

GETTING STARTED WITH US KIDS GOLF

# DEVELOP THE PERSON, THEN THE ATHLETE

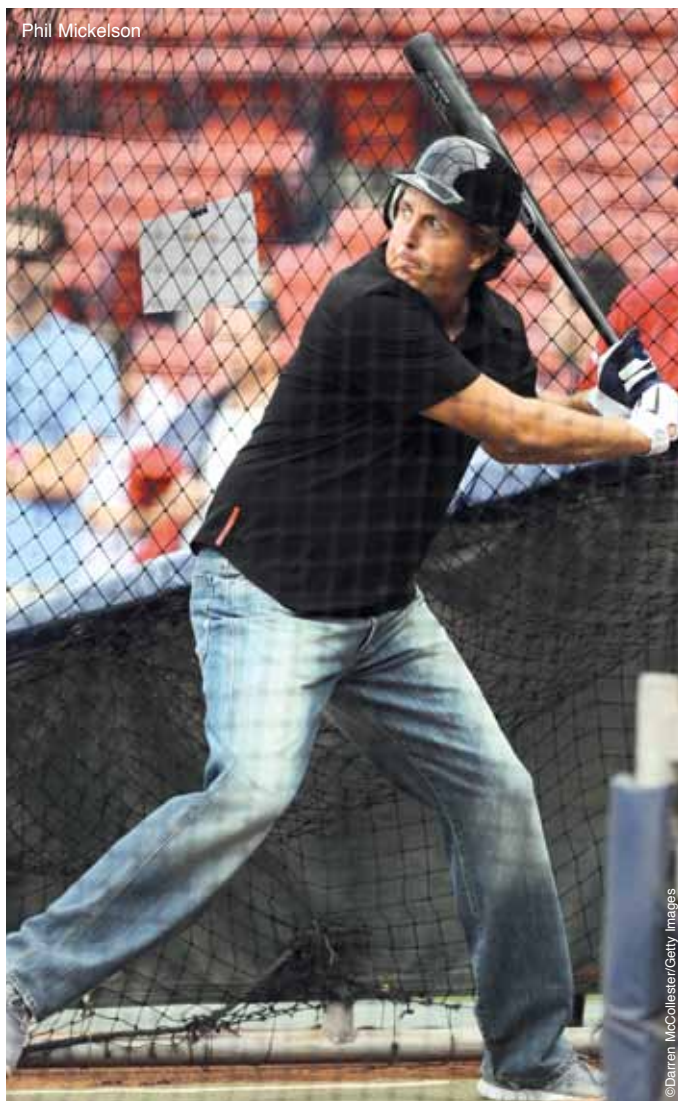
Getting a child involved in multiple sports will increase their development and help them appreciate its long-term effect

BY EDMUND TAN





Sergio Garcia



Phil Mickelson

If you are a parent and your kids have a passion for golf, you will do whatever it takes to help them fulfil their passion. I won't deny that as a coach, I myself would like to see all my juniors winning championships at an early age – this, however, could lead to a much bigger problem.

Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia, Rickie Fowler and Phil Mickelson, some of the greatest athletes in the game of golf, all have something in common. They are multiple sport athletes. Dustin can dunk a basketball in bare feet, Sergio played competitive football when he was younger, Rickie has his motocross hobby, and Phil in his younger days had a knack for baseball. He even tried out for a minor league baseball team back in 2003 with already multiple PGA Tour titles under his belt. These great golfers did not specialise in golf at an early age – they were developed as an athlete first.

Learning to play golf is different from learning to play other sports. Unlike badminton, basketball, etc, playing the game that involves a lot of running, jumping,

throwing and footwork will indirectly train a child's Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS). Golf is not able to facilitate the growth of those necessary skills as the child only stands still swinging the arms around the body. In fact, he or she probably wouldn't even know how to use the legs and wrist to generate power because they've not developed the FMS gained from other sports.

Apart from lacking FMS, specialising in one sport can also lead to under development in other areas. Early specialisation can also make a child identify himself or herself solely as an athlete instead of having sports being just a part of their personality. The role of specialising in golf can become so intense, so much so it could leave an adverse impact on the kid's otherwise regular childhood.

Participating in various sports – especially team sports – also helps to develop the skills and values unique to each sport. In addition to being exposed to different coaches, learning different philosophies, strategies of competing and

dealing with different personalities, multi-sport play can provide added benefits to an all-around athlete. Individual sports such as golf can deprive a young athlete from meeting kids who play other sports, and enjoy the competition that comes with it. Individual sport athlete will never experience the importance of team building that will be needed later in life.

Develop the person and then the athlete. Getting the child involved in multiple sports will increase their development and help them appreciate its long-term effect. Experts recommend that specialisation should not take place until the athlete has at least reached the age of 12. Golf is a sport and athletes must be able to run, jump and throw. **PG**



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