

Golf Secrets Uncovered

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[Begin Golfing]

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Interviewer: Arthur [Daley] the Sports Columnist said that golf is like a love affair. If you don't take it seriously it's not any fun; if you do take it seriously it will break your heart. Well the sport of golf continues to grow in popularity and more and more enthusiasts are looking for ways to improve their golfing skills while still enjoying the great fun that chasing that tiny little ball around a course has to offer.

Here to talk about just that is Michael Robichaud, PGA professional and Manager of the Ranch Gold Club in Southwick, Massachusetts. Welcome Michael....

Michael Robichaud: Hello; how are you?

Interviewer: I'm so happy to have you here. The--the Ranch Golf Club is relatively new.

Michael Robichaud: Yes; we opened in July 2001; it's a daily fee upscale course. We actually were ranked the third best new upscale course in the country by *Golf Digest* in 2002 and ranked in the best in State in Massachusetts, so it's a great property, a beautiful unique property; it is an old New England dairy farm with three beautiful Victorian barns that we've renovated into our clubhouse complex and it's a beautiful experience.

Interviewer: Definitely a must-visit for golfers?

Michael Robichaud: Yes.

Interviewer: So Mike, you've--have worked with a lot of golfers of varied skill levels. Is it possible to take the game seriously and still have a good time out there?

Michael Robichaud: [*Laughs*] Yes; but it's an easy game to get caught up into you know many different stressful ways of--of trying to get better but in--like in any sport, it's you just have to you know probably get it down to its simplest form, understand the concept first, learn the basics, and try to stick to them as much as possible. But like a lot of sports, particularly in golf, you know there are a lot of gimmicks out there, there are a lot of things, but I really think if somebody finds a mentor or a professional that they have a

comfortable relationship with--that they can communicate well with and--and really feel comfortable with it, you know those--those basics will be learned and the concepts will be ones that will never be lost. The bottom line is--is you know--is as teachers, we just want to teach the student that it's great to--to get better and there are many ways to get better, but ultimately you just have to have fun playing. It is a game; and you know let the--the childlike personality come out of you and just enjoy it as a game.

Interviewer: And that's why we're out there--for fun. Okay; well we are going to talk a little bit about the instructor/student relationship a little later on but if I came to you today and said I wanted to start playing how would you go about getting me started?

Michael Robichaud: Well I certainly would set up a series of--of sessions and clinics and that first clinic is really more informative. I think you know when someone comes to the game new, to put a club in their hand and start talking about hitting the ball that's really not what golf is. Yes; you do have to hit the ball but the game is a bigger picture. It's a lot like life; you can focus on the little. And so I would probably take the day and drive the person around the golf course just to show them what the course is, explain to them, you know--just the basics of the game, how you're trying to score and--and you know I wouldn't get too deep into the rules but talk a lot about the traditions and etiquette because there is a certain manner in which you have to act in golf. It is a game of tradition and--and etiquette and everything, and the whole thing in that introduction is to get that person comfortable to say yeah I think I understand that.

Interviewer: Because I think that is daunting to a lot of first-time players is just--you know what do you do? Where do you--where do you take the cart and you know just the--the etiquette? That's so important you brought that up.

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; see I've found through my experience and a lot of my fellow professionals have found that you know to start a beginning a student off by just hitting a club is very frustrating because when they get on the golf course they really don't know what to do with it; they don't get the concept of the game. And anything in--in--that you're trying to learn, I think the student has to understand the concept first before they feel comfortable and gain--you know golf is a sport and you can't perform any sport unless you not only feel comfortable but you have a certain level of confidence. And so really

from the first lesson I'm trying to build confidence in a student that they understand what they're trying to do in every step of the way.

Interviewer: So get out there and learn the fundamentals before you try to play?

Michael Robichaud: You know I start a lot of my beginners off not with hitting a full swing but with putting because you know the--the swing is a pendulum stroke and--and really the basics of set-up and stance and ball position start with putting and--and they just kind of grow and evolve from that. So everybody can putt; most people have gone to a miniature golf course and they've putted and they're tried that, so you know they're already starting off with something they're familiar with and that--that might build the momentum to want to learn more and you know the key is not to lose a student--and to get them to say--

Interviewer: Right, right.

Michael Robichaud: --wow, I can do that. Now well so the next thing is chipping and chipping is just a little more swing than putting, but now you've got a game because you're hitting the ball with one club onto the green and then taking the putter and putting it in; now you're teaching how to play and how to score.

Interviewer: Okay; let's talk a little bit about equipment. How important is club fitting? I mean can you just start with some--some equipment that you may have borrowed in the beginning or do you need to actually have clubs fitted to you?

Michael Robichaud: I--I personally believe the single greatest reason that people do not play to their potential is because they don't have properly fitted equipment. You know the technology out there today can make the game so easy but there's you know--you buy a set of clubs off the rack and you're really buying something that fits 15-percent of the population. Now that it has to be great variances but most of the PGA professionals out there today have some type of fitting system that they can get you fit into the right--the right one, and most of the manufacturers have it out there; so I do believe that you know there's a great opportunity for people to get fit right off the bat--and particularly at the beginning. You know to get an old set of clubs that are the wrong weight and the wrong length and the wrong shaft and then to try to learn the game, well it's not going to be a lot of positive results out of that if it doesn't work.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Michael Robichaud: So right from the get-go I think you need to give yourself every opportunity--I mean would you go and--and learn how to play baseball if you are left-handed but use a right-handed glove? You've got the wrong equipment to do the job.

Interviewer: Hmm; good point.

Michael Robichaud: So you know if you're going to play golf, I think there is some investment there. There are various levels of--of investment that you can make but you can find something--I think people can find something that fits into their means to get at least something reasonably close to what they need because it's just going to make them that much successful sooner.

Interviewer: Where can we go to find the equipment? Can you recommend you know--obviously they can come to a pro at a club and--and purchase equipment; are there other places that you could recommend?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; there's--there's you know--golf clubs--most public golf courses if you're not a member of a private club--of course if it's a private club they can go there and--and you know I really just--the people that are trained in this industry to fit golf the best are the PGA professionals. There are PGA professionals that work in various retail sites; just call the retail site if they sell golf and say do you have a PGA professional onboard? If they don't then you can find one. I know there's several sporting good stores out there that do have PGA professionals and there's other golf specific stores around that people can go to and--and find someone that can fit them correctly.

Interviewer: Okay, all right; let's move onto the more experienced player. Now are there common problems or bad habits that mid to higher handicaps come to you to correct?

Michael Robichaud: You know depending on--on--on the level--let's start with the low--low handicap, the better players, they're just looking to get fine-tuned you know and that's really what people want to get to is actually get back to what we were saying in the beginning. They only want to know like is my grip okay? How does my stance

look? How is my posture? They don't want to talk about the swing because they know that's an athletic response.

Interviewer: Uh-hm.

Michael Robichaud: And I try not to do too much swing mechanics in any of my teaching at any level. I'll find ways for people to feel it so that they can practice it but--so that the beginner is really looking you know--how is my--how's things looking you know--as far as that. They'll probably want--want just somebody there to make them feel good and build up that confidence and have an opportunity to you know at least build confidence that they're the doing basics correct and--and everything comes at it from there.

As I get into someone who is a little higher handicapper I'm using drills or a lot of practice swings or different things to get them to feel that--what they're trying to feel because generally when a person is having a difficult time, they're thinking about too much mechanics and they're not just letting the athletic you know response happen.

Interviewer: Okay; why don't we go back and talk a little bit about even though it is hard to describe just in an audio situation but can you describe the perfect grip?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; I could--I think I can. The--the top hand which is the left hand for a right-handed person and the right hand for a left-handed person--ideally what you're trying to do is get your palms to face each other while you're holding this golf club. And the position of the top hand is really critical that should actually control the position of the club face. So if a person were to put the club down and you'd have to know what a square club face looks like meaning you know that face would be aiming at its target and if it's fitting properly you're going to let your arm hang down from your side and then bring your hand to the--to the handle and just close the last three fingers--that's the grip pressure; that's the pressure--only in those last three fingers. And at that point you're going to let the top of your hand relax so that the thumb goes--and for a right-handed person to the right-hand side of the--right side of center on the shaft. You form a V with your thumb and forefinger and that should be pointing up to your right shoulder. Your right hand you're going to place the ring and middle finger on the shaft and the baby finger is something that's a real individual thing; some people like to interlock the baby finger with the other hand's ring finger, some overlap, some baseball grip--it's a matter of preference. There's no one that's better than the other. I can

give you examples of players that you know with all the variation of those grips that have--have won major championships. Tiger Woods uses an overlap; Jack [Nicklaus] uses an interlock; I mean they're the greatest players that ever lived. So there's no one way better than the other; it's a personal thing.

Interviewer: It's all whatever is comfortable to you?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; and so when you do it just make sure that when--when you're grabbing with the right hand that once you close those two fingers you can feel the palms facing each other. At that point you'll stick your arms out after you close your right-hand around and you'll point the--the V with the--the thumb and forefinger of your right hand will also go towards your right shoulder and if you were to pick the club up and put your arms out in front of you that club face would be square. If it's off one way or the other then your hands aren't in the right position and that's about--I hope I could articulate that well enough.

Interviewer: That was excellent. [Laughs]

Michael Robichaud: And you can visualize it.

Interviewer: I--I was visualizing it as you said it. Now maybe you could tell us a little bit about the stance and posture that is necessary for a good golf swing.

Michael Robichaud: Posture is pretty--pretty basic to any athletic thing that you're getting ready for. The big thing is the width of stance; we like to tell people keep your feet the width of your--about the width of where your hip joints are. Those are pivot points; you--it's a static action that you're--you're creating the motion so that the--the--you know the machine [or] the body has to be in balance. You need to have your feet underneath your pivot points--so about the width of your hips. Teachers used to say the width of your shoulders. The problem is most guys think their shoulders are like you know Franco Harris of the Pittsburgh Steelers--too big and they end up putting their feet apart too wide, so about the width of hip just so the balls of your feet are under the sockets of your hips. That's the best you know place to be in balance. Your body should be in a position similar to somebody who's--and particularly lower body--we'll talk from the waste down--somebody who is getting ready to shoot a [foul] shot or maybe a short-stop waiting you know--they're in that bouncy kind of mode but the knees are flexed but they're not bent and--and sort of in

a sit-down position. The lower body has to be ready--ready to react; it's almost like throwing a ball. You're going to go one way and wind up and then let it go and get off that backside and go forward. It's like a lot of my students when we were watching football season were talking you know if they're hanging back you see some quarterbacks that hang off their back foot; they have no power, but when they get off their back foot they have power, so that's what you're trying to do in golf is get off your back foot on the forward swing.

And then the spine angle--your spine should be fairly straight and at an angle of about 15-degrees tilted towards the ground. Any slumping or anymore than that then you know we don't get the big muscles to work the way they want to.

Interviewer: Okay.

Michael Robichaud: So the body sort of at 15-degree angle of the spine and then the from the hips there's a little bending of the knees and then the feet are right below the--the balls of the--the balls of the feet are right above the hip joints, and the shoulders are right above the hips also, so there's--you're really set up where you get the shoulders, hips and--and balls of your feet in the same thing, so there's balance. Any leaning forward out of balance or back out of balance then you're going to be fighting balance throughout the whole swing and that's not something you want to do in the sport. You want to just let it be kind of natural.

Interviewer: Now I think those are good reminders for beginner golfers or more advanced golfers because I'm sure you know we--we tend to fall back into our bad habits and--you know just being reminded of those technical things are important.

Michael Robichaud: Which--which comes to when you--what I teach a lot of my students that if you watch the--the touring pros on TV on a Sunday and watch every shot you'll notice they go through a certain routine and those pre-shot routine have elements in them that allow them to have a checklist of all of the basics. First a player will take the club out of the--the bag and get behind the golf ball putting the ball between them and the target. Well what they're doing there first is visualizing what they want to do--not from a swing standpoint but show me the flight of the ball, get some feedback; your body will react to get that and they're just kind of visualizing maybe a nice smooth swing or something. And then the next thing they'll do is they'll put their hands on the club and a lot of them will be very particular to

practice the right grip. Then they'll put the club face down so it's aiming towards the target; that's aim. Then they'll bring the body around and spread their feet apart to the right distance and put the ball in the right position and then [they kind of get in themselves]-- you know a waggle the club a little bit and then they'll take a couple looks at the target going back to visualization and then they'll turn the key and swing. So there's six or seven steps in there; we're always checking the basic fundamentals of grip, stance, and alignment and that's--those are the three really things that you're--you're talking about during the pre-shot routine to make sure you'll have success during the regular shot. I teach that to my beginners; I teach them right off the bat to say look; you really need to find your way of getting this routine but to make sure that you're not questioning yourself. A lot of times people will get before that first swing and then is my left hand right and--and if you're asking that there's no way you're going to be able to execute a golf swing.

Interviewer: Right, right; now you mentioned that the grip could be individual--the pre-shot routine I'm sure in your 30 years of working as a pro, you've seen some pretty unique pre-shot routines. Can you talk about any specific that might come to mind that [*Laughs*]--?

Michael Robichaud: Some I can't mention you know but I can tell you that an interesting thing that was done years ago is there was a time study done on different tour players and their pre-shot routines. Greg Norman was 24 seconds; Nick Price was 18 seconds. They did find that if those tour players had the same amount of time for the routine they played their best golf. But if they varied to 21 seconds to 24 seconds it really wouldn't even be that much--it would be one second--that was a problem, so we are creatures of habit, but yeah, I've--I've had some people that you know they--you know they have to clear their throat before they do it, or you know there's this big stretching exercise. I had one person who you know would--would take so long that I don't know how they could do it, but a lot of different little niches but you know it's--it is an individual thing and people should take the time to practice it.

Interviewer: So then we move into the swing from the pre-shot routine. How integral is it to get your swing to just a point where you don't even have to think about it anymore and how do you do that?

Michael Robichaud: Well the theory is and it's--it's been proven that a proper setup--all those things we talked about--setup--will lead to the proper swing.

Interviewer: Right.

Michael Robichaud: And really once the--particularly the posture, if it's set up correctly and you get the person just getting the feeling of you know turning a little to the right side and then just going to the finish and--and you know taking someone and putting them in a balanced finished position where the--you know the front foot is flat and the back foot is turned up so it's on the toe and the back knee is touching the front leg and the person is turned right around to the target--that's really what people should be focusing on--not how to get there, but that's the position and then athletically from your good set up find a way to get there. So the swing is--you know there's a lot of different theories out there; some people believe and--and again it depends on the person. I may have a person depending on their style of learning--if they learn by feel then it's going to be feel, if they're more visual then I'm going to show them, or if they're more intellectual then they need more of a mechanical approach to it; there are people that do--that excel that way. So as a teacher you've got to kind of find out how this person's learning process is but I try to keep it--there's not that many mechanical people out there that--that really can perform an athletic function. I mean you know it is about reacting to a target and you know it's like if--if some of the people listening recall back in the Yankees when they were playing the Red Sox and Chuck [Knobloch] was on second base and he was having the darnedest time trying to throw the ball. Well they showed him in slow motion and he was watching his hand throw the ball. You can't athletically watch your mechanics and think about your mechanics and react. All he had to do was just throw it to the glove--that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Right.

Michael Robichaud: So it's tough to be mechanical--but the swing itself you know I really think--I try to get people just to understand what a balanced finish is, what it's like to feel that, and then find a way then--from a balanced move to get back and through and let them you know get to that target. Talk a little bit about the importance of the path of the club, so that they can get the ball on line at the same time, and--and maybe--I like to have fun teaching beginning students how to hit the ball with different types of curves at will just by changing the stance of the grip a little bit. It makes the better players a lot faster.

Interviewer: Is there such a thing as a post-shot routine?

Michael Robichaud: A post-shot routine--I've heard crying, I've heard a lot of things but [**Laughs**] yelling--screaming, I've seen clubs go in lakes, I've seen a lot of things, but generally you know Bob [**Rotella**] who is just an amazing sports psychologist--he--he really coaches most of the--the people on tour--always says it the best--there should be no emotion up or down; it should be kind of even keel. You can smile and be happy but don't jump for joy or don't get very mad because that's going to affect your round and affect you know the next shot.

Interviewer: Right; so it is important to keep somewhat of a positive attitude because you know every hole is a new opportunity--right? [**Laughs**]

Michael Robichaud: Absolutely; and--and you know it's--you know you can have a bad hole but make a birdie the next hole. And you know what? You may make another birdie the next hole. If--if you're thinking what you're doing on each hole then really you know--and worried about that then you don't--you know the number can be whatever it is. All you can control is one shot at a time and don't worry about your score. You just try to take that shot and it's just the only thing you're doing in that moment--you're in that moment, and then you're just trying to execute that to the very best of your ability. You plan it out; you--you prepare for it and then you just execute it and then you go to the ball and you plan the next one because you can't do anything about the last one and you certainly can't control the future. And that's the zone.

Interviewer: Right, right; now I--that's a perfect segway into discussing something about the mental game of golf. Is there anything we can do to condition ourselves that you have found successful in your many years of working with many different levels to condition ourselves to play an even keel?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; you know I think you have to understand yourself first and--and you know you got to understand what you can and cannot control. It's okay to be a fiery temper(y) kind of player; if that's your personality that's what's going to work. Your swing is going to show that. It's okay to be a very laid back, quiet person; you can still be successful but you know you can't do things that you're not. I think one of the important things to do is--you need to--to make it your goal to become confident in what you do and that means you've

got to be afraid to take a risk, you've got to be afraid to hit a shot that you hate, you know--but I think one of the things I help set up is I like to see my students play more than practice. I like to see them practicing their putting, their chipping and the tee shots about 20-percent of the time, a little bit of practice with the irons but I like to see them play as much as possible because if you get too stuck on the--on the practice tee about you know hitting the ball and we all will do it you start to get mechanical. When you go on the golf course you hit one bad shot--you're almost ready to go back to--to the practice tee; you can't finish the round. You've got to go out there and be able to play good golf when you hit the ball lousy. You know when you're not hitting at its best but you know you're--you're putting and chipping is doing great that day or you're hitting one good shot and the next thing you know the score is--you're hitting terribly and it's one of the best scores of your life. That can happen.

I think it's just outlook; you know if--to realize that it's 18 holes; it's the [whole] game, you know it's not something done by one shot. I--I--look, I know people that they learn to play well and relax because they put a headset on a half-hour before and they listen to classical music. Some people it's nothing more than having to walk around the parking lot four or five times--so really getting to know yourself and how you can get to that point to hit that one shot at a time and do it--knowing that you know how to do it and with confidence.

Interviewer: Because you--

Michael Robichaud: Mentally it--it gets better.

Interviewer: Right; and that equipment is not inexpensive, so you don't want it to end up in the lake every single time you play.

Michael Robichaud: No; I--I saw that happen once and I didn't--I didn't mean to laugh but it was probably one of the funniest things I've ever seen in my life. So it's just--I was just flabbergasted; all of the sudden and with no emotion the man hit a golf ball and it hooked and went into the lake and he just went over and put the club in the bag and he--when he was taking the clubs off the cart I thought he was going to walk away or something, and he just took it and tossed it right in the middle of the lake and then walked in. And it was a funny day. We've been talking about it for a long time.

Interviewer: Well--. [Laughs] It makes for good stories.

Michael Robichaud: He bought a new set of clubs though. **[Laughs]**

Interviewer: Yeah; that's--that's true. Okay; let's talk about fitness and what we can do to get our physical selves--we've got our mental selves all in gear; what do we need to do to--what do the best golfers do to train physically for the game and--and you know ultimate--ultimately what--what can we do to be prepared to play our best game of golf?

Michael Robichaud: Well that's changed over the years too because-

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Interviewer: Uh-hm.

Michael Robichaud: --you know the stories I heard from a lot of tour players in the '50s and '60s was it was to see who could stay out the latest, drink the most, and shoot the best score the next day. But **[Laughs]** the players today are just--the reason why they hit the ball so well and they play so much better is they're really very fit. It starts with--starts with nutrition. You know they keep themselves hydrated; they try to eat the right foods; they stay in good shape, but a lot of stretching and a lot of you know--there's various weight programs out there but there are golf-specific exercise--you know weight programs now and things to do; there's a lot of golf specific training--trainers out there--physical therapists, but I think you know for everybody just--who wants to do it, just get into a good stretching program and there's some good golf-specific stretching things that you want to make sure you stretch your triceps, your shoulders, you want to stretch the hamstrings, you want to stretch you know the muscles on the side and--and various muscles; you don't want to do a lot of heavy lifting. You don't want to bulk up, so nautilus is probably better; strength training is--is probably a lot better than you know trying to do power lifting because at some point then you're going to restrict you know the natural movements of the swing. But there are--there are pre-season, in-season, and off-season, you know training and exercises that people can do and there's a lot of different trainers out there that--that do it. That certainly is going to give you a chance for optimum performance, and the other thing is some type of walking or cardiovascular. You know you want to keep moving and it's great to walk with this game, too; so don't forget to walk and--or run and jogging. Running you know can be a little hard sometimes on the knees and shins, so it depends on the individual but you know the--it's okay to play other sports. There used to be a theory oh, you can't

swim or do this--whatever type of physical activity you can have--first off, just for your overall well-being is great, but I just--

Interviewer: Sure.

Michael Robichaud: --think it--it does help golf too and--you know you want to keep the muscles relaxed, but you also want them to be--to be active so that they can really react and give you all the strength you can have.

Interviewer: Do you think the fitness or training for golf varies between men and women? Do you think there's any--anything women should do?

Michael Robichaud: There's certain basics but I think you know it's certainly--gender-wise there's going to be different things and again you seek out a--a teaching professional who can really probably get you to the right physical person to help the individual in your area.

Interviewer: Okay; well let's go back to--to instruction. What--what are some of the important things to consider before you actually decide to work with a pro to try to improve your game?

Michael Robichaud: Well I think you know there--first off, gender is maybe something for--there are a lot of females who--who really you know maybe they don't feel comfortable with a male teaching them and that's why they've stayed away from that, so you know there's a lot of great female teachers out there.

Interviewer: Sure.

Michael Robichaud: On the other hand though you know we have a female professional here at the Ranch--head professional, Hope Kelly and you know what? She teaches males, females, and juniors; she's just an--an incredible instructor. So you know you've got to just feel comfortable with the person. People in an area will hear if someone is good or not and you know they'll--word of mouth is probably the professional's best advertising. But you know you may have somebody that you take a lesson with and you don't feel all that comfortable. It doesn't mean--they're not a bad person; it's just that you know maybe it doesn't click. And don't give up; there's others out there and you can always call your local PGA section and/or you can go on-site onto www.pga.com to find a local professional.

Interviewer: Now what do you think makes a good instructor?

Michael Robichaud: A good listener, someone who is patient, someone who likes to have fun, who knows how to make other people comfortable and is not afraid to serve other people, and make you feel like you know when you're there that person is there for you and--and you know just is willing to--to take the time to ask the right questions to make sure that you know that person feels comfortable and understands what's happening.

Interviewer: Now do golfers tend to come in, you know newer golfers and just expect really quick success and really you know easy and--and have you actually had--first of all, let me just ask; do you have any success stories or where anyone just kind of walked in and took a lesson and was a really great golfer?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; I mean I've had a lot of people--I used to do--there's a lot of times I'll give a lesson and you know it's--it's over in--in eight swings because it just goes back to the basics and people forget the ball is out of position and you know I've had many times someone come to the tee in the morning and they're--where they play in tournaments and they go look at me, I'm so bad, and you know they'll go out and win and play really well. I had one young lady that when I was in the Cape at the Captain's you know--she and her boyfriend came down and she took her first series of lessons and you know I heard from her dad a couple weeks ago--and this is probably seven or eight years ago, you know and she shot her first even par round of golf. So you know to go from a beginner to that it's just--that's incredible.

Interviewer: Now is there a certain amount of natural ability there or do you attribute it to your excellent instruction?

Michael Robichaud: I think it's a combination of both; I think particularly with that one individual it was a lot of determination. Certainly there was physical ability; there were no physical limitations but you know she struggled at first like every golfer would but she got hooked by the bug and she practiced those things that were basic. And I remember a couple of years ago she was here for a--a tournament that--that was a little tour that came here and we worked and I gave her a lesson and you know she--all those basics, she remembered them and she was just sticking with them, and so she had confidence in what she's doing and--but she took the time to--to practice a little bit and play better.

Interviewer: Well there's hope for us.

Michael Robichaud: Oh absolutely.

Interviewer: [*Laughs*]

Michael Robichaud: You know the thing is we can't all aspire to be the best player that ever lived, but we all aspire to do the best that we can do and whatever that level is providing when you're off the golf course at the end of 18 holes you feel more energized and more relaxed than when you started--then you're playing the game the right way. And if you get off the golf course and you feel exhausted and you feel like your--every bone in your body aches then you're not playing golf because golf was--was really intended for a sport against--you know to be able to compete against other people but the person against you know a task or an element and it's--if you do it too hard--you over-think it you're going to be exhausted. So you can kind of tell at the end of the round if you're doing it right or not and the big thing is--is you know once in a while you're out there and you've hit a bad shot but there's you know a beautiful patch of wild roses to your left, just walk over and take a smell. It's kind of neat.

Interviewer: Hmm; that's a nice thought and you know golf courses can be some of the most beautiful places in the world, so why don't we talk about some of your top courses to visit?

Michael Robichaud: Well the Ranch Golf Club certainly is--is one of the best. It's an--an incredible ever-changing golf experience. It has links, holes, it has holes carved out through the woods, so a traditional New England [tile] hole and it has a couple of holes with tremendous--you know great elevation changes, a couple par fives, there's a hundred 120 and 160-foot elevation drop; so--and overlooking a small mountain range so you think you're in you know--in--in Colorado or some point but it's just a beautiful, beautiful experience. There are many great courses in New England that I've played. I don't want to miss any but to say--but I've spent 10 years on Cape Cod and you know Eastward Ho which is called Pebble Beach of the East and Hyannis Port and Oyster Harbor is--those are all tremendous golf courses. You go onto the islands and you know [Sankaty Head] and I tend to--to really like those older, more traditional courses that Donald Ross designs. The new ones are nice and they're beautiful; Nantucket Golf Club is fantastic, it's gorgeous; but [Sankaty Head] has the--the--you know the--the lighthouse there and it's just really a wonderful

charm. Farm Neck, they have--which is on Martha's Vineyard--great golf course, the one that President Clinton would play all the time when he was over there in the summer; Newport Country Club where it's going to be the site of the Women's Open here in a few weeks, down in Newport, Rhode Island is amazing. Boy, [Myopia] Hunt Club and--and Essex County Club--the Country Club in Brookline, you know one of the best in the world; down the coast a little bit I've played I want to say Seminole which is in North Palm Beach, Florida is--is another Donald Ross built in the '20s but that's probably one of the--the best golf courses I've played. Mid-Ocean which is in Bermuda is another beautiful golf course that I've played. Casa De Campo in the Dominican Republic--you know I want to get on a plane and go back to these--

Interviewer: [*Laughs*] Yeah; I know.

Michael Robichaud: --thinking about it. There's also a new place opening up that's really pretty incredible that's down in Jersey City which is right on the shore overlooking the Statue of Liberty called Liberty National that will be opening up this year. I'm sure people are going to hear a lot about it--very exclusive, but just an amazing place. But I've toured that when it was in construction and it is pretty--pretty special.

Interviewer: Wow; that's cool being able to see the Statue of Liberty while you're playing golf.

Michael Robichaud: Oh it's amazing and there's no other--and Manhattan, I mean it's just--you've never seen anything like it. It's pretty amazing.

Interviewer: Wow; that's exciting. What--what do you think makes for a challenging golf course?

Michael Robichaud: Well [*Sighs*] there's two kinds of challenging courses. One is manufactured and that's probably where I really get bored and I don't have a fun day with that. When--when you know--unfortunately for one reason or other, you know whatever land the architect had to work with was--was pieced in so they had to you know kind of piece it in between something and create a lot of target golf. And while it's fun you know I don't--that doesn't really appeal to my senses as would be a golf course that's laid out on natural terrain without a lot of movement and--and you know just well placed bunkers, you know good--really difficult green complexes where

you've got to really use your imagination to chip and putt and you know good length but yet excellent conditioning.

Interviewer: You hear a lot about places like Pinehurst in North Carolina as being a--a good place to get really good instruction and maybe stay for a week and do you know some really good intensives; are there other places that you can talk about where training facilities might be superior in this country?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; I mean like--I know that PGA National down in Port St. Lucie has one of the finest practice facilities and great PGA instructors there. There's several great places in Florida. In the summertime I know you have many golf schools around in--in the New England area and the Northern area--instructional schools. The Harmon Schools which are now--I know there's--there's one outside of Boston and there's a couple other places--those are great. Really I think if you get on the internet you can--it's just there's so much out there that offers schools that it wouldn't be very hard for someone to find something they like. I think the thing is you know make it fun. Add--make sure it's a vacation too.

Interviewer: Right.

Michael Robichaud: Not just I'm going to go learn golf, because those weeks, people come back so frustrated they end up having to take a lesson when they get back just to straighten them out. Make it a vacation fun time and--so if you're going to go to Pinehurst, what a great place to go; it's a history of golf you know that--Donald Ross' course there, number two, and the courses he did there--they're all beautiful, or if you go to Florida, you know enjoy the beach or enjoy something but make it a fun time, too.

Interviewer: Now a lot of golfers really enjoy sitting down and watching the game of golf on television or even you know going to a PGA tournament to watch. What--what can we learn as--as golfers from the pros in watching them play?

Michael Robichaud: Particularly you have to go in person--watch how they swing with such ease. Don't watch the ball as much; watch their balance, watch their grips, watch their mannerisms and then copycat the things that they did the same that you thought wow if I do that--. Unfortunately, people just want to see how far they can hit the ball; we know they can hit the ball far, but watch their posture, watch their ball position, watch their tempo and--and the ease in which they

swing to hit you know a seven-iron you know 175--180 yards with no effort. That's really--those are really the things that people should watch. Get impressed with--and you know what--what is the mannerism on the golf course? You know and--and how do they handle emotionally hitting a bad shot and you know how do they handle being in a difficult situation but pulling off a great shot--those kinds of things?

Interviewer: How about the future of golf? Are there--are there new innovations that are say increasing like the length that we can hit the ball you know--the--is there something in golf that's--that's really changing that you can see will change the game?

Michael Robichaud: Well you know there's limits to that because of the USGA and because if you make equipment that everything is greater and greater then all the golf courses we have will be obsolete, and you know some great golf courses and they've been around for hundreds of years. I think we still have to limit what it's going to do as far as how far you can hit the ball and what kind of aid--because you know if you're--the true golfer wants to do it the right way, they want to do it fair, they don't want a gimmick to make them hit it better--yeah, they'll use a little help from--from equipment if it's within the rules and that's the beauty of the game--it's within the rules. I just see that you know golf courses are continuing to offer you know good conditions. All golf courses for--for any level of play and you know we certainly--access is an important issue so that people can have access; not everybody has tremendous means to join a private club or whatever, so we want to keep it as affordable as possible. People keeping in great condition and you know you can only play basketball or tennis or a lot of sports for so long; you can play golf until you're 95 years old.

Interviewer: That's right; it's a great sport for a lifetime.

Michael Robichaud: And it does--it--it is probably still one of the most addictive sports for your competitive juices that there is. I mean Michael Jordan even said--he said *golf is just one of the hardest games I've ever played; it just makes you come back and want to get better.* So I think the game will be healthy for a long, long time. I think in the short-term what's exciting is what's happening with the Women's Tours--Michelle [Weis], Paula [Kramer] and these gals that just you know--they--they can play; they can play with the guys and you know they're--they're good-looking and they're sexy and--and they're just

going--you know they are Madison Avenue's answer to you know what some people might find boring about golf.

Interviewer: Well there's also really cute golf clothes for women.

Michael Robichaud: Oh yeah. [*Laughs*]

Interviewer: [*Laughs*] And that's exciting to me.

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; you know the game is--is growing up. You know and it--it is embracing the masses and you know where I think--while we are traditional, certainly we are not the same we were 100 years ago, so things will always change and evolve and I think you know get to where people will enjoy it and--but you know people need to feel comfortable but I do like--I do like what's happening, you know in--in women's golf and you know as women's golf gets strong, more guys are going to play and the game is just going to keep growing.

Interviewer: So if you had--if--if you had a client who came to you for a lesson, getting ready to play in a big tournament next week, what would be--and they just wanted you know a basic lesson that would you know really sharpen their skills and go out there and play the best game of golf they've ever played, what--what would be the points--the key points that you would try to go over with them?

Michael Robichaud: Yeah; I wouldn't hit many balls, particularly going into a tournament. I would hit you know some--some drivers and some mid-irons and a couple of shorter irons, just checking ball position, reminding that person you know this club--the ball needs to be a little bit more here than this one, you got a little too far up, a little too far back--just check on that. You know are you comfortable with your routine? Are you visualizing and all that? And then I'd spend really most of the time really working on the putting and the chipping and the pitching--lob shots, generally the shots that people have a hard time with are 50-yards and in and just--just work on them until the person feels like they're very confident they have the feel for the distance.

Interviewer: Are there certain shots that people typically will make you know--you hear of the dog leg right and--and how--how do you correct those--those slices?

Michael Robichaud: The slice is the one that curves away from the front of your body; the hook is the one that curves towards--around your body. That could be one of a couple things. I generally start with that with grip--the club face somehow is starting the ball out and doing that. I then look at alignment and stance, but that goes to part of that--that check-routine of--of that but you have to hit one or the other to--to a small degree. You really can't hit the ball straight. To be a good player you have to work the ball with a curve--be it you know a slice or a fade or a hook--fade or a hook, but you just don't want it to be extreme. So you know you have to find out as a player what style is yours and learn how to--to work those shots and you know examples--Lee Trevino, Jack [Nicklaus]--typically faded the golf ball which you would call a slice. On the other hand, you know a lot of your players hit the ball right to left--Sam Sneed and a lot of these younger players and they hook it, so you're trying to work--be able to work the ball either way. You never--you know so if a person is a little off then it's probably just a little adjustment in grip or ball position or you know setup and of course that makes the swing feel funny but I wouldn't go fixing the swing for that.

Interviewer: Now how about the club choice? I mean you--you actually worked as a caddy. Are--are there--do people actually make mistakes in club choices these days?

Michael Robichaud: Oh absolutely; I think everybody--and unfortunately the day of the caddy is not as big as it was when I was a young boy because they'd have caddies at public golf courses. And a good caddy is going to save you a half-dozen shots a round; there's no doubt about it because you know ego gets into the game and you know somebody will certainly think they can hit that seven-iron 150-yards but there's a 20-mile an hour wind in their face and it's uphill and you know they really should be using a five-iron. So yeah you can make mistakes--and the caddy who knows the player is certainly going to help that player make better decisions and calm them down and bring them back. You know you speak about clubs too; a lot of that fade and that hook could be the fitting of the golf club too.

Interviewer: So be your own caddy?

Michael Robichaud: In--in many ways yes; you know be realistic about what you're trying to do and what you can do.

Interviewer: Well Michael Robichaud, thank you so much for all your valuable information. It makes me want to get out on the course today.

Michael Robichaud: Well I hope so.

Interviewer: On this beautiful day.

Michael Robichaud: Because we need--we need all the golfers and it's been my pleasure. It's a lot of fun to talk about it.

Interviewer: And for more information about the Ranch Golf Club we can contact you at your website. You want to give us that web address?

Michael Robichaud: Certainly; www.theranchgolfclub.com, all spelled out with no spaces.

Interviewer: And you also have a toll-free number?

Michael Robichaud: The toll-free number is 866-790-9333 and we look forward to seeing everyone up here.

Interviewer: Great; well we will see you at the 19th hole.

Michael Robichaud: Thank you.

Interviewer: [*Laughs*] Bye Michael; thanks.

Michael Robichaud: Take care; bye-bye.

Interviewer: We hope you've enjoyed this discussion about the great game of golf and that you'll get out there, work on your game, and most of all enjoy your time on the course. For more information about the Ranch Golf Club in Southwick, Massachusetts you can call 1-866-790-9333 or visit their website www.theranchgolfclub.com.

[Music]

[End Golfing]

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