

What I did while I was learning. (An alternative CV)

I have never been entirely convinced by the idea that we must learn everything before we begin.

Clearly, there are matters where some learning has to come first. It helps to know the alphabet before trying to read, and I was grateful to learn what pedals and gears did before being let loose in a car. Although, given where cars are heading, even that may soon sound like a story from another century.

Much of that kind of education is what I think of as “just in case learning”. Useful, sometimes essential, but often stored away for a day that may or may not come.

My working life has been shaped more by “just in time learning”. Learn enough to begin. Do the work. Make mistakes. Adjust. Ask better questions. Keep going.



What follows is not a conventional CV. It is factually true, but it is not trying to list everything I have done. It is a short account of some of the work, people, mistakes, opportunities and lessons that have shaped my working life over the last 50 years.

It may be lighter on the failures, of which there have been many, and slightly more generous to the so-called successes.

Even an honest CV is still a curated document. In any case over the coming paragraphs I let you into my ‘private area’. This is the story of how I learned on the job.

Let's start with a handful of professional appointments

This is a selection of what some might consider my most important professional roles. Even that phrase, "most important", is subjective. What I think mattered may not be what the reader thinks mattered.

Before getting into the chronology, I should say that I have been an independent worker since my early twenties. I have played golf for a living, been a golf club professional, coach, coach educator, business owner, strategist, mentor and, from time to time, the person in the room asking the awkward question.

I have worked with golf clubs, national sports federations, international organisations, education providers and people who had big ambitions, limited resources and a worrying faith that I might know what to do next.

Sometimes I did. Sometimes I had to learn quickly.

Throughout my working life, I have leaned on the learning that came before. Some of it came from observation. Some came from formal study. Some came from experience. Some came from getting things wrong and being fortunate enough to notice before it was too late.

The pattern was often the same. Decide what I wanted. Take action. Observe the result. Adjust. Take action again.

This action loop has been one of the most useful habits of my life. It also has a downside. Occasionally, I moved so quickly that I forgot to stop and ask the first question properly.

What do I actually want?

The saying "you can't see the wood for the trees" suggests that some people become so lost in the detail that they miss the bigger picture. I have been blessed, or cursed, with something closer to the opposite condition. I often see the possible destination before I have worked out where to park the car.

Club Professional, Leyland Golf Club | 1984 to 1986

This was my first club professional job.

I remember the interview. A giant of a man, Dawson Allen, sat at one end of the boardroom table and I sat at the other. After a few pleasantries, he boomed:

“Can you play?”

Of course, I said yes.

“Can you really play?”

I replied, “You know I can. It’s all in my CV.”

My playing record was good, if not outstanding. I had been making a living from playing, although “making a living” is perhaps generous. I stayed in cheap hotels, ate pizza most nights and kept going.

At Leyland I learned that representing the club and playing with the members mattered deeply to the board. Once I understood that, I realised that if I did those things well, they would let me get on with building our business.

Sue and I learned quickly. There was stock to buy, accounts to do, tax to understand, staff to employ, lessons to give, members to serve and not enough hours in the day. We took work home every night.

It was tiring. It was also exciting.

Head Club Professional, Newark Golf Club | 1986 to 1996

Newark Golf Club, in Coddington, had a gem of a golf course. By the time we arrived, I was transitioning from being a player into being a business owner.

Sue was six months pregnant when we moved. We had to find a home, start a new business and do it all in the middle of the golf season. Why we moved three hours away from family and friends at that particular moment is still not entirely clear to me.

Looking back, it was either brave or badly timed. Possibly both.

My negotiations for the job had gone well. The chairman, Gordon Hunter, offered me the role and was surprised when I turned it down. When he asked why, I told him that I did not feel the club’s ambitions were as big as mine.

I wanted evidence that they wanted to grow.

I asked for an extension to the shop and an additional area where I could build what became one of the country's first indoor club fitting and putting centres. Gordon agreed. It was not written into the final contract, but I trusted him.

That may sound naïve.

It was not.

I could see in his eyes that he was trustworthy. I learned many lessons from Gordon, but trusting instinct was probably the most important.

In the early days, we did almost everything personally. Account ledgers, shop signs, communications, newsletters, birthday cards and Christmas cards. We wrote to around 400 members by hand, addressed the envelopes and put a stamp on each one.

It was laborious, but it built relationships.

Our business model was simple. Do the basics properly. Refuse to be average. Give until it hurts.

We did not give credit, or tick as it was often called, to members. We used strong margins. We did not advertise because we believed word of mouth was the best way to attract the kind of clients we wanted to serve.

We gave coffee and chocolates to clients buying clothing. Almost everyone buying clubs or a putter did so after a fitting in our rather swanky computerised custom fitting centre. We changed grips after a year to build the habit of looking after equipment. Every member received a free golf lesson on their birthday.

Service came at a price.

It was a price we were prepared to pay, and one that thousands of clients from around the country were willing to pay too.

The business was later featured in the PGA training manual for years after we had left Newark. That pleased me, partly because it was recognition, and partly because I had spent a fair amount of time arguing with people about why it would work.

National Coach, Federação Portuguesa de Golfe | 1997 to 2003

Moving family to another country is not something to do lightly. But it felt right.

After almost eleven years at Newark, we had plateaued. Within a few thousand pounds, I could predict our turnover, how many sets of clubs we would sell and how many lessons we would give in the coming year. To make another step forward in business would have pushed me deeper into the back office.

I did not want that.

The opportunity to become National Coach to the Portuguese National Team was interesting, flattering and slightly alarming. I had coached good players. I had coached the Portugal Boys team for short periods. But designing and delivering a national team programme was something else entirely.

Overnight, I went from being an experienced coach in one context to a beginner in another. That is a useful thing to remember. Expertise does not always travel as well as we think.

I learned quickly. I designed and delivered a national junior development programme with 28 delivery centres, a 24-tournament schedule and workforce education for coaches. We implemented an elite performance programme including sports science and regional support for players who would go on to international amateur success and, later, success on the European Tour.

Portugal had some excellent coaches. Many were self-taught, but they had a wonderful human touch. They knew their players. I felt they also needed a structured training programme.

That was where my deeper journey into coach education began.

I wrote the first training programme that golf professionals in Portugal had been able to attend. It was a three-year programme covering coaching skills, club technology, marketing and general business. It was later taken on by the PGA of Portugal.

Eventually, a difference in approach brought my role with the Portuguese Golf Federation to an end. I believed in a broader, more democratic reach for the game. That view did not fully align with the Federation's direction at the time.

It was time for a change.

Managing Director, ScoringZone Portugal | 2002 to 2007

ScoringZone had existed throughout much of my career as a consultancy business, but in Portugal we developed it further.

Over these five years, we consulted on, built or managed multi-site golf academy operations across six venues. We leased a nine-hole course, turned a loss-making business into a profitable operation and increased membership to capacity with an innovative monthly contract model.

I advised the Confederation of Brazilian Golf on golf development programmes and sat on the Education Committee of the PGAs of Europe. I also increased my consultancy work with national federations and became active in The R&A's golf development programme.

I continued to coach. Some players came to supplement their national team coaching. Others were tour players looking for advice. One was Trish Johnson, who returned to the winners' circle on the Ladies European Tour after a fallow period and six months of work together.

Sue and I worked hard during those years. Long hours. Lots of travel. Projects that demanded time, effort and creativity. Several clients had big aspirations and very few resources.

That combination can be difficult.

It can also be useful.

We developed tools, used our network and learned that Aristotle may have been onto something when he suggested that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Which is just as well, because around that time I started studying for a Master of Philosophy.

Director of Education, Confederation Professional Golf | 2008 to 2018

Steve Jobs famously said that you cannot connect the dots looking forward, only looking backwards.

My work with PGA training, programme writing, coach education, national federations and different cultures eventually connected me to the Confederation of Professional Golf, formerly the PGAs of Europe.

For someone who did not much enjoy school, there was a certain irony in spending my days helping golf professionals develop their own skills and knowledge.

Life does enjoy a joke.

At the CPG, I was responsible for the review and design of professional education and the development of a golf development strategy. I wrote training standards across the membership, implemented an Initial Professional Education programme, led the technical elements of the European-funded GOLF STAND project and worked on both Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+ European projects.

Two important dots started to take shape.

The first came through the CPG's involvement with The R&A Working for Golf programme. I was responsible for delivering more than 70 missions using a team of 28 golf development professionals.

You learn a lot about national federations, people, politics and culture when doing that kind of work.

The second came through the Ryder Cup European Development Trust, where I advised applicants on funding submissions ranging from one-off projects to multi-year projects. The focus was always on legacy and sustainability.

The learning I gained from report writing, funding applications, project design and the workings of a Trust became far more useful than I could have known at the time.

One of those applications came from a Dutch organisation called EDGA.

At the same time, I became increasingly interested in research. I earned my MPhil at the University of Birmingham with a thesis on the career development of successful golf professionals. I also completed several courses and diplomas, including becoming an ASOIF Coach Educator and studying sports psychology at Newcastle University.

The boy who did not like school had, somehow, become rather good at finding classrooms of his own choosing.

President, European Disabled Golf Association | 2014 to present

Some of the most meaningful work of my career has been with EDGA, a not-for-profit organisation formed in The Netherlands 25 years ago to support golf for the disabled, which I came to call G4D.

When I first became involved, the challenge was to keep the lights on in an organisation that was struggling for credibility and influence. It is hard to believe now, but we had to persuade the golf industry that golfers with a disability belonged in the game. Some people already believed that, but far too many did not.

The heavy lifting was to create awareness, a common language, trust, practical tools and structures that would allow that belief to flourish.

That sounds tidy when written down.

It was far more messy in real life.

Over the last decade or so, EDGA has grown into a global organisation working with national golf federations across five continents. Our work now spans advocacy, education, player opportunity, eligibility, world rankings and capacity building for the wider golf industry.

Put more simply, EDGA tries to support and encourage national federations and non-governing organisations to help more people with disabilities find golf, stay in golf, and be taken seriously within the game.

I have been lucky to develop a team that demonstrates purpose and passion every day. My role has been to help move good intentions towards workable solutions and practical systems, while making sure that good ideas do not disappear into well-meaning conversation.

Other than the current work to transition EDGA from a not-for-profit association based in The Netherlands to a registered UK charity, much of my work has focused on creation and advocacy.

Governance, of course, is where dreams go to be tested by paperwork.

Twelve years ago, when I first presented my vision of EDGA becoming a knowledge and research hub, with good practice, tools and programmes backed by solid evidence, it gave us direction. Today, I think we have built something closer to a lighthouse: a place that illuminates G4D and helps guide the golf industry through the somewhat choppy waters of a new sector.

EDGA already had a medical eligibility system. Building on that solid start, I helped guide the team in developing an international eligibility system for golfers with a disability, designed to support fair and consistent access to competition.

Coach education followed a similar pattern. Golfers with disabilities often have functional constraints that challenge coaches, and those challenges expose useful gaps in how the game is taught. I have enjoyed working with the team in developing *Learning from the Edges*, a coach education programme now used by more than a dozen education providers.

What we already know is useful.

What we are learning is exciting.

One of the things I am happiest to have originated was the Official World Ranking for Golfers with Disabilities. It now supports a global competition pathway and has helped give players, federations and events a clearer place within the wider game.

Rankings are never just numbers.

They tell people that something counts.

The player stories were another idea I pushed from the beginning. I believed that, if I interviewed and wrote the stories of 100 golfers with disabilities, we would have a resource that could help change the narrative.

Visibility matters. Three films aired on Sky Sports, the Golf Channel and other international broadcasters helped put G4D onto screens around the world.

These stories were not created to make people feel sorry for anyone.

They were created to help people see golfers first.

Much of my work has also been helping national federations embed G4D into their own structures, rather than treating it as a side project. This has meant

working with governing bodies, delivery partners, disability organisations and others active in golf for the disabled.

The lesson here has been simple, although not always easy: progress is faster when people understand their role, trust the process, and feel that they are building something together rather than protecting separate territory.

If there is one lesson I take from this period of my work, it is that inclusion is not achieved by a slogan. It is achieved through patient, practical work. Eligibility systems. Education. Governance. Communications. Rankings. Relationships. Trust.

In other words, all the things rarely printed on the front of a T-shirt.

Not especially romantic, perhaps.

But useful.

And useful tends to last.

Head of Disability and Inclusion, International Golf Federation | 2019 to April 2025

The International Golf Federation wanted to improve access and provide clearer recreational and competitive pathways for golf for the disabled, aligned with its strategic priorities.

By then, the G4D movement was gaining momentum. The IGF had previously made unsuccessful bids to the International Paralympic Committee and wanted to move the inclusion agenda forward.

My role was to advise senior stakeholders in golf on disability-specific considerations across governance, development and competition. I also provided feedback on classification-related work being undertaken by EDGA and supported the development of practical implementation guidance.

My time with the IGF taught me a great deal about politics and how it affects sport.

Keeping everyone happy is not easy.

Nor, I have learned, is it always the right ambition.

In 2023, the IGF made entry into the Paralympic Games a priority. Engagement with the IPC became more focused, and meeting the IPC's requirements became fundamental.

This brought with it a tension between values and rules.

I firmly believe that G4D is for everyone with a functional impairment that leads to a disability. I will not compromise on that belief.

I also respect the IPC's right to limit access to the Paralympic Games to those who meet its rules. If golf is to enter the Paralympic Games, the IGF must meet those requirements. It should do so properly, and when it does, golf should be admitted as soon as possible.

After all, golf is a huge sport.

And a truly global one.

And now

If you have read this far, thank you. Stamina is an underrated quality.

I continue to contribute to EDGA as President of the Dutch entity and will become chair of the newly registered UK charity once that transition is complete. I also consult on selected business and golf development projects and mentor people who are working through their own career journeys.

I am a Professor in Practice in the Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Durham University and I speak at conferences when I feel I have something useful to contribute.

I do not really do social media. I prefer to go about my business quietly. From time to time, I add thoughts, papers, articles or photographs to this website. Some of the photographs are mine. Some are Sue's. The better ones are probably hers.

And finally, I am back playing some golf.

It was this infuriating game that caught my attention when I was just a kid. It remains endlessly fascinating and may be the most difficult of all ball games to master.

Oh well.

I suppose I just have to keep learning.