

# Every Shot Must Have a Purpose: How GOLF54 Can Make You a Better Player

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Two legendary coaches give golfers a powerful new approach to the game... and to life. As coaches to some of golf's top players, Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott have designed and refined a revolutionary way of teaching the game, with phenomenal results. They don't believe in prescribing the same stance, grip, and swing to everyone, followed by hours of purposeless drilling. They don't even believe in beginning with physical technique. Their success has proven to them that a great game begins with a great vision.

Unlike any other golf book, Every Shot Must Have a Purpose offers cutting-edge techniques for integrating the physical, technical, mental, emotional, and social parts of a player's game. The book's revolutionary pre-shot routine will improve your focus, leading to a golf swing that is not only successful but can be repeated under extreme pressure. Emphasizing the individual golfer rather than a rigid set of mechanics, their VISION54 method takes the frustration out of the game. Why 54? Because they believe it's possible to shoot a 54 (making a birdie on every hole of a par-72 course) if you have the right mind-set and well-honed intuitive power.

An engaging read for the beginner or the seasoned golfer, Every Shot Must Have a Purpose is inspiration for life, not just the links.

Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott cofounded VISION54/Coaching for the Future, Inc. Their golf school, Golf54, in Phoenix, AZ was recently named Golf magazine's #1 in the nation. In addition to serving as Annika Sorenstam's coach and coaching the Swedish national golf team, Nilsson has spoken at numerous conferences worldwide. Marriott has been named one of Golf Digest's 50 Greatest Teachers and one of Golf Magazine's 100 Top Teachers, coaching major figures such as Grace Park and Ken Kellaney.

Award-winning sportswriter Ron Sirak is executive editor of Golf World and a senior writer at Golf Digest.

Introduction

8Imagine the Impossible: Then Figure Out How to Make It Happene  
=Ron Sirak

8The secret of success is constancy to purpose.e  
=Benjamin Disraeli, nineteenth-century English prime minister

What you are about to read is a golf book unlike any other. Through years of teaching players of all different skill levels—from beginners to top professionals—Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott have refined an approach to instruction that is not bogged down in arm angles, spine positions, and swing thoughts so complex they would make the average golfer's brain freeze with confused indecision. Rather, VISION54, the revolutionary approach to the game that Pia developed in Sweden twenty years ago and that she refined with Lynn as GOLF54, teaches that peak performance on the golf course is achieved by simplifying the game, not by burdening the pupil with overly technical instruction. As Pia and Lynn say, 8Itfs all about the person first.e

What you will find in these pages is a life philosophy, not merely a golf instruction book. It is

the most radical departure from traditional golf instruction yet to come along. VISION54 teaches us to expand our concept of limits. GOLF54 provides the tools that make it possible for us to achieve our vision. The intuitive intelligence of Pia and Lynn's approach reduces the game to such a basic and accessible level that you will frequently find yourself, as I did, shaking your head and saying, "Of course," when they point out an obvious aspect of the game that has been obscured by what they call the Pez Dispenser School of Instruction. "Bend your knees, thirty bucks please." GOLF54 takes us back to the reason we started to play golf in the first place: It's fun. It is in the rediscovery of that joy that Pia and Lynn teach us how to find the keys to better play.

One of the disturbing trends the golf industry has to confront is the fact that in the United States as many people quit the game each year as take it up. While cost and the time required to play a round of golf are significant reasons for this trend, many are also driven away because the game becomes more of a struggle than an enjoyable experience. When a troubled golfer tries to get help, he or she will most likely be given a series of instructions that would require a much more talented athlete and a serious amount of time to master. Completely rebuilding a swing is not only impractical for most players, it is also unnecessary. You have hit good shots with the swing you have. You have hit perfect shots with the swing you have. This book will teach you how to make those shots happen more often. You don't need a new swing; you need a more defined sense of purpose.

I had known about Pia for many years as a player, a coach, and a European Solheim Cup captain, and had long been fascinated by her novel approach to instruction. I knew of her astonishing success with Annika Sorenstam and I was aware of the rebellion against her by some of the tradition-bound players when she tried to bring her innovative approach to the 1998 Solheim Cup team. But I did not really get to know Pia and Lynn until 2003, when Sorenstam decided she would play in a men's event on the PGA Tour. I interviewed Pia soon after Annika announced her intentions and revisited the conversation several times in the months leading up to the Bank of America Colonial. After listening carefully to Annika's words, a light went on in my head. "Of course," I said to myself. "It's so obvious." Words you will say time and again as you read this book.

I called Pia and said, "It doesn't matter what Annika shoots at Colonial, right? And it doesn't even matter if she makes the cut, right? All that matters for Annika to consider the experience a success is if she feels she has handled the enormity of the moment well." Pia, who punctuates life with an exclamation point, laughed and said, "You got it!" I know some teachers who would have then added, "What took you so long?" But that is not the way of Pia and Lynn. They lead you to knowledge. Understanding is up to you. Commitment is up to you. Sorenstam did not make the cut at Colonial, but her opening round of 71 was a ball-striking performance of such perfection that women's golf gained new respect instantly and more than just fans of the LPGA finally appreciated Annika's skills. GOLF54 was a key component in how well Annika handled the pressure of that day.

It was at Colonial that I had my first extensive conversation with Lynn Marriott, who has been a Class A teaching professional since 1983. Lynn graduated cum laude with a degree in marketing and management from Penn State University, but she could just as easily

hang out her shingle as a psychologist. Her numerous courses and seminars have as much to do with communication, leadership, mental training, and the psychology of how to coach as they do with golf. It was Lynn who made THINK BOX/PLAY BOX, which is so essential to GOLF54 teaching, come to life, and made it a real experience. If Pia punctuates life with an exclamation point, Lynn approaches the process with a question mark. Like any good therapist, she provides answers by asking shrewd questions. Lynn has always had a vision of a whole-game approach. It was clear to her as a young teacher that the golf swing does not equal golf.

In April of 2004, I went to Pia and Lynns school at the Legacy Golf Resort in Phoenix. When I left for three days of instruction, friends who had been to other golf schools told me how much my hands would hurt and my muscles would ache after days of beating balls. Clearly, they had never been students of Pia and Lynn. The biggest breakthroughs were made when the ten of us in the class were sitting in a circle, laughing and collectively grasping one of their concepts. As much was accomplished in discussions over dinner or lunch as was accomplished on the range. When we hit balls or when we went out onto the course it was with the drills and exercises you will learn in these pages. Instead of complex theory, we learned the focus that allows the good shots within us to come out more often. We practiced with a purpose, and we played with a purpose.

I wish I had met Pia and Lynn years ago. Not just because it would have helped my game=which it has=but also because it would have made me a better golf writer. Now, since I understand their method better, I understand Annika Sorenstam better. I look at her with new eyes and appreciate that everything she does at a tournament=from where she stays and whom she stays with to where she eats and when she practices and how she practices=has a purpose. I watch her routine on the golf course and I smile inwardly when she steps into the THINK BOX and then moves with total commitment across the DECISION LINE into the PLAY BOX.

I watch other players, and when they struggle I can spot the physical and mental errors Pia and Lynn have taught me to be aware of in my own game. I also wish I had met Pia and Lynn earlier because, in addition to improving me as a player and as a writer=I now employ many of the philosophies in this book in the way I approach work=they have also improved me as a person. They are two very special people whose approach to teaching is rooted not just in a love of the game but also in an appreciation of and respect for the individual.

Their approach=GOLF54=will teach you how to develop routines you can trust and it will teach you how to transfer those routines from the practice range to the golf course. It will teach you how to embrace your ability and how to discover, in that embrace, the secrets of moving closer to achieving your ultimate potential. There is good golf within you. Pia and Lynn will help you bring it out more often.

## CHAPTER I

Forget What You Know,  
Learn What You Know

8Learning is experience. Everything else is just information.e  
=Albert Einstein, twentieth-century scientist

SWING KEY: Empty your head so wisdom can flow in.

All golf instruction books promise to lower your score. We promise to make you a better player. You decide what that will do for your handicap. What we offer is not a quick fix providing temporary results but rather a new perspective that will allow you to maximize your abilities and approach your peak performance more often=and more reliably under pressure=no matter what your skill level. We will show you how to become much more than a mere student of the swing. If you are a beginner, you will learn how to play better sooner on the golf course. If you have been playing for a while, you will learn how to score lower. No matter what your skill level, you will learn how to enjoy the game more. You will learn how to make golf a game you love, not one you fear.

How are we going to make you a better player? Well, it is absurd to think that we can change your swing with a book. For one thing, we've never seen your swing. How can we change it? While there are certain mechanical fundamentals essential to playing the game=grip, stance, posture, etc.=we believe there is more than one right way to swing a golf club. And we believe that golf is far more than merely the physical act of swinging a club. Your fundamental problems are probably not with the way you swing but rather with the way you approach the game.

How many times have you taken a swing tip to the golf course and found that it was a magic elixir for a few rounds, only to wear off when you needed it most? How many times have you hit the ball great on the range only to lose it when the round starts? That's because traditional instruction separates the swing from the person, and it separates practice from real golf. We integrate the two. GOLF54 is not about teaching; it is about learning. Most approaches to instruction focus on the teacher's knowledge; we focus on the student's potential. A lesson well learned becomes your teacher for life. Everyone who swings a golf club has hit a good shot at one time or another. We will show you how to open the door that will allow those good shots to come out more often.

What we offer is a radical departure from traditional golf instruction. The current culture of instruction leads you to believe that the technical is the only piece of the puzzle that matters. This kind of teaching reduces the gloriously fluid, decidedly sensual experience of the golf swing to nothing more than angles and elbows. We call this the Pez Dispenser School of Golf=8Bend your knees, thirty bucks please=talking heads spewing advice that has very little, if anything, to do with the person swinging the club. They believe in teaching you; we believe in having you learn. There is a big difference.

The conventional way of instruction is also a school of thought that creates a dependent relationship between the student and the teacher. We believe in the Socratic coaching method. We want you to learn to coach yourself by helping you to understand yourself better and by showing you how to draw out your own abilities. You are always with yourself on the golf course. What more reliable coach could you have?

Absolutely essential to our approach is the notion that you should only concern yourself with the things that are under your control. Not only should every shot have a purpose, but every action should have a purpose as well. And the purpose of golf is all about getting the ball in the hole=pure and simple. Why make the game any more complicated than that? There is a ton of truth in the old cliché: "They don't ask you how, they ask how many." Don't waste energy fretting about those things over which you have no control. When you do that, all you are doing is borrowing trouble.

To get the ball in the hole as efficiently as possible, you must channel your energies only toward those things you can influence. We call these things CONTROLLABLE GOALS. Score is not a controllable goal. Neither is winning. Bad bounces, bad weather, an opponent having a career day, and endless other things all take control out of your hands in regard to score and winning. You will learn how to develop a PLAYING FOCUS that will keep your mind centered on the task at hand= hitting the shot you are about to play.

What do we mean by PLAYING FOCUS? It includes things like preparation, focus, tempo, and commitment. How many times have you been playing well when a thought such as this crossed your mind: "Gee, if I play the last five holes two over par I can shoot my career-best round?" And how often is it the case that, almost as soon as you start adding up your score, the round falls apart? You have let your focus shift from the controllable=your PLAYING FOCUS=to the uncontrollable=your score.

Let's take practice as an example of an aspect of your game over which you have definite control. Many players spend a lot of time and energy on the practice range, hit the ball great there, and don't get any better when they take their game out on the course. That's because they practice in a context that has nothing to do with the game of golf. So much of teaching in this game is economically driven. Here's my twenty bucks, give me a bucket of balls. Scrape and hit, scrape and hit. Give myself a perfect lie and hit the shot. The balls are gone. I must be done practicing. If you are going to practice, make it useful time, not time used up.

A lot of players will wear blistered hands as a badge of honor showing how hard they have worked. But what was accomplished? Most players develop Golf Attention Deficit Disorder (GADD) because of a practice culture that teaches us to value quantity over quality. The practice of standing on the range hitting one hundred balls with little thought and no purpose is actually teaching your mind to be less focused on the golf course and it is encouraging your swing to be less disciplined. And you wonder why the player you are on the range is not the same player who shows up on the course! With our approach you will learn how to cultivate a PLAYING FOCUS on the range that works for you on the golf course.

Bobby Jones said there is golf and then there is tournament golf. He was right. There is also practice golf and real golf. We will show you how to integrate the two. Part of our message is that if you want to score better, simulate real golf when you practice. You will learn how to do this through simple drills and enjoyable games that will make your practice

not only more productive but also more fun. You will also learn how to use the game's proving ground—the golf course—as a practice facility. The course should be not just a proving ground but a learning ground as well.

Most people practice by giving themselves a perfect lie and then hitting a dozen shots with the same club at the same target. How is that like real golf? How often do you do that on the golf course? How often in a round do you hit even two 8-irons in a row? Rarely, we hope! Switch clubs after every shot. Switch targets. If you are working on the takeaway, maybe you don't even need a ball in front of you. Just work on the takeaway. Ask yourself: What's my INTENTION? And then ask: Am I paying ATTENTION to that? When you practice you should be grooving not only your swing but also your mind. Take putting as another example. Why do people practice by putting with three...

#### Other Books

Library Journal. Includes, beginning Sept. 15, 1954 (and on the 15th of each month, Sept.-May) a special section: School library journal, ISSN 0000-0035, (called Junior libraries, 1954-May 1961). Also issued separately.

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Philadelphia Americans in Paris : A Literary Anthology . "