

## Part 2A – Review of Literature

*This section on the mental side of shuffleboard focuses on what learned men in the field think about how our mind operates.* Excerpts from six golf books will follow – a complete bibliography of books used can be found in the back of this book. Remember, I've used golf books as there are no shuffle books (until this one) that address this issue. I highly recommend reading any or all of them; the ideas put forth have helped me immensely.

### A. Thoughts of Dr. Gio Valiente from his book: Conquering the Mental Game

As Cicero said many, many years ago, "Man is his own worst enemy." Dr. Valiente addresses the age-old question of any sport, "Why do we play?" He uses the term, Mastery Golf, which I feel can be transferred over to Mastery Shuffleboard. Very simply put, it's a test of you and the court! He also talks of continual, measured improvement in one's game regardless of performance. The key idea to keep focus on is, "What's my target?" This keeps the mind focused on the task at hand.

Finally, Dr. Valiente focuses on four key elements to self-efficacy/self realization.

1. The first is what he calls the Mastery Experience - This addresses the concept that winners know what it takes to win. He is a big believer of "framing". In essence, when faced with any given situation, it is imperative to look at it in a positive light.
2. The second concept is Vicarious Learning; in other words, continue to improve regardless of the outcome. A fact to keep in mind is that even the best players actually win tournaments less than 5% of the time. (Tournament players, please look at this stat carefully!) Remember, we have no control on how others will play on a given day.
3. The third concept is a very interesting one – he calls it the Verbal and Social Persuasions. Simply put, we tend to become what we think other people think we are. If you agree with that statement, then be around positive people.
4. Finally, he points to the Physiological/Emotional states we need to and must deal with in our competition. It is *how* we cope with problems/obstacles that determines winners.

B. Thoughts of B.J. Tomasi from his book: The 30-Second Golf Swing

“I just have 2 goals in life – My *short-term* goal is to get through today. My *long-term* goal is to get through tomorrow.”

(Joe Zaletel)

B. J. Tomasi talks about four key ideas to foster strong mental play.

1. He is a great believer in practice – he stresses the need to polish your strengths and to identify and upgrade your weaknesses. (You will be able to do this with your game after you take your player survey later in the book.)
2. His next key idea is very interesting. He lists, then explains, a very simple equation – Excellence = Talent + P. S. O.
  - P = PLAN (Mental) after a shot is taken – was it a good plan or a poor plan? (Either way – accept it)
  - S = SHOT (Physical) was it a good or a poor shot? (Either way – accept it)
  - O = OUTCOME (Emotional) was it a good outcome or a poor outcome? (Either way – accept it)

I would like to insert a score sheet I devised and actually used; it was part of my first book. Look at it as a way of tracking a game. The idea came to me from baseball – where people in the stands fill out a score sheet on the plays of the game. I realize the bottom half of the page has its shortcomings in that, if someone in the stands is tracking your game, they can't be sure if some of your shots made were what you intended to do. The only foolproof way I know of is to have someone videotape one of your games, so you can then review it (just another tool for you to possibly use). This tracking form appears on the next page – feel free to adopt/adapt it for your game.

Singles/Doubles

Game#

Date

Park/Court

Opponent

Cue Length \_\_\_\_\_

Game Score

1/2 Bob \_\_\_\_\_ Opp. \_\_\_\_\_

"Bob" 3-Strong    1/2    1/2    \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Reading Court    Bob \_\_\_\_\_ Opp. \_\_\_\_\_  
                   2-Average    \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Shot Strategy  
                   1-Poor    \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Hammer Count    Kitchen \_\_\_\_\_ Me \_\_\_\_\_ They \_\_\_\_\_

_____ Tally Person		
<u>Shot Taken</u>	<u>Successful</u>	<u>Unsuccessful</u>
1. <u>Block</u> _____	/	_____
2. <u>Hide</u> _____	/	_____
3. <u>Take-out</u> _____	/	_____
4. <u>Take-out w/stick</u> _____	/	_____
5. <u>Score</u> _____	/	_____
6. <u>Shoot thru</u> _____	/	_____
Total _____ + _____ = 64		

3. Think about his next statement very carefully as most of us are probably guilty of this. Tomasi says that in competition we generally *overestimate* our opponent's strengths, and *underestimate* ours (Mental, again).
4. Lastly, he details what I've mentioned earlier in the text. He aptly points out that the shot is in reality, only a 20-30 second event. It includes:
  - Our thoughts (mental) prior to the shot
  - Our pre-shot routine (mental/physical)
  - The actual shot (physical)
  - The shot result (should be mental, *not* emotional)

Think about all of the above in your next match.

C. Thoughts of Dr. Parent in his book: Zen Golf

"Self acceptance is the beginning of confidence"

(Maxwell Maltz)

Dr. Parent notes three ideas to foster strong mental play:

1. He states that we *limit* ourselves by our assumptions. How very true this statement is! The next, I believe, is a powerful message for us seasoned/veteran shufflers. That is, the big positive of the beginner's mind is that there are many possibilities. Put in another way, they are more open to learning. On the other side of the coin Dr. Parent feels, and I wholeheartedly concur, that the big negative of the expert's mind is they see few possibilities. We all need to be more open-minded and continue to learn.
2. Dr. Parent feels that the body/mind are synchronized (in harmony) when we are in the present. We need to be focused on the here and now in a match, not on what last happened or what will happen in the next part of a match. We especially don't need to be thinking of non-shuffle information.
3. Finally, Dr. Parent suggests a terrific idea I'd like to share with you. It is to simply count what we want to change – clearly a mental strategy – (maybe to put on that little notepad you're using). I've been doing this now for over two seasons. I've used this in two areas of my game needing work. I'm working for an 'O' in each category for a match;- the first is to control my

emotions after the shot and the other is to be clean on take-outs. I'm happy to say that because of this technique, progress is being made!

D. Thoughts of Bob Rotella in his book: Golf is Not a Game of Perfect

"Many people succeed when others do not believe in them. Rarely does a person succeed when he does not believe in himself."

(Herb True)

1. Mr. Rotella feels that in golf, the mental side is 90% of the margin between winners and losers. I strongly believe the same holds true for shuffleboard. In both cases the physical/shot-making ability of the top players are very close; hence, the mental side generally decides who will be victorious.
2. Secondly he feels that players need to shed their expectations and just go out and play the game. In shuffleboard, even for the exceptional player, over the course of a season a player falls short of the "Final 4" more often than not – let alone winning the entire event. Mr. Rotella uses a very appropriate quote from Mark Twain – "The inability to forget is more devastating than the inability to remember." Boy, how true that is!
3. That leads to Mr. Rotella's third thought on staying mentally strong and that is, staying focused on each and every shot. As we all know just one bad shot can cost.

E. Thoughts of Cohn and Winters in their book entitled: The Mental Art of Putting

"Most people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan"

(John L. Beckley)

I equate the putt in golf to shuffleboard's hammer shot. Cohn and Winters feel that the putt is 2% mechanical, 98% confidence and touch. Think about that one! They secondly think/believe that *speed* is more important than line, in that proper speed actually determines the line. We all do it in shuffleboard, especially out West - after missing a hammer we can score 99% of the time on that first shot out in the next frame. In golf the player practices the stroke before making the actual shot. That has implications for shuffleboard, in that I have never seen a shuffler practice the stroke before the shot or at least, the hammer. Think about *that* one!

Finally, Cohn and Winters give a mental prescription for improved play which goes like this:

Believe in yourself...Practice effectively...

...Develop your competence...Make your shot...

...Build your confidence...Develop a Positive Feeling

Please read the above as it pertains to your game.

F. Thoughts by Graham and Stabler in their book: The 8 Traits of Champion Golfers

“The greatest test of courage on earth is to bear defeat without losing heart”

(Robert Ingersoll)

Graham and Stabler identify three keys to fostering strong mental play. The first is to create a Fail Forward Journal. Obviously the basic premise of this idea is to *look ahead* and not dwell on the past. The other purpose of the journal is to focus on change/improvement in the next match. They feel that failure isn't failure *unless* it's failure to change. How true that is! Their second point is one of definition: an *optimist* sees failure within one's control, whereas a *pessimist* sees failure outside of one's control. This is crucial – which one describes you? Is a loss something you didn't do, a poor court, weather conditions, bad discs, bad luck, etc? Think about that one. Lastly, Graham and Stabler suggest that if you are superstitious you should develop positive superstitions. I tend to be very superstitious. In the 04-05 shuffle season, I had Becky Mclure and Margaret Robinson (wives of Jack and Rob – two very fine shufflers) make me a shuffle hat – a red, white and blue hat with a western boot on it. I had a magical season, going 84-20 and making the Final 4 a ridiculous 12 of 18 tourneys. Was it the hat?

Conclusions – This concludes this section of the book focusing on the *mental* side of the game, I strongly urge the reader to reread it! And don't be afraid to mark up items of importance to you – remember; it's *your* book.

## Part 3 – The Emotional Game

“We all need therapy”

(Shuffle board Bob)

I would be first in line for the above – the emotional part of this great game has been my nemesis. Is it yours, too? If so, I think this part of the book will be very helpful. You see, I probably started reading all of those golf books and gravitated to writing this book trying to improve this part of my game. Those of you, who know me, know about my passion to win and at times, my body language, which as I tell my strategy pupils, is *not* necessarily a positive attribute. So here we go. Please read this entire section carefully because most of us, to one degree or another, have this malady.

### A. Defining the Word

Again, the best way to approach any word is to carefully define it so that we are all on the same page. Webster, and other dictionaries, defines it simply as a strong surge of feeling experienced by an individual. As I pointed out in the last section on the mental aspect of the game, the definition of any word is just a starting point. The same can be said of our emotional definition. This entire section will be devoted to going beyond that definition. Point number one (which will be repeated in many different ways in this section), is that no play of any sport can eliminate emotion; rather, the player needs to be able to control/manage the many feelings that sweep over us during the course of a match. Again, being able to balance the emotion with the physical and mental parts is a key component of the top flight player. Point number two is that our court demeanor needs to be carefully managed. This section will talk about it being used as a tool to improve play and even how it can be used as a strategy, if needed. Isn't it curious that even in a 5¢ jackpot game in your park changes how we feel about that game? For many, it goes from a relaxing time to one of increased tension – for a lousy five cents. We will explore the foregoing phenomenon and much more in the pages that follow.

## B. Why We Play the Game?

"I was lost in the shuffle – now I shuffle with the lost!"

(Bob Van Horne)

In this section I'd like to focus on *motives* for taking part in this great game. I can identify five of them I'd like to share with you – I'm sure there are more.

1. An activity – many, many people get into this game simply because of the trying new things philosophy. They bowl on this day, golf on those two days...you see my point. Their feelings/motives may be two-fold. One is that it gives them something to do on their free days and the other is that they are curious to see if this game suits them - possibly leading to something more. This like all groups is an important group in that, if the game is presented to them properly, they might keep playing it. However, as most of you are aware, we lose most of these folks because of the treatment they receive down at the courts. Generally once we lose them, for whatever reason, they seldom return.
2. A social activity – many of our shufflers, 99% seniors over 50, come to the game simply because they like to be around other people. In many ways I envy these people because they are out to *enjoy* the game - winning is not why they are there. Obviously as time goes on they may embrace the game, but initially they truly are there to have fun. In Mesa's District 4, we have a 2-Board League playing singles (5 on a team) and there are over 100 people playing every season. They don't want to move up (?) to our 4-board play because they just want to play and have a good time. I applaud them! In fact, for years now I've felt we should have what I call Recreational Shuffleboard for players of this ilk. Hey, they're playing the game! They're telling their friends! (I'm going to get a little political here, please forgive me). The problem I see in the game of shuffleboard in general, is that we have the highly competitive/tournament players running things. Don't get me wrong – someone has to do it, but many times the leadership forgets about the first two types of players I've described and we *lose shufflers* because of this. Not all players, I repeat, not all players play our game to be/become champions. If you agree with the above, *please* talk to your leaders. Well, down off the



soapbox for now, but I did feel the above needed airing. *Everywhere* I look our membership is declining! Give the above some serious thought.

3. The Whiner/Bellyacher – Have you ever noticed that there are some people who complain about almost everything? Yes, these people exist in our game, too, and you know who they are in your play group. To me this type of shuffler is a tough one to figure out. I say this because they constantly complain about game conditions, the court/discs – you name it. However most of this group continues to shuffle, which leads to the \$64.00 question, why? I'm convinced some of them do it as a ploy – a form of strategy, they are trying to move us from the mental game to the emotional game. Really! You *cannot* let them do this to your game. I am constantly amazed at statements I hear like, “No more play at this park” or “Well, this is my last tourney” or “Why does my luck all seem to be bad” etc. On the one hand, these statements are not good for the game, yet their play continues. I guess that this type of individual just has it built into their personality!
4. The Quitter – Let's face it, some people just don't care to play after a time. The reasons for stopping are many and varied. It can be as simple as “I just don't care for the game” to “I'm competitive, but I give up – I just can't seem to do/master the things that I need to do to have more success”. I believe strongly there is more to it than just not winning games. Sometimes we lose people who become disenchanted with the politics of the game, sometimes with doing all the work at their park and they're just plain tired of doing it. And sometimes it is exclusion from the group, in other words, their requests to help are turned down. Lastly, sometimes there are those shufflers who don't take to instruction; hence, they don't improve and just give up. The above is a real challenge to the entire shuffle community because *most* people in this group want to play, yet something derails them. What a pity this is!
5. The Competitor – The last group of shufflers are those, like myself, who are in it for the competition. Until someone shows me otherwise, I still consider myself the most competitive shuffler on the planet! I truly wish this weren't so because I continue to fight those demons that haunt my, and maybe your, game. I try to tell myself three things every time I go out. The first is that it's just a game. Secondly, I'm only playing for a trophy or a cash prize, not a million dollars. Lastly, the “glory” of the game is really only of importance to me. I, like many of

you, am trying to achieve “emotional balance” in every match I play. Because of these continued efforts to be top notch, I have tried to do a couple of other things. One is I’ve tried to continually learn about the game. I love to talk with shufflers more accomplished than I about how they view/handle their game. I also love to practice, probably from my basketball days. As you know by now, I continue to read to foster improvement. Being an ex-teacher I love teaching the game to others – from beginners to improving one’s strategy. Finally, I’m writing this book, my second, to promote the game. I’ve written this section from a personal standpoint to offer a prescription for ideas you might use. Also, I realize that many of you do many of the things listed above. Put in a nutshell, I’ve tried to make the *game* much bigger than me. Emotionally, my match is only a small part of what shuffleboard means to me.

### C. Sportsmanship

“If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two *imposters* just the same... you’ll be a man my son.”

(Rudyard Kipling)

Regarding competition, the above quote is one of the most powerful thoughts I have ever read! My brother Joe, once an avid tennis player-instructor, told me that the complete poem is displayed in the walkway leading to center court at Wimbledon – one of the world’s most prestigious sporting events. Please reread the above quote again before any further reading. I guess the word that jumped out at me the most was “imposters”. What is winning or losing anyway? In the total scheme of things, whether we win or lose a competitive event, lest a given game, really means very little. Why then does any competitor place such great importance on winning? Chi Chi Rodriguez, one of the all-time golfing greats once said, “I never worry how I react after a great shot, rather I am more worried how I’ll react after a bad one!” Some real food for thought here. You’d be surprised to hear that many shufflers I play, (and maybe you hear this same thing as you play), feel that *if* they don’t win the championship of a tourney they’ve failed or not had a good tourney. How sad! I’ve said many times that I’ll take second or making the Final 4 pairing any day of the week. Sure, I want to win every time I step onto the court but as we all know, nobody wins them all. Is this