

# The Shrinks of Shank

Some who study the game of golf believe that every player reveals his personality “type.” What does your game say about you?

Last year a company’s sales group went on a golf outing. It was meant to be a grand day, but before anyone had even brought up a divot, the conditions on the course were already ripe for conflict.

The CEO, a power personality, couldn’t stand one of his salesmen. In his view, the guy talked too much and said too little. The salesman, of course, had no idea how the top man saw him. On the contrary, he interpreted being paired with the CEO as a positive sign. So he spent the afternoon simply being himself—friendly, funny and charming. When the boss gave everyone a dozen Pro V1s, the salesman was so relaxed that by the eighth hole he hardly cared that he’d blasted all four sleeves into the woods and water. *Ha! Well, there goes another one!*

And all day, the salesman took his boss’s clenched pearly whites for a smile.

For the CEO, the encounter confirmed his worst impressions, because he knew, as all dedicated players do, that a golfer’s character is his destiny. A code of conduct, both written and oral, legislates that you count all of your shots, improve lies only when and where permitted, and keep as cool after sinking a putt from 20 feet as missing one from 20 inches.



Illustration by Glynis Sweeney



## READING THE GREEN

- The members of the Shivas Irons Society, a nonprofit organization of golf enthusiasts, have captured the game's cerebral side with their gorgeously designed semiannual art and literary journal. The second issue features evocative photographs of brooding Scottish links, a pair of amusing golf essays by the late Alistair Cooke and a collection of golf trading cards from the '30s, as well as original fiction and art. \$25 (\$15 for members). [www.shivasjournal.org](http://www.shivasjournal.org).



## PRO SHOP

- TAG Heuer's first pro golf watch makes its debut this month, with some design help from Tiger Woods. Everything has been streamlined, from the clasp (integrated into the superlight titanium-and-steel head) to the adjustable silicon strap, so it all holds fast through your most sinister of swings. Even the standard placement of the crown has been rotated from three o'clock to nine o'clock for greater comfort and ease of movement. \$1,195. Call (866) 260-0460 for stores. [www.tagheuer.com](http://www.tagheuer.com).

But golf, say researchers, actually reveals much more information and insight into players, and their likely behavior in business, than mere character judgments. They say a person's on-course behavior can indicate how they negotiate and whether they're suited to sell, lead, trade or communicate. Betting, joking, driving the cart, even the way a person examines a scorecard are all clues, and the key to using golf as a business tool beyond just getting uninterrupted hours with colleagues or customers is understanding how to read the players—and making sure they read you the way you want them to.

"The golf course is a psychological laboratory," says Jennifer Munro, a longtime management consultant who has plumbed the mysteries of course behavior as part of her work as president of corporate sales for the Golf Digest Schools, a national golf school headquartered in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. "Anything you want to know about someone will be divulged on the course. As a man thinketh, so is he. As a man plays golf, so is he."

Munro, along with Shelby Futch, a former pro and a major entrepreneur in the golf industry over four decades, interprets the links between golf, business and psychology in a survey they created called the "NeuroGolf Profiler," which measures behavior and attitudes and breaks down the population into four psychological profiles.

Golfers they call "challengers," representing about 10 percent of the population, are assertive, decisive and competitive. On the course, they propose the bet, drive the cart and don't spend a lot of time analyzing shots and putts. Winning is all-important, and they respond to pressure by becoming faster, gutsier and more aggressive. They also lead in the boardroom, especially those of entrepreneurial ventures.

"Social" golfers, about 20 percent, are extroverts oriented around relationships. They make introductions, tell jokes and admire the scenery. They're happy to break at the turn and have a beer on the 19th hole. Professionally, they tend to be in communications-related fields, including public relations, sales, training—and politics.

Both types do well in creative, leadership positions.

"Technicals" make up a third category,

and 20 percent of the public. These people don't grip-it-and-rip-it but think through club selection and putting angles. They play with uncertainty when faced with unfamiliar shot situations, because they're drawn to rules and systems. They keep track of the hitting order based on who hit what on the previous hole and who's away on the green. Likely jobs: company controller; tax, patent or corporate lawyer.

Finally, half the population are "traditionalists": patient, cooperative types who strive for consensus. They blend in, focusing on their own performance rather than those of the people they're competing against. They slow down when under pressure, and like technicals, they are more reactive than proactive. Professors, architects and government officials often fit the profile.

The categories do not represent a particular hierarchy, Futch and Munro say, and within businesses and professions, you get a mix of types. Take, for example, professional golfers. You might figure they were mostly challengers. Not so, say Futch and Munro. Most pros, in fact, are traditionalists: private, introverted and generally oblivious to what's going on around them.

One of the sport's demigods, Ben Hogan, was a traditional, says Munro. According to lore, during one Masters, Hogan birdied a par three. His opponent had a hole-in-one. At the next tee, as Hogan stepped up to hit, his opponent said, "Excuse me, Mr. Hogan, that's my honor." And Hogan said, "Oh, what did you have back there?"

Contemporary traditionalists include Sergio Garcia and Bernhard Langer—guys who slow down under pressure. Sergio's waggle, Munro says, buys him time to get feel. Greg Norman and Arnold Palmer are challengers; so is Tiger Woods, who plays best aiming for a personal goal. Lee Trevino and Peter Jacobsen are socials: As they play, they get involved with the people around them. Nick Faldo, known for obsessively studying every video frame of his swing, is a rarity among pro golfers—a functioning technical. Technicals tend to analyze themselves right out of the game.

Futch and Munro maintain that if the categories are themselves value-neutral,

the interaction between different types prompts value judgments. Let's say a player juggles change in his pocket. The challenger interprets a calculated intention to throw him off his game; the technical detects bad etiquette or ignorance of the rules. They could be right, but most likely the change-jiggler isn't even aware that he's jiggling. He's a social.

"When a person does something that you expect them to do—that you would do—you hardly notice the behavior," Munro says. "But when a person does something you don't expect them to do, such as jiggling change or stepping on your line when they go to pick up a golf ball, or when he does something you yourself wouldn't have done, the natural inclination is to ascribe an intention to it, and you draw a conclusion based on your value system, which is linked inextricably to your psychographic profile."

In other words, opposites don't attract in golf. Pace of play is probably the most common, revealing and contentious issue that arises between contrasting types. As traditionals slow down, challengers speed up. The traditionals are irritated by what they feel is gratuitous pressure; the challengers, who would opt for ready-golf, are impatient with what they perceive as plodding and indecisive play.

"You see it play out at the office, too," Futch says. "The corporate counsel is patient and conforming, making sure all the *i*'s are dotted and the *t*'s crossed, and the sales guys can't understand why it takes so long to get a contract through. And the counselor is thinking, 'Here he goes again. He never pays attention to details.'"

The other big on-course indicator, say Futch and Munro, is the amount of socializing players need. Are they chatty or quiet? Introverts and extroverts are usually a bad match, says Munro. "Right away there's an element of mistrust. One is sharing, one isn't. One is communicative, one isn't. The introvert is likely to start imagining things about the extrovert that may or may not be true, such as they're superficial or insincere or not focused. If you're trying to build a relationship, one of the first things to ask yourself is whether someone is outgoing or private. Then be mindful of how you're coming across. I've never seen a deal signed on a golf course, but I've seen a lot of deals

broken out there."

That, of course, is what happened between the CEO and his salesman. At the office, the CEO had been willing to accept that the salesman was just young and needed some time. On the links, though, the CEO realized the guy couldn't read social cues, couldn't see that his garrulity was annoying to the people around him. Or to the CEO, anyway.

"Golf is real life," Munro says. "It's as

real as it gets. When you're out there, you'll know what a person really is in their life."

It was certainly as real as it could get for the salesman, even if he had to come off the course and go through the motions at the office for a few more weeks to find out what he really was: unemployed.

*The NeuroGolf Profiler is available to the public at [www.neurogolf.com](http://www.neurogolf.com) (\$50). For information on Golf Digest Schools, call (800) 243-6121 or visit [www.golfdigestschool.com](http://www.golfdigestschool.com).* •