

What Happens Next – July 25, 2021

Critical Race Theory, Golf Strategy, and Enforcing Non-Compete Agreements

Scott Fawcett QA

Larry Bernstein:

I'm going to focus initially on the mental aspect. One of my best friends, John Karzen used to always tell me, just focus on the next golf shot. How important is next golf shot as your most important mission, let the past go and don't worry about so much about the shot after that, just focus right here, right now, this shot?

Scott Fawcett:

Well, there's about 20 different things that I say during my seminar, this is the most important thing you're going to leave with, and that is certainly one of them. There's a great saying, obviously, if you're depressed you're living in the past, if you have anxiety you're living in the future. And that's again, just defining the word presence. I've heard you've got to stay present and I heard that all before, but I just feel like we as humans because I hate social media more than you can imagine, but because of social media, we have such access to great brains, guys, again like Sam Harris and Jim Rowan and all kinds of old guys.

Scott Fawcett:

It remain present, just recognizing Sam's got a great way that he talks about the half-life of any emotion is extremely short, unless you are focusing on that emotion. And so if you're pissed off, you're typically thinking about something in the past, and so that's just not going to help you. There's another saying, if you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. If you're a surgeon, you nick an artery, fix it and move on. There's just all these little sayings but they're all about staying present and keeping your brain on the task at hand, because if it's already happened, there's nothing you can do to change it.

Larry Bernstein:

And as I think about the lesson you're trying to teach the kid, is that when you fire a shotgun, it could go anywhere, and when it does go into the bunker, it doesn't mean that it was a bad shot or a bad plan, it's just a statistical dispersion that you should be comfortable with. It just bad luck and it doesn't mean that you suck, it just means it was bad luck. Is that the key insight you want to also express?

Scott Fawcett:

Any shot you hit, it's just funny because in golf when you get mad, it's one of two things. You're trying to let everyone else know you're better than this or you're just wishing you were better than you are. So the idea of saying you don't suck, well, you hit the shot, so you're capable of that shot. So really you can't be too surprised. And yes, essentially the better player has a tighter, smaller shotgun pattern, but still, you can't remove all risks. You do have to take on some risk in order to play optimally, to shoot an optimal score. So there are just bad outcomes,

five to 10, 15% of the time, you should have a bad outcome otherwise you're playing too conservatively.

Just recognizing that that was a potential outcome, there is no reason to be necessarily mad about it. There's nothing you can do about it so you might as well just move on and try to make a better decision moving forward. I mean, so much of what I created with Decade, and then the psychology, is just stolen straight from poker. I'm a relatively avid poker player. And as I've got finance and economics degrees, I kind of realize golf is just a math game. All sports at their core are just math games but you have to understand the math in order to apply the math. And I think that's just what I accidentally created with Decade, was that exactly.

Larry Bernstein:

It's funny. I come from the fixed income arbitrage business and effectively, I think that Moneyball came from the application of finance theory to baseball, and now you're just applying those same mathematical statistical metrics to golf. But I think it's different though, in my world, in the bond world and in the financial modeling world, we're concerned about both expected value and also variance. We're very concerned about fatty tails, basically losing all our money. How do you think about expected value in relationship to variance?

Scott Fawcett:

Well, I mean, obviously they're just completely intertwined. I mean, you've got an expected value. The way golf works is if you have an eight foot putt, that is where is, it's 50/50 on the PGA tour. So, you average one and a half strokes to hole out. Obviously you can't hit the ball one and a half times, so you have a 50%, well, let's hope you don't three putt it, but you have a 50% chance of making it, a 50% chance of losing it. And again, then it's just the weighted average from there. So now if I know how many shots it takes to hole out from any given spot on the entire golf course, you just wind up making an entire, I mean, again, it's just a giant weighted average math problem. Again, this is where people, I am pretty good at math, but the actual math of Decade, it's not advanced at all, it is literally as basic as a sixth grader's weighted average test score.

And variance is just a part of it. Again, I have about a 10% chance, like almost by definition of hitting an outlier shot, regardless of whatever you realize, you are making it up as a 20 handicap, have a 10% chance of hitting one of your 10% worse shots, just like a PGA tour player does. And so making sure that where you're aiming, those things again, they're just part of the potential outcomes. It is just part of the deal and I mean, variants again, I really do look back at just variants and weighted average as being the root of all decision-making decisions. So when you're talking about bonds and fixed income, you've got a 20% chance of whatever outcome, a 20% chance, and then you can get as detailed as you want, and then you just add it all together and here's your expected value at the end of the day.

Larry Bernstein:

I want to go to putting as an example. Your focus in your general videos relates to recommendations for a fabulous scratch golfer. I happened to be a 12 handicap and so I wanted to give an example of concerns for our typical audience member, at least who play golf. And

that is, let's say you have a 15 or 20 foot putt and the odds of me making that putt are pretty remote. I'm not a particularly good putter.

But I probably can make a putt from three feet. Should I just have in my mind a three foot radius circle around that pin and just trying to get within that and not really try to necessarily make it? Is it the same logic that you apply to not getting in the hazard off of your drives? Should I apply that same thought to putting, make sure I two putt, give up on one putt?

Scott Fawcett:

As a 12 from outside of about 15 feet, yes. Literally the first slide in my seminar says stop trying to make putts and it's kind of tongue in cheek-

Larry Bernstein:

Oh, so it is?

Scott Fawcett:

Yeah, it's kind of tongue in cheek, but it's also not. You have to just trust that... I like to try to explain it, it's so much easier to do with my hands, but if you think of a beehive swarm, if you had a beehive swarm of golf balls rolling at a hole, the hole would get in the way of a few putts, by definition. And then if you had the beehive that is hit too hard, so if you have this putt that you hit too hard, that's the part that's going to start to try to lip out. And so there was a guy, and I don't want to say him by name, but he used to say that every putt should be hit 17 inches past the hole.

And that's correct if you can control your speed to the inch, which nobody can. And so really when somebody says, "How far should you hit a putt past the hole?" the only real answer is it depends on your skill level and how long is the putt. But on the PGA tour, the best putters in the world, they're going to leave 20 to 25% of their putts short from about 15 to 20 feet. And so if you think of a bell curve, I've got a bell curve of potential speed outcomes. So distances, I'm going to hit the putt anywhere from, let's just make this number up, it's about four feet long. Then if I'm 20 feet, I might hit it two feet short of my target, or two feet longer than my target.

Well, if I can move that bell curve to where only about 25% of it is short of the hole, I've now actually put the vast majority of the bell curve, the meat, the middle, centered just past the hole, which actually makes the hole as large as possible, meaning you're going to have fewer lip outs if the ball is rolling six inches by then three feet by. So you've really accomplished two things. You've made the hole as big as possible for the vast majority of your putts and you've also optimized the average length of your second putt because instead of having some four footers coming back, you've now got one footers that you have left short. You've essentially just swapped out again the 20% tail roughly from being four foot long to one foot short. Again, obviously not perfectly, but that's basically what you've done. And again, on the PGA tour from four feet, the make rate is 88% and that's not four feet exactly. That is three foot one inch to four foot. Again, I failed at professional golf, so I can't say this, but that's not very good.

It's not mind boggling, but these are obviously the best players in the world. So it by definition has to be mind boggling, but it's just not. And understanding these things, it's okay to leave a

putt short. Tiger, when he won the Masters in 2019, he made the turn, he had to chip out of a bush on number 10, he then hit a shot about 18 feet or so past the pin on number 10, and he left it short six inches and just kind of smiled, walked up, tapped it in and was kind of laughing as he was walking off the green. Literally 100% of the rest of the field if they left that putt short would have given some sort of emotion with their hands like hit it, get it there, something. And here's Tiger just knowing, it would've been nice if that thing had got there, but in order to never leave any short, I will have four and five footers coming back. That's just the way it works. So you just got to deal with it.

Larry Bernstein:

When I watched your videos, one of the things I thought was really interesting was you said, "Okay, my drive goes a certain distance." Mine happens to go like 260. So if you go 260 and you see that there are hazards at the 260 yard point, you need to place your target significantly away from that hazard. And you then said, "The dispersion for a professional golfer at that distance is approximately 65 yards." And you said, "Okay, at 65 yards across is there a room at the 260-yard distance to stay in play without going in the hazard? And if there's not, then you may want to consider using less club so that you don't go in the hazard." I guess my first question for you as someone who doesn't hit it that far and doesn't know his dispersion, how can I find out what the 12 handicap dispersion is, or mine specifically is? Do you recommend that we use TrackMan? Do you go out to the range and figure out what my dispersion is? How do I evaluate that question?

Scott Fawcett:

In a perfect world, yes, you would have access to a TrackMan or a Quad, just any sort of a launch monitor. Those things are \$25,000 a piece. So not a whole lot of people haven't, but you can go rent them at your local golf course or your local club fitting shops would probably be the best place to do it, where you just go in for an hour and you can figure some of these things out. And honestly, you can also get on your driving range at your home course and get on Google Earth, the thing is just mind boggling how accurate it is and you can find a spot from, okay, the left edge of that green out there in the middle of the range all the way over to the edge of the range is 50 yards. Here's the center of that and just start practicing.

You want to practice into these grid that you know how big they are because then when you go out onto the course, again, this is all theoretical, you're trying to shoot your lowest score as possible, you've gotten on the satellites and you have looked at how the width of certain holes at different areas and then you can really dig deep and get a lot of confidence of hey, I keep it inside of this 50 yard wide pattern on the driving range, 90% of the time, there's 60 yards out there between the lakes and that house on the right. If I don't get in my own way, I should be fine here. And that's really the power that you start getting from that because when you look at PGA tour shot patterns on number 18 at PGA West has a lake all along the left, and you will literally see balls scattered from that lake all the way to over 100 yards right of the lake.

And there's literally no chance on earth, shot patterns for PGA tour players would be that big on the driving range. And again, this is at the PGA tour level guys thinking mid swing, don't go left. Well, I know exactly where that one's going when you think that, and you probably think

that yourself from time to time since you're a 12. Trust me tour players do the exact same thing, which some of the dumb stuff that... I feel like that's why I teach these guys so well because I can look at them and be like, "Trust me, there's nothing you have ever thought that I haven't thought and thought worse. You're not going to out crazy me." And once guys can really kind of see and trust that fact and I can just tell them from the ShotLink images like, "Here's what you were thinking on that shot."

And they're like, "My gosh, yes, that is exactly what I was thinking or trying to do" because there's just outlier shots that make no sense. And again, I hate saying they're entirely mental because that's kind of a non-answer, but they're basically entirely mental. And again, once you take these young players, we used to think that you would have to get out on tour and learn all the shots and that's why you kind of peaked in golf in your early thirties. It's not that. You actually had to get out on tour, let your brain finish developing by the time you're about 25 and then figure out how to pull your head out of your butt in order to play golf correctly. And then you started peaking. Well, now most of these kids I work with from college moving forward and just using ShotLink and launch monitors and just all this stuff, you can literally get a kid thinking like a PGA tour veteran, I mean literally like Tiger Woods in under a day. It's pretty remarkable. Now, the patience and discipline-

Larry Bernstein:

Is the problem that we have this false sense of confidence that we could hit it to that pin and that pin is just well-protected by that hazard and we should just stay away from the hazard? Is that the biggest error we make our overconfidence in our ability not to hit it in that bunker?

Scott Fawcett:

I honestly believe it's just the fact that we want to make birdies. I really do believe that ultimately we're all out there thinking I want to shoot low, so I need to make some birdies. And just it's not about making more birdies. It is entirely about avoiding mistakes. And if you have a corporate turnaround specialist come in to take a company to turn it around, they don't come in and think, all right, well, how can we start selling a lot more product? The first question is where can we trim the fat? And it's exactly the same in golf that. It really is just interesting how ubiquitous some of those ideas are across all genres. For the most part, you want to start by making fewer mistakes. And kind of the one step that I always give in my seminar is a person who averages 95 compared to a person who averages 79, the 79 shooter only averages one birdie more per round.

The other 15 shots of improvement are literally bogey and higher avoidance. It's not about making more birdies. This is entirely about avoiding mistakes. And then as your scoring average drops from 79 down to the tour level of 70, 70 to 80% of that improvement through the 70s is by making fewer mistakes. I can't tell you to go out and make more birdies. "Okay, well, how?" "Well get better at golf." That's not very actionable. I can tell you to go out there and make fewer mistakes because everybody in their stomach knows I'm kind of trying something here that's probably dumb.

Larry Bernstein:

I often hear on the course, "I didn't come here to lay up." And I think that's exactly the opposite we're supposed to do. You came here to score well, you got to lay up.

Scott Fawcett:

This is where I hate the words aggressive or conservative. It's just mathematically correct. Maybe you shouldn't be laying up. Given certain parameters, off the tee. If I had to boil proper golf strategy into a nutshell, it would be off the tee play very, very, very aggressively. I want you hitting driver everywhere it's physically possible. And then into the greens, it would tend a little bit towards the conservative side. The idea of just laying up, again, where you're going with that, a lot of times people are like, "Well, I just not really feeling good with my drivers. So I'll just hit three wood out there and get it in play." The three wood just not go much straighter. You might hit five or 7% more fairways with three wood drivers simply because it goes shorter, so it has less time to get offline.

But 100% of three woods go 30 to 60 yards shorter than your driver. And then we go right back to the weighted average math, and it will just never be supported that you would be better off being 40 yards longer on your approach shot in order to have 5% more fairways. The best analogy I have for people is if you and I were flipping coins and every time you won I gave you \$10, and every time I won you gave me \$20, you wouldn't do that for very long. You would figure this out real quickly, this is a pretty bad idea. And I would even say that if we flipped the coins and you win and I give you \$10, you did not win money there. "But I have \$10 in my hand." "No, if we do this very often, you're not going to win money." And so that's really what you have to boil again all decisions in life down to is something that trivial as math. Will I get hit crossing this street? Maybe. I'm going to wait until a better time.

Larry Bernstein:

And let's say you hit a great drive it's a par five and you're just within range of going for it, but there's hazards all over the place, how do you think about whether or not you should go forward to two?

Scott Fawcett:

This is the hardest part of golf because golf is the only sport in the world that's not played on a uniform field of competition. And so giving generic answers on specific holes is essentially impossible. That said, if there's 50 yards between water hazards, which are usually going to be kind of the penalties that we really want to try to avoid, water hazards and out of bounds. But if there's just some bunkers and stuff up there, send it, get it up there. But again, it's just really difficult. Golf is just different. If I told you that I was playing basketball last night and I was at the top of the key and a defender from the wing shifted onto me, you kind of know what I'm talking about. You can kind of picture that. But if I tell you I'm on a par 5, I'm 240, should I go for it? Well, I need a lot more information.

Larry Bernstein:

Tell me more.

Scott Fawcett:

Yeah, tell me more. And that's what does suck. I do agree sometimes Decade, it's not complex. Seven minus two is the most advanced math there is, but there's a lot to it. There's literally 10 hours of content in the Decade app because there's a lot to teach and there's a lot of unique situations.

Larry Bernstein:

Tell me about wind. How does that affect our decision-making? It certainly adds a lot of uncertainty to stuff.

Scott Fawcett:

Exactly. If wind were steady, so a 10 mile an hour wind, if it were just blowing 10, you could perfectly compute for that. But at 10 mile an hour wind is blowing five to 15, a 20 mile an hour wind is blowing 10 to 30. And so how do you control? What's really at the end of its core is every single sport, ball sport I should say, track and field. I was trying to think. Surely there's other sports. Every sport that involves a ball, basically the most powerful person with the most control, that combination, is who's going to be the best at that sport. And wind, because golf is the largest outdoor sport played with the ball in the air the longest of any sport in the world, the subtle variants in wind make your shot patterns huge.

So a couple of years ago they had this robot set up on number 16 at TPC Scottsdale during the Pro-Am and it hit a hole in one, and everybody's like, "Oh my God, this robot hit a hole in one! It's golf mastered." And my buddy was running the robot that day and he said the wind was down and off the right about five miles an hour, so blowing like two to seven, barely more than your air conditioner. And yes, it made a hole in one and it also hit balls in the left bunker. It missed the green right some. It had a shotgun blast and that was because this wind is just barely off the right and it's just enough. So again, if you've got any wind whatsoever, you just keep getting more and more conservative towards the middle of the green. And days when it's windy scores, simply aren't going to be low. So let's get it on the green as fast as physically possible and try to get out of there with the lowest score possible.

Larry Bernstein:

What suggestions would you have for practice for a 12 handicap golfer? What should I be working on?

Scott Fawcett:

I go against the grain of intelligent golf instruction. There's a lot of guys in golf instruction who try to apply studies from other genres and variable practice, and you have to challenge the brain and the brain keeps making these maps, and you've got to keep changing them in order for the brain to learn it. I get it. I got it. But golf is the only sport where you have a ball that you're not looking at the target. There's so much going on in golf. And so for the 12 handicap,

for the tour player, I think that block practice, which is doing the exact same thing over and over and over again, is by far the best way to practice. And it's just not even close in my opinion. This is opinion. It's how I play. I'm a pretty good golfer and I literally hit the same shot over and over and over again because what I feel like the variable practice, the random practice crowd has missed is it's the time between trials that actually matters for the brain to reorganize its action plan or map or whatever the correct terminology is.

And time between trials is not exclusive to random practice, but having the exact same shot shape, getting yourself in the exact same orientation to the ball, training your eyes to see the target line, figuring out, I'm hitting 80% of my shots right at the target, you can only do those things with block practice. So I do believe that you have to be engaged, but once you're engaged, do the exact same thing over and over again. Tiger literally, my understanding is it's just exhausting to practice with him because he goes so slow. He'll hit five or six balls, go grab some water, think, come back. And you're like, he's got all day. Well, he used to have all day to do whatever he wanted to do. It is about slowing down, but about really trying to own and command one shot with your full shot, and then just practicing your speed control and putting. That's all you should be doing with your putting practice is speed drills.

Larry Bernstein:

I agree with that. I end each session with a note of optimism. What are you optimistic about the teaching of golf?

Scott Fawcett:

Finally, we're getting there. Golf is just so unique. We used to have you'd to have this model swing where your golf club was staying on plane and there's this... We've definitely just come to realize that all of the traditional... I shouldn't say all of it. There's no such thing as a fundamental. There are fundamentals and fingerprints for each player. You can have a super strong grip like Dustin Johnson, and it's fine. You can have a super weak grip, like Bryson DeChambeau, and it's fine. There really is no fundamentals in golf anymore. It's all about match-ups.

And so if you're going to go out and get a lesson from an instructor, the first question I would ask him is, "Tell me your opinion on match-ups. Here's my grip, here's my swing. What kind of match-ups would you be looking for?" And if they can't answer that question, I'd move on to another instructor most likely, but you've got to be understanding like well, this guy's grip is strong, so this is what his body dynamic is, what he needs to be doing. Because if you just take somebody and you're trying to get them to swing on plane or whatever it is, you just cannot use... There is no model golf swing anymore. And I think that's probably the most important thing.

Larry Bernstein:

One last question. When you watch golf on television and you listen to the moderators discuss it, do you feel like they're just talking nonsense? And if so, how should the moderation of golf to the public audience be changed?

Scott Fawcett:

They're getting better. So I used to get into a lot of Twitter arguments with Brandel Chamblee and some other commentators, and I'll give Brandel credit. Well, I had to corner him. I'm a pretty dumb six one 210. I had to corner Brandel one day and force him to listen to me in order to understand where I'm coming from. But once he saw that I kind of know what I'm talking about, this was four or so years ago, I give him credit, he came to one of my seminars in Orlando, Frank Novelo, A lot of these guys are now reaching out to me and they're learning. There are still quite a few guys that honestly I'll be interested to see if they keep the jobs because the viewing public, I've only got 50,000 followers or so across social media, but there's 50,000 educated brains out there that are educating their friends.

"Well, he needs to get aggressive here and fire at this pin. And just sometimes you got to step up and make birdie." That stuff, commentators have better stop saying it real soon because my Twitter just gets lit up on the daily on the weekends with, "Oh my God, this guy said that and this guy said that." And I'm like, "Yeah." They just think that every single shot the guys hit should be perfect and it's just they don't understand the variance. They have a very fundamental lack of understanding of variance.

Larry Bernstein:

Scott, thank you so much.

Scott Fawcett:

Absolutely. Thank you for having me on.