and over the long term. For you as a player, this means having an overall plan for how you want to make your way around the course and stay one step ahead.

Before you tee up the ball on the first tee, you should have decided on certain “principles.” For example, which par 5 holes you intend to try to reach in two shots, which holes you plan to lay up on in order to hit the green with your third shot or directly at the flag, which clubs you will use from the tee on certain par 5s and par 4s (since the driver does not fit everywhere), and which greens you will play toward a specific target area regardless of where the pin position is.

Having a basic plan ready before the round is important for your sense of security and harmony. Many major decisions are already made, meaning you do not need to spend energy on them during play. In some cases, the plan can be adjusted during the round—and that is perfectly OK. With more experience, you will know when to do this.

Bob Rotella writes about the “game plan” in his book “Golf Is Not a Game of Perfect”:

“A good professional player never plays a tournament round without first studying the course and creating a plan for how it should be played. The plan includes target areas and club selection for every tee shot, the best landing areas on each green, and which hazards should be avoided. It also accounts for variables such as rain, wind, and other weather factors. A professional player plans all of this in advance to minimize analysis and improvisation on the course.”

STAY ONE STEP AHEAD

Planning long term also means thinking one shot ahead during play. Where do I want to play this shot so that my next shot has the best possible angle to the target? The target can be the flag, a specific area of the green, or the fairway if it is a positional shot.

(page 9)

EXAMPLE – PLAYERS A, B, AND C

PLAYER A

Player A is hitting the driver well today and plays with great confidence. A chooses to make the hole as short as possible to attack the flag and get close with the second shot using a wedge or short iron. She is going for birdie.

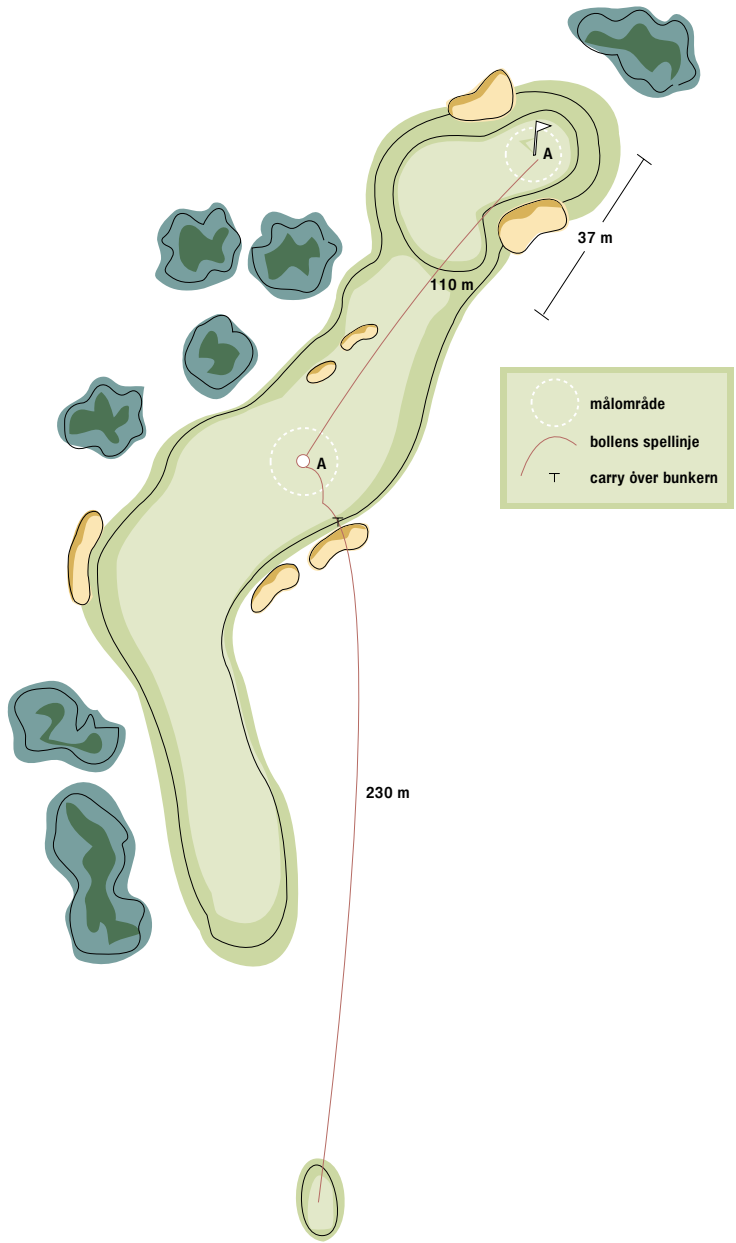
PLAYER B

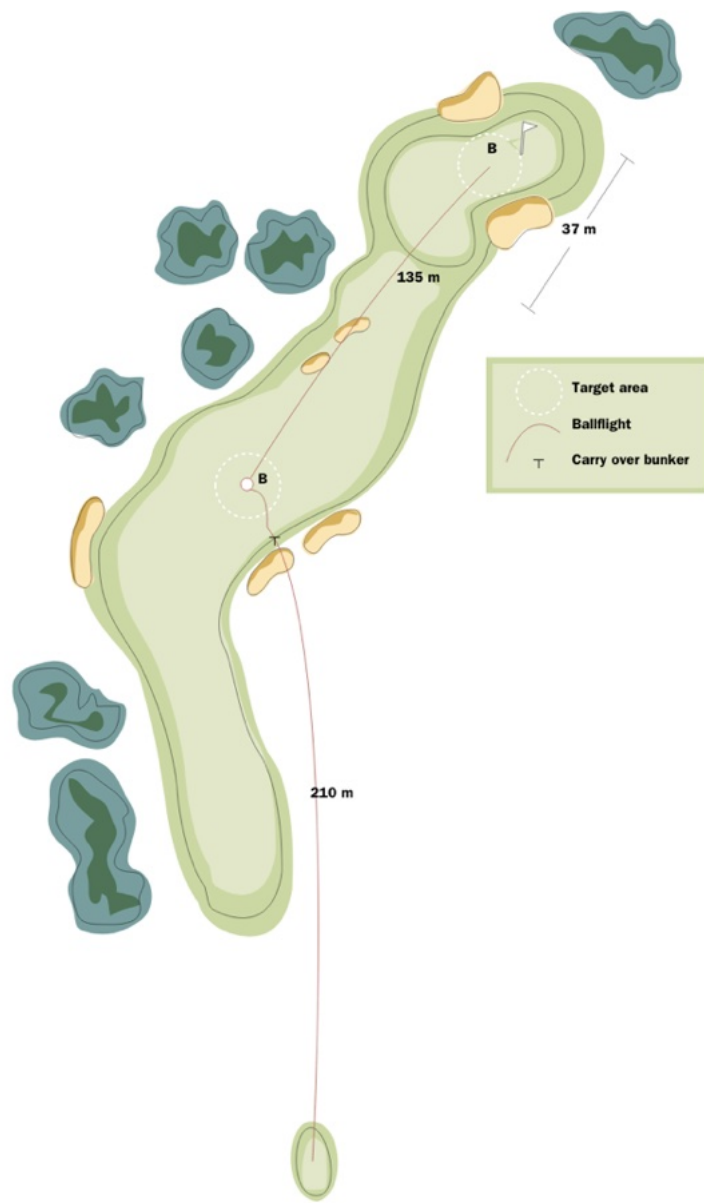
Player B is also in good form and strikes the long shots well today. However, earlier in the round she has hit a few wedges thin. B therefore chooses to hit a 3-wood from the tee so that her second shot is a mid-iron. To give herself enough margin, B aims about five meters left of the flag and slightly short. If the shot turns out as planned, B will have a putt of five to eight meters. Birdie is a bonus; she is satisfied with par.

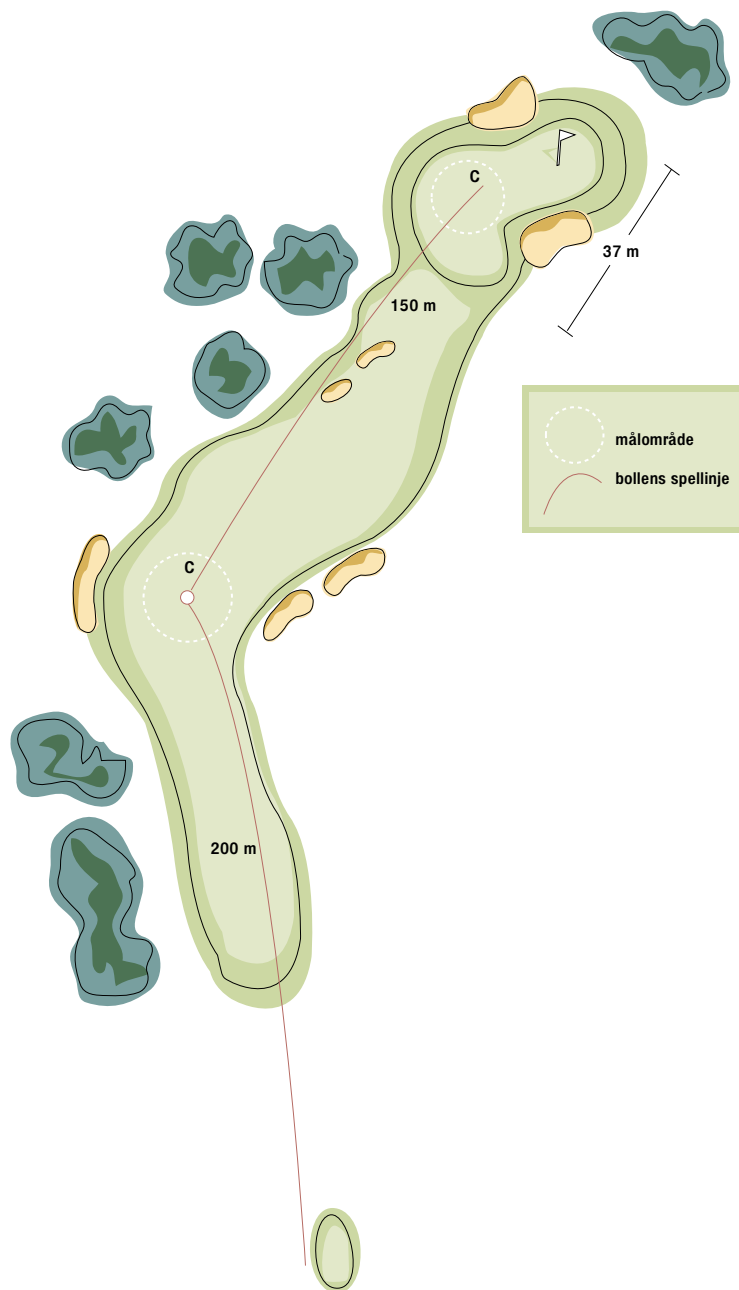
PLAYER C

Player C is not comfortable with the driver today. C therefore chooses a long iron or a more lofted fairway wood to get the ball in play. This leaves a much longer second shot than A and B—about 160

meters. C therefore plays toward the area of the green with the largest landing zone, roughly ten meters left of the flag and ten meters short. As a good long putter, C two-putts and is satisfied to walk to the next tee with a 4 on the scorecard.







COURSE GUIDE (page 10)

All professional players and the vast majority of skilled amateur golfers use a course guide when they play. In the course guide they have all the information they want in order to master the course with as low a score as possible.

The course guide is a tool that helps you plan and structure your game. You get a clear picture of the hole in front of you and can easily see what options you have depending on where your ball lies.

PLAYERS' DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

What information do you include in your course guide?

Do you know your own distances you hit with all of your clubs?

A GOOD COURSE GUIDE CONTAINS:

- Fairway length and depth
- Hills and depressions in the fairway
- All hazards that may come into play (bunkers, out of bounds, water, bushes, trees, etc.)
- Distances to hazards and carry distances to clear them from clear reference points
- Distance to the front edge of the green from various points in the fairway
- Green depth
- Green design (contours, plateaus, depressions, and mounds)
- Carry distances over bunkers and other hazards around the green

If you play big tournaments there is often a course guide available for purchase at the club. It usually contains all the information you need, but not always. Review the course guide when you play practice rounds to see if there is anything you want to add to it—or in some cases remove—because it may simply confuse you.

At smaller competitions there is rarely a good course guide available for purchase. Many clubs have a course guide, but it often contains far too little of the information an elite player needs. In that case, supplement it so that you have a course guide you trust and like.

To obtain distances you obviously need to measure them. You can do this by pacing (in which case you must know how long your step is, or how many steps each of your clubs goes), or by using a measuring wheel. I prefer a measuring wheel—it is more reliable.

When I wrote this booklet twentythree years ago the rangefinder was not yet invented.

Nowdays almost every player and caddie use a laser rangefinder to get knowledge of distance the ball flies. Trackman or similar devices are also useful.

INSPECTION ROUND or Practice Round (page 11)

The purpose of a practice round is to learn the course. Your attention should be focused on how the holes are laid out, where the various hazards are placed, how the sand in the bunkers is, whether fairways and greens are firm or soft, and so on (see above under course guide).

A tip from Jack Nicklaus, who during the 1960s, 70s and 80s was one of the world's greatest golfers:

"When I play the first hole, I go through the hole once again in my head. When I play the second hole, I go through holes one and two in the same way, and so on."

In this way, he learned the course quickly. In his mind, he had played the first hole eighteen times, the second hole seventeen times, and so on.

I have heard another wonderful story about Ben Hogan during his practice round before the British Open in 1953, Ben Hogan's first and only appearance in that competition.

The practice round is followed by several hundred spectators, and after five or six holes someone from the crowd shouts:

"Mr Hogan, why are you kicking your ball into the rough on every hole?"

"I know how the ball will react from the fairway – from the rough I don't!"

On every hole, he had with his tee shots hit every fairway and then deliberately kicked the ball into the semi-rough. This was, as mentioned, his only appearance in the British Open and the course (Carnoustie) was significantly tougher than what he was used to at home in the USA.

From the fairway, he knew how to stop the ball. From the rough, he could not achieve the same control, so he played the ball from the rough to see how it reacted. He wanted to see whether he would be forced to attack the ball in a different way. He very much wanted (from the bottom of his heart) to win the British Open.

One of the foremost strategists golf has ever seen, and also among the very best ball-strikers – meaning pure contact, control of ball flight, power and finesse.

He won!

Practice Round (page 12)

During the practice round(s), the best players usually try to determine where the pinpositions are likely to be placed during the tournament rounds.

They then consider where they might end up if they were to miss a shot and play a few balls from those locations in order to practice them. This could be a chip, a pitch, a bunker shot, or an extra long putt.

When the competition begins and they actually end up there, they have already played the shot and know which club and shot to use to hole out or get close to the hole.

They have prepared in a professional way.

They are one step ahead.

The timing of your first practice round is also something to consider. If you play the course well in advance of the competition, you have greater opportunity to adapt your practice to your shots and your game so that it fits the course.

If the competition is very important to you, it can be beneficial to have played the course long before the event.

Sidebar – Discussion and Reflection

Are there anybody at your home club that always get a lot out of his/her game? A good scorer.

Who is the best strategist or tactician on your team?

What can you learn from them?

Do you know how to play the course after a practice round?

ADAPTION (page 13)

In order to produce or shoot the lowest possible score as often as possible, you need to be able to adapt to the circumstances.

Golf offers an abundance of variation, and we are almost always faced with new challenges from one day to the next. In professional tournaments, tee markers and pin positions are moved for each competition day. This can mean that club selection must change in order to adapt to the prevailing conditions.

Our bodies can feel different than normal, and as a result we may not have the same control over our shots as we usually do. In such cases, it may be wise to bring out the 8-meter fade, a half swing, a punched shot, or some other reserve shot that works.

Simply adapt to your form for the day in order to finish the 18th with a sense of 'job well done'.

Many professional players can confirm the wonderful feeling of finishing with a good score even when the body, swing, or ball striking has not been completely satisfactory.

The weather can be completely different, such as heavy rain or storm conditions. Playing the same golf as in sunshine and calm wind is impossible.

Many players still expect the same results, which is unrealistic. We must also adjust our expectations in order to be able to play an entire round with balanced emotions and mental stability.

In bad weather, many players 'lose their heads,' and scores often rise dramatically—much higher than if expectations had been adjusted to a reasonable level and patience had been maintained.

Golf is a game where the big tournament wins often takes a while to happen. Routine and experience are just as important as youthful strength. Calmness and patience are always rewarded in the long run.

Sidebar – Discussion and Reflection (Page 13)

Do you lower your expectations when the weather is bad? Why or why not?

Could you practice differently or in other ways to learn more shots?

Do you try to fix your swing during the round when it does not feel good, or do you play with what you have that day?

Do you have many shots 'in the bag' that you can rely on?

Strategy Examples. (page 14)

Here are three possible ways to play this hole. I want to emphasize that it is perfectly OK to choose whichever you like. Being good at strategy also means choosing the shot the player believes he or she can execute at that moment.

A.

A skilled player with many shots in the bag plays a fade into the wind so that the wind will not affect the ball sideways. Chooses an extra club since the ball travels shorter when shaping it into the wind. Aims—meaning sets up—to start the ball about five meters to the right of the flag. If it fades too much, Player A ends up a little short of the flag but likely still on the green. If it fades too little, Player A ends up at the flag or slightly to the left. If Player A misses, the result is in most cases still acceptable.

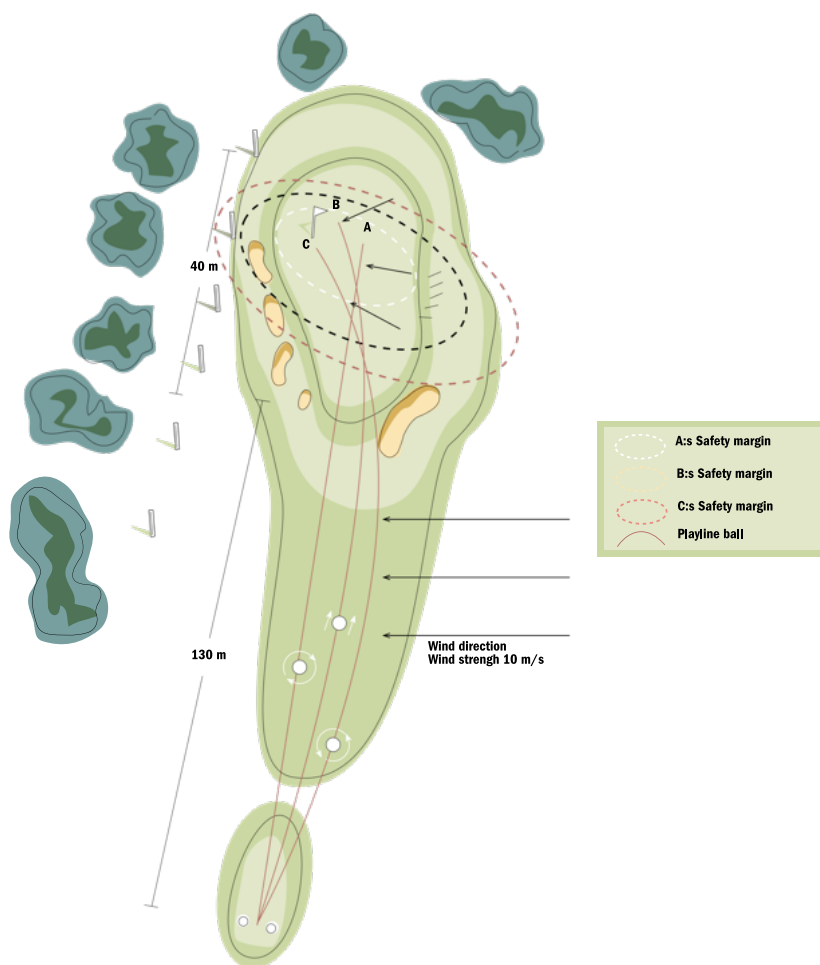
B.

Chooses to aim at the left edge of the bunker to the right of the green. Plays a straight shot and counts on the wind carrying the ball toward the flag. Depending on various factors discussed in this book, the choice of shot may be completely correct. Player B, however, takes a greater risk than Player A, since a potential miss can be greater.

B chose to play a straight ball. If Player B has a slight mishit, it can actually become either a draw or a fade depending on how the clubhead arrives at impact. If Player B gets a little draw-spin on the ball, the bunkers to the left of the green suddenly come into play. If it becomes a slight fade, the ball will likely finish to the right of the green.

C.

Is a player who exclusively plays the ball with a draw. Strong wind from right to left is rarely favorable for a player who only masters a draw. To allow a bigger draw than usual, Player C must aim about five to ten meters to the right of the green. Just as in the example with Player B, Player C may have chosen the right shot—the shot that solves the task and gets the ball as close as possible to the target. A possible miss can, in Player C's case, be even larger. A block (which is not uncommon for a draw-player in this type of shot) misses several meters to the right of the green, leaving Player C with a pitch from thick rough to a green that slopes away. If it turns into a big hook, all you can do is close your eyes and hope—the out of bounds to the left of the green suddenly comes into play.



Below is a route from one of my colleagues on tour.

“A professional player who wants to get close to the flag or the target area always plays the ball into the wind. If the flag is placed on the right side of the green and the wind blows from the right, you will not see many professionals hit the ball 20 meters to the right and let the wind bring it back. Instead, we play the shot with a right-hand curve into the wind.”

– Jesper Parnevik

Different ways to play a hole. Page 16.

I have drawn this hole from a course guide I saved from the time I played on the European Tour. It is the final hole at Emirates GC in Dubai. A very good par 5 that offers several playing options. A long drive over the hill on the left side makes the green much easier to reach in two shots. A shorter hitter will most likely choose to reach the green in three shots.

Here I give examples of three different ways to play the hole. It is sunny, warm, and no wind.

A. plays a long, high drive straight over the hill. A has decided to go for the green with the second shot. There are 190 meters to the front of the green and 205 meters to the flag. When A reaches the ball, it lies in an old divot. A, who does not consider the risk worth taking given the chance of not making clean contact, chooses a different tactic. A decides to lay up to the favorite distance of 85 meters. To achieve that distance, A plays a 130-meter shot. To get a good angle into the green (as flat as possible in this case), A chooses to play the second shot toward the left side of the fairway. Favorite distance: 85 meters. A then plays the favorite wedge one meter left of the flag. A confident, committed putt later results in a 4 on the scorecard. Very pleased, even though A was forced to change tactics. World class!

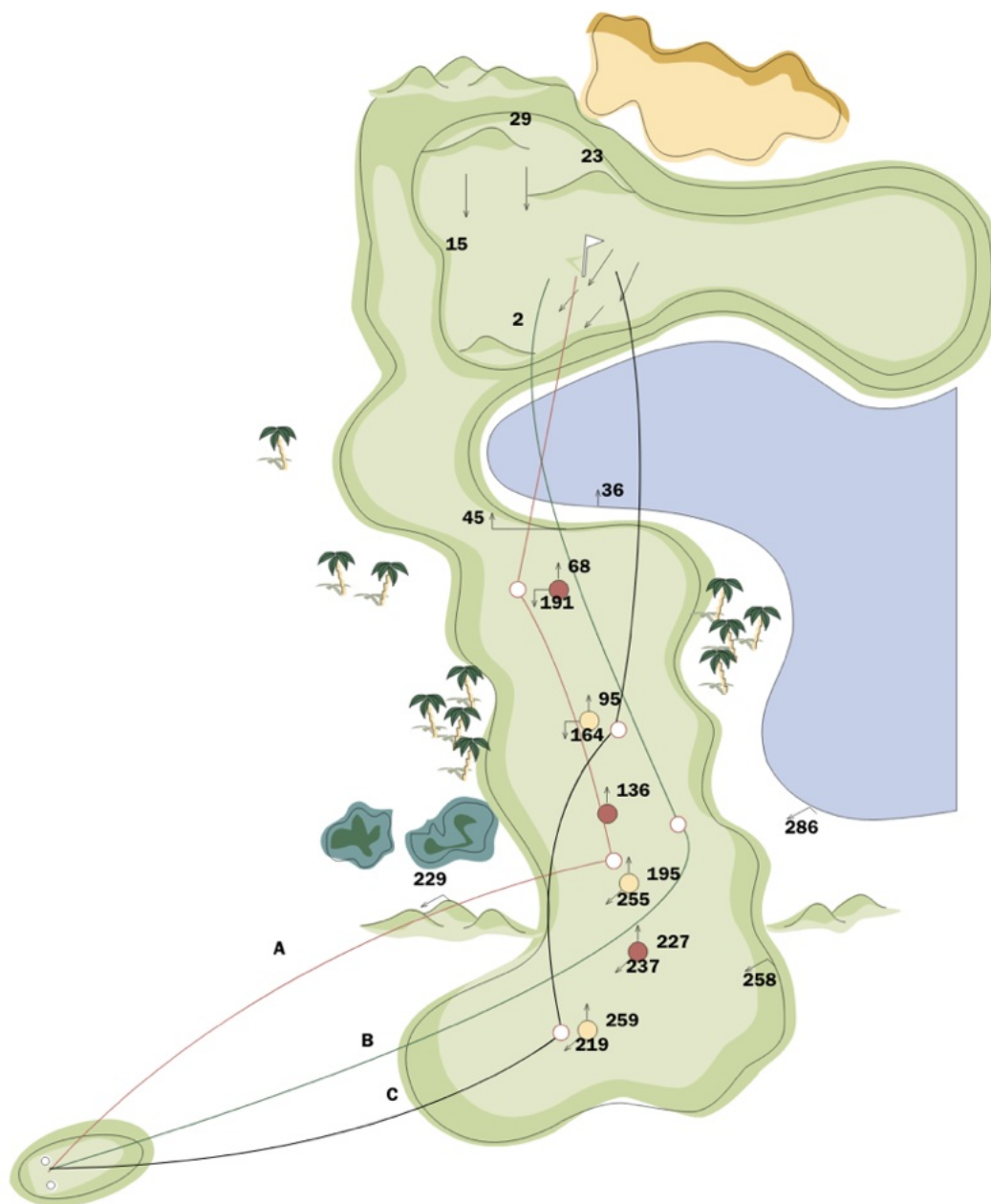
B. plays a long draw from the tee. B needs a birdie to achieve a personal best on this course. A very well-struck drive leaves B with 170 meters to the green and 185 meters to the flag. B therefore chooses to play the second shot toward the easiest part of the green — the left side — which is also flatter and easier to putt from. B plays a slightly faded iron shot eight meters from the flag. The eagle putt stops at the edge of the hole and from twenty centimeters B holes the putt for a 4. World class!

C. chooses to play a low, running driving-iron from the tee. C has 164 meters left to the favorite distance of 110 meters. In calm conditions, 110 meters is always a full wedge for C. C therefore chooses to lay up with a five iron. The shot travels 160 meters, leaving C with a third shot of 114 meters to the flag. C chooses to go for the flag and, to reach the full distance, plays a slightly lower draw and uses the slope of the green to feed the ball toward the hole. The shot works as planned, despite the ball stops slightly to the right of the flag, leaving C a one-and-a-half-meter putt. A soft putt drops, resulting in a 4 on the card. World class!

Three different ways to play, same result. It is not how, but how many, that counts.

Lee Trevino once played a very narrow par 5 on the U.S. Tour using 7-iron, 7-iron, 7-iron to three meters from the flag and holed the putt for a 4. Boring? No, in my view, (and probably his wife at the time who was keen on spending dollars), simply world class.

Depending on which shot you choose to play, you give yourself more or less margin for error. It is important to play with sufficient margins based on what your game allows on that particular day. Mucho importante as Bob Torrance (Sam's father) often used to say, in his rough Scottish-accented English.



Attitude, Mindset and Other Mental Factors (page 18-19)

What we think, how we think, the feelings we experience, the inner voice we hear and the images we see within ourselves before a shot, greatly influence our choice of strategy. Or perhaps more importantly, whether we manage to get the ball into the hole in as few shots as possible.

If we are aware of a problem, obstacle or memory that affects us in a negative or unconstructive way, we need to acknowledge it to ourselves. Playing a shot with negative thoughts, images or inner dialogue is never good; far too many shots are missed precisely for that reason.

When you have completed your preparations for the shot and are ready to address the ball, you should believe that the ball will end up where you intend. The ideal situation is when you are completely filled with positive feelings, images or sounds that you like. It can also be a combination of emotions, images and sounds – one does not exclude the other.

Suggested order when planning a shot:

1. Take in external information such as distance, elevation changes, side slope and wind. What task lies ahead of you?
2. Is there something you want to avoid? Is there a place you absolutely do not want to end up? Only address this if you are aware of a problem – do not go looking for problems.
3. Where do you want to play the ball? Where do you want to finish? What margins can you allow yourself right now?
4. Which is the easiest shot for you to play in order to get the ball where you want it? Choose that shot.
5. Feel the shot, see the shot, or hear how it sounds when you succeed.
6. Trust your decision and your club selection. Play the shot.
7. Enjoy your success! Always give yourself credit or a small 'kick' for executing the shot (never take anything for granted!).
8. If you are not satisfied with the shot, you can briefly go through how you would have liked it to be. This can help players who tend to be negatively affected by the ball's outcome. You do not change the result, but you can change your experience of it.

Many players waste an enormous amount of energy being angry, upset, disappointed or stuck in some other negative emotional state between shots. This makes it difficult to be fully present for the next shot. Many players abandon their game plan because of their negative mindset, leading to poor decisions and even higher scores.

CONSERVATIVE STRATEGY - COCKY SWING (page 20)

If the score is what matters most, you should always play the shot you know you can execute – not the shot Tiger Woods or Annika Sörenstam would have played, not even the shot you think you might be able to pull off.

Being completely confident that you can execute the shot you decide on is the most productive way to play a hole. It gives you a “cocky” swing – another way of saying that you swing aggressively or with complete confidence.

The opposite of this is choosing a bold strategy but making a cautious or hesitant swing. By a bold strategy, I mean attempting shots you do not fully trust. This often leads to tentative or hesitant swings, which in turn often result in missed shots.

Poor execution of daring or reckless shots most often leads to very high scores.

If you feel comfortable with – and have confidence in – the shot you have chosen, you can of course apply a daring or bold strategy.

It is you who weighs opportunities against risks on every shot. Sometimes you have to take a chance, and what often separates a world-class player from a merely good one is that the world-class player usually knows when.

During the Scandinavian Masters in 2000, Jesper Parnevik told several national team players about the mindset he chooses to have before most shots he plays.

Whatever he decides to do, he chooses not to care where the ball ends up. Whether it is a percentage shot or a very aggressive attacking shot, he plays the shot “without concern”.

“Then I can swing freely – there is nothing holding my swing back,” said Jesper. “It’s hard to explain, it sounds strange, but I am almost relaxed.”

It has taken many years of routine, experience and a great deal of practice for Jesper to get where he is today. If you are aiming for the world elite, you can already now choose to adopt a mindset that suits the way you are and the way you play.

STRATEGY IN THE SHORT GAME (page 21)

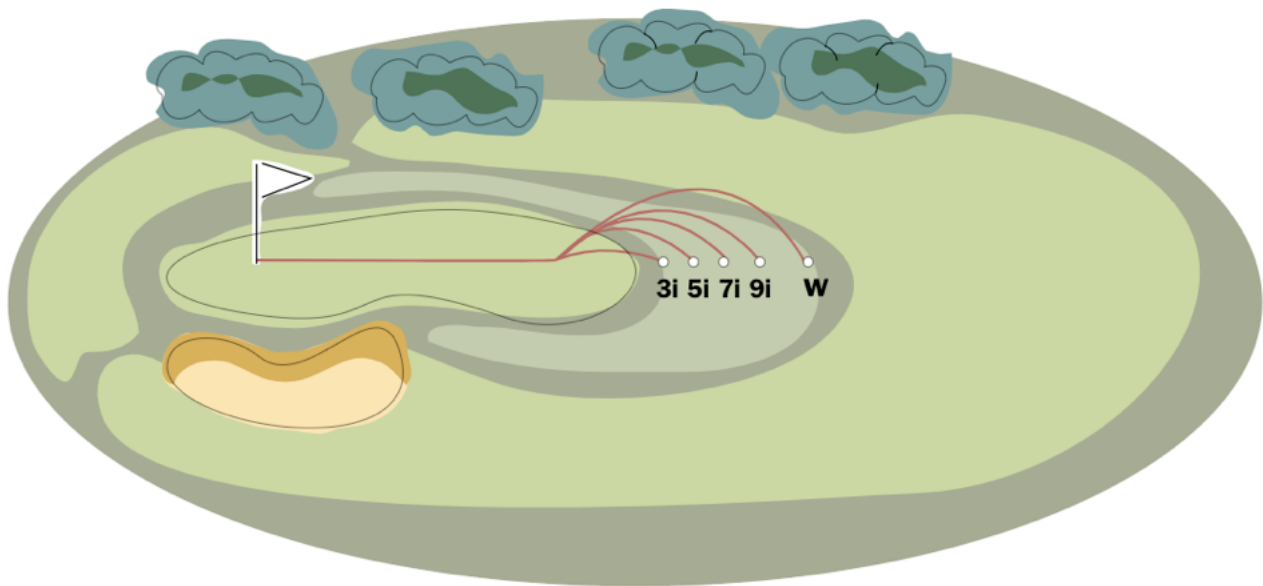
If the shot allows it, most skilled players will always choose to land the ball at the beginning of the green and then let the ball roll toward the hole.

This is because, for most players, it is easier to visualize the ball rolling along the ground than flying through the air on short shots.

The basic technique is also the same – neither ball position nor the movement changes significantly. It is primarily the club selection and, to some extent, swing speed that differ.

Feel free to experiment to see whether this approach helps the ball consistently finish closer to the hole for you as well.

This applies under normal weather conditions. If it is raining or the greens are very soft, it may be easier to play the ball higher and land it closer to the flag.



COURSE ARCHITECTS' DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES (page 22-23)

In literature from around 1920, three different categories of hole design are described:

penal – punitive

heroic – heroic

strategic – strategic

During the 1950s, when the golf boom was strong in the USA, another form emerged called “freeway,” which in Swedish could be explained as “straight, simple and with less finesse.”

From the time golf began to be played up until the middle of the 19th century, the game was played on the land as it was found. The most sought-after ground to play on was sandy coastal areas, with gently undulating terrain, hazards in the form of open sand patches, and fine grass.

As the need for more golf courses increased, there was not enough links land available, so courses began to be built further inland. To make the land resemble linksland, hills, depressions, and sand-filled hazards were constructed.

The first golf balls were extremely difficult to get airborne and instead rolled almost as far on the hard ground as a “properly” struck shot through the air. Course architects of that time therefore built high, unnatural earth mounds in the middle of the line of play to punish low shots. Penal design was born.

To make golf more popular for the majority of players and reduce the dominance of highly skilled players, strategic design was developed. The Englishman H. S. Colt (1869–1951) was the one who began modifying penal courses by moving hazards away from the direct line of play. There were still just as many hazards, but instead of punishing topped shots down the center of the hole, the hazards now penalized hooked and sliced shots.

Almost all holes should offer different ways to reach the green. Hazards of varying difficulty exist to make the player consciously decide, already from the tee, which route is most suitable to reach the

hole, depending on playing standard. This is the foundation of strategic design. In other words, different lines of play to the same hole, where all options offer adapted opportunities and risks.

Strategic design, at its best, rewards the skilled player without punishing the less skilled, and allows both to get the most out of their game.

Heroic design is a blend of penal and strategic. It offers the player a punishing hazard, but also the possibility to choose how much of the hazard should be “cut off.” Good heroic design can be summarized as follows: the more you risk, the greater the reward.

Freeway design is characterized by straight holes with all hazards outside the playing corridor. Tees are often square or rectangular and greens completely round. The purpose of freeway design was to make the game fast to play. There are no choices regarding how the hole should be played — straight ahead applies — and those who do not hit straight are heavily penalized.

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR LOWER SCORES (page 24)

WHEN YOU FACE DIFFICULTY OR A TROUBLE SHOT

You must think through what happens if your shot doesn’t come off. In some way you need to leave room for a miss by being aware of the possible result when you have to retreat to a playable position, and then choose the shot that keeps the damage to a minimum.

FAVOURITE DISTANCE

If you have a favourite distance, for example 95 metres with your wedge, a yardage you are very confident with and like, you should of course plan your play so that you have that distance left on a par-5 hole and that it becomes your approach on short par-4 holes. Your favourite distance can vary from week to week, be aware.

FAST GREENS

If the greens are very fast you should plan your shots so you give yourself uphill putts. It is often easier to putt ten metres uphill than three metres downhill. Golf is not an exact science and we can’t strike the ball perfectly every time, but this tactic should definitely be part of your course strategy.

USE THE WHOLE TEE

It can pay to look at the hole from both sides of the tee, to notice which side feels easier to play from. From one side a tree may partly be in the way, while from the other side it is completely clear. This tactic can pay off even if there is no obstacle; some holes simply look much easier from one side of the tee.

PAR-5 HOLES

“Here I always try to make birdie. A par feels to me like a lost stroke. Even if I don’t reach in two, it still feels as if I must make birdie. My strategy varies, however. Everything depends on how I’ve scored and, to some extent, how I’m putting. If I’m not putting well, it can happen that I decide to play aggressively and go for the green in two. If I’m playing poorly, it can also happen that I go for it in two in the hope that it will create a positive feeling. If the game is flowing and I’m putting well, it may happen that I’m satisfied with laying up and playing the ball up in two because I feel I can then hit the approach and hole the putt for birdie.”

— Jesper Parnevik

CLUB SELECTION

“Always take one more club! If I’m unsure whether it’s an 8-iron or a 7-iron, I always take the 7. If I hesitate between a 7-iron and a 6-iron, I always take the 6. That gives me room to execute the shot with good tempo and a rhythm that suits me. Always take one more club!”

— Ben Hogan

Practice Course Management (Pages 25–26)

THE TWO-BRAIN GAME

Play two and two. For each shot, your partner decides which shot you should play.

You decide which shot your partner should play.

In this way, you discover new possibilities for playing the shot.

You will notice that there are many ways of thinking.

Be clear: Curve? High or low? Hard or soft? Bounce and roll or stop?

Starting point? Landing area?

18-IRONS

Play all tee shots with an iron on par-4 and par-5 holes and position yourself at your favorite distance on all par-5s.

Even if you could reach the green with a long iron on your second shot, lay up instead.

CALL THE SHOT

Play two and two. Tell your partner how you intend to play the shot:

Where the ball should start, where it should land, and where it should finish.

This primarily trains decision-making, but you also learn from each other’s different ways of thinking.

ALTERNATE SHOTS

Play two and two. After the tee shot, you play each other’s balls.

After the second shot, you switch back again, and so on until the ball is holed.

LONG OR SHORT OF THE PIN

Play 18 holes. On each hole, decide whether you will play the ball long or short of the flag.

You may not play directly at the flag.

Purpose: Increase awareness of the best landing area on the green.

Variation: Choose left or right of the flag instead.

ATTACK OR SAFETY

Play nine holes. On every other hole, play with an attacking mindset, and on the alternating holes, play with a safety-first mindset.

Do you notice a difference?

STRATEGY IN THE SHORT GAME

Work on strategy in the short game.

Practice together with a partner and choose a specific lie.

Your partner decides the shot and club.

First decide landing point and ball roll, then club.

MIDDLE OF THE GREEN

Play 18 holes. On every hole, aim your approach shots at the middle of the green.

Even if the pin looks easy to attack, you may not play directly at it.

Purpose: You will discover that you are rarely far from the hole when you aim for green centre.

CLUB ME

Play two and two and choose clubs and shots for each other.

Player A's goal is to make Player B achieve the worst possible result.

No wedges from tee, no putting on the green, and at least four clubs between each club choice.

Purpose: Develop strategic thinking and force consideration of optimal next positions.

CLUB ME AGAIN

Same as above, but now Player A helps Player B achieve the best possible score.

B may not comment on favorite shots or clubs.

Purpose: Learn how others think.

TOWEL GAMES

Have someone place a white towel on the fairway where you intend to land the ball.

If you have a rangefinder, measure exact distance.

Purpose: Clarify the target for each shot.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Choose a green that can be used.

Player A finds an almost impossible lie.

Both players then play from there until holed.

Won hole gives one point.

Purpose: Learn how to escape difficult situations.

Maybe it's better to take a penalty and drop it?

PLAY FROM THE TEE WITH THE WRONG CLUB

Play nine holes using deliberately wrong clubs to gain a new perspective.

CHALLENGE A FRIEND TO POINTS GOLF

1 point for fairway hit

1 point for green hit

1 point for birdie

1 point for up & down

Bogey or worse gives 0 points.

18-HOLE MATCH

Review your scorecard before the round.

Decide on a score you would be happy with for each hole.

Play match play against that score.

Purpose: Push boundaries.

PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHOR

Magnus Sunesson.

Magnus played during the years 1987–88 and 1990–94, a total of seven seasons on the European Tour. In 1989, Magnus won the Order of Merit on the Swedish Tour with a record that still stands today. He finished twelfth in The British Open in 1991 and fourth in the PGA Championship in 1992.

World ranking best, 172:nd.

He represented Sweden in national team contexts as a boy, junior, and senior during the 1980s.

After his playing career, he focused on coaching and teaching. Between 1995 and 1998, he worked at Royal Drottningholm Golf Club as Head Professional. During this period, he also worked with the boys' and men's national teams, and to some extent with Swedish female professionals.

Between 1995 and 2004, Magnus held a part-time position at the Swedish Golf Federation, where he worked with players on the Challenge Tour with the aim of helping more players develop to European and U.S. Tour level.

Hello Sweden Future Team was founded in 1999. Magnus worked there as a coach for four promising players, and after the first two-year development program, two players had already advanced to the European Tour. Henrik Stenson and Peter Hanson also became Ryder Cup players.

Magnus has also worked as TV-commentator for Viasat Golf covering the European Tour, Greens staff at three Clubs in the south of Sweden, Club Manager at Rya GC and since 2014 he mainly focuses on improving golf courses as a consultant where he helps Golf Clubs to present a better product for their members and guests. Resulting in a higher member satisfaction and a better economy for his clients. He still also teaches the game at HG Golf in Glumslöv.

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