

What a Good Caddie is: A PGA Tour Player Assessment.

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Introduction

There is little research on the contemporary PGA Tour player assessment of what makes a good caddie, which seems odd given the growth and subsequent compounded pressures of the 21 century PGA Tour. Over the last 30 years, the Tour has experienced exponential prize money increases, more events, aggressive improvements to golf equipment, and improved course conditions, which has attracted better quality players. As a result, the caddie's role, and their influence on PGA Tour players from a strategic positive influence, tactical advice on judgements, and the output-guidance for judgement accuracy and its well-being effect (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Yaniv 2004; Hong et al. 2021), has intensified (because the competition standards are higher). A pilot study of this nature has merit because it seeks to convey positive qualities to current and future Tour caddies and improve player performance.

Method

Utilizing semi-structured interviews, respondents reflected on what they believe makes a good caddie. A three-pronged line of inquiry framework of, 1) the caddie as a remedial screening instrument to enhance golfer performance, 2) the caddie as a person who can reveal the very best version of the golfer's skill, and 3) the caddie as a belief system "coach" that fits the full throttle PGA Tour environment, was used to gather data. Qualitative open-ended data revealed thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that were gathered to assess for themes. Themes were identified using a progression of a) data familiarization, b) generating data codes, c) investigating for themes, d) reviewing themes against the interview question, e) defining and naming themes, and f) producing further information to help those who this study seeks to serve. Study approval was granted by university ethics. The study was author funded. There were no conflicts of interest to perform this study.

Results and Discussion

Eight (8) respondents identified five (5) good caddie themes including, 1) caddies execute routines and rituals as calming actions to maintain normal player behavior in stressful environments, 2) caddies function as a rhythm of mental performance over a sustained period, which is a synchronized mathematical model for optimizing performance, 3) caddies are a chameleon in that they must become a player-personality surrogate, 4) caddies help to ensure the golfer has as few thoughts as possible when executing golf shots, and 5) caddies promote a 'leave it all out there' mind set to mitigate the 'up all night afraid of what the future might bring' thinking. Considering the themes, the good caddie connects with the player (in a shared reality) to benefit player performance.

Significance

This study provides current tour player insights of what they believe makes a good caddie. Given the assessment context, it is suggested that a good caddie coherently evaluates, translates, and communicates insights over a sustained period so the player can process information cognitively, and then systematically execute it. Future research on this topic and its themes is recommended.

References

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