

One of golf's most innovative and creative teachers, Nick Bradley has forged a career that is not only geared towards helping golfers improve their technique but understand and explore the keys to enhanced focus, visualisation, goal setting and performance. Such is the regard in which he is held in the higher echelons of the game, Europe's Ryder Cup captain Paul McGinley included Bradley as part of his back-room team at Gleneagles, with a brief to create a powerful visuals that would inspire a motivated team – a role he will reprise alongside Darren Clarke at Hazeltine in 2016. Editor **Richard Simmons** talked to him

Gi: How did your relationship with Paul McGinley come about?

Paul and I have known each other for a while. When I directed the David Leadbetter Golf Academy at Mount Juliet, Paul used to come down and practice and I used to study him, notebook in hand. That was back in 1994. The relationship grew from there. We'd keep in touch at European events when I was out there full time. Paul had a fantastic relationship with long-time coach Bob Torrance, who had been very kind to me when I first went on the road, and I learned a tremendous amount watching them work together. Paul was made captain in January 2013 and shortly after that he asked if I would like to be a part of his team, and that's when I started dreaming up motivational themes that could be used in the team-room at. It was an honour to be asked. It would have been easy to create just pretty pictures that created a 'Wow!' factor, but that wasn't the captain's brief. In essence, the artworks we created were messages that would have different meanings during the event. They were not only cues for Paul to say, 'Listen lad's, we have to be THE ROCK this morning, they're coming at us...' but also historical footnotes that informed the team that work had to be done. Paul was a joy to work with; on one hand he gave me artistic licence and on the other we had some pretty in-depth discussions. An extremely capable guy.

MISTER

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Gi: Much has been made of McGinley's preparation as captain – what elements of his approach particularly impressed you?

I think Paul represents a genre of player age-wise and ability-wise that is strategic anyway. Let me give you an example. Much was said about the comparison about his record as a player against Tom Watson's as a player; in other words, a guy without a major title against a legend with five Open championships and eight major titles in all. This was a totally irrelevant point of view. Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino and Watson all lost Ryder Cups – and so did Nick Faldo. So the correlation between a stellar playing record and Ryder Cup success is a junk science. But let's get back to Paul's genre of playing; a player like Paul – who like Miguel Angel Jimenez will never be the longest guy out there – always has to find an edge from somewhere else, and that edge is usually found in preparation, training, sheer professionalism. So it was no surprise to me that whilst he realised he was going to have twelve great players on the squad the 'edge' was going to be found in aspects such as course set up, delving into the history and psychology of playing partnerships and the investment into the team. And there's the key. When the players see the investment into the team from the captain, like a bank deposit, the players respond by paying back with interest. The trouble with big-name captains is that their playing careers have often bred a somewhat self-serving attitude which doesn't always fly in the team room.

Gi: How do you describe that 2014 team – and what was your brief in terms of helping to create the optimal team mind-set?

The brief was to create a balance between avoiding complacency and creating a focus to the process. Paul wanted to keep the players on their toes and so I wanted to create an image that demonstrated that. Whilst we were trying to win three in a row, the Americans had previously won seven in a row twice! The image I created that sat behind Paul in the team room showed a ticker-tape of the Ryder Cup victories and from this you could easily see the dominance of the US over the years – there was a sea of red, white and blue. I also wanted to use Seve. I don't need to go into what he created for our tour but if you look back at the history of the Ryder Cup, in the early 1980s he reignited a belief that had been knocked out of us. I surfed Getty Images for days trying to find the expression from Seve that I had seen and wanted, and I eventually arrived at one taken at the 1976 Open in which he finished second to Johnny Miller. It was the picture I had to do the least with from an artistic point of view – his eyes say it all. It was funny because the quote I wanted to use for the image was the one where Seve, referencing the Ryder Cup said, 'I look into their

This ticker-tape artwork was created to remind the European team that America has been the more dominant of the two sides in the history of the Ryder Cup – a message captain McGinley used to good effect in motivating his troops



eyes, I shake their hand, I pat them on the back but in my mind I'm thinking I'm going to bury you!' This one didn't make the final cut! It was thought to be too aggressive in its tone by the European Tour – fair enough, but I can assure you every player knew the quote and lived by it during that week.

Gi: What, for you, were the highlights of Gleneagles week?

I think the greatest aspect of it all was just being around that level of competition – it just doesn't get any better. Anyone who knows me will testify that I'm pretty easy going until a challenge is presented and then I'm all about the process of winning. For personal reasons I had been away from the tour for a couple of years which is why I was so grateful to Paul for inviting me back in. Micky Doran, who was caddying for Thomas Bjorn that week, told me: 'Nick, the images you have done are great, but out here is where you belong.' That meant a lot to me. But to hear Rory talk about the imagery, Justin and Paul reference them in the post-match interviews really brought home the fact that whilst I was just a toe-nail in the body part it was an aspect that seemed to be appreciated. I don't believe anyone works for work's sake, the biggest satisfaction comes from knowing you have contributed in some way.

Gi: Talk to me about the artworks and your collaboration with the artist Lee Rouse. He was involved with your first book, *The 7 Laws of the Golf Swing*

Let me put it this way: I have never heard a top golfer say they played better after hearing a great sentence – it's invariably a feeling or an image they will be working to. I remember when I was eighteen years old I had to make a choice between turning pro or starting stuntman training at Pinewood studios – seriously, I'm a huge James Bond fan, unabashedly fanatical, actually. As a kid I used to lie in bed and draw until the early hours of



You can feel the passion: Bradley's artistic interpretation led to the creation of a number of inspirational artworks, such as this study of Justin Rose in action at Medinah in 2012. (Below): Seve's spirit is never too far from a Ryder Cup, and this portrait encapsulates the great Spaniard's desire for victory



the morning, all the movie posters from the Bond films, and out of that two things happened. First, my imagination developed the ability to flip ordinary scenarios into dramatic Hollywood movie scenes; second, I became pretty decent at drawing. It's how I learned the nuances of the golf swing. I hear instructors talking nowadays about the need to see the swing in a 3D mode – I was drawing the golf swing in 3D at 16. You only have to look at my copy of Nick Faldo's book *The Winning Formula* to see what I did to it. So when I came to write my first instruction book I was determined to create imagery that spiked the imagination, like Ben Hogan's pane of glass did for generations. Lee is one of the top digital artists in the world and he was the natural choice for me to do both books – talking about it now I can't believe it's been thirteen years since we worked on *The 7 Laws*. We have just started collaborating on a new project in regard to the English philosopher Alan Watts.

Gi: Your most recent book, *Kinetic Golf*, contains explosive art. Explain the concept behind its creation.

If *The 7 Laws of the Golf Swing* taught you how to build the car, *Kinetic Golf* teaches you how to drive it. It's an encyclopaedia of imagery that can be used to create visuals whilst out playing. It's broken down into three chapters, Images of Swing, Images of Shots and Images of Motivations, Attitudes and Affirmations; I think, in essence, those chapter headings pretty much sum up

the content of playing great golf.

Let me give you two examples of the power of visualisation. When I first started working with Justin [Rose] in 2006 I needed to make up ground fast with him mentally; yes, there were technical issues – particularly in his short game – I didn't like, but mentally he had been conditioned into thinking that unless the swing hit points A, B and C then he wasn't going to play well. So during our first week of working together I introduced what I then called our 'meditation pieces' which were essentially one-page documents that I'd read whilst Justin was in a somewhat meditative state. I could talk about his attitude, the manner in which to play that particular venue and, in particular, the certain shots he'd be hitting on certain holes – it worked very well.

The second example is actually documented in *Kinetic Golf*. I wanted to find a way in which I could marry the visual ability of the mind to picture something before it happened with a physical preparation to make it happen. With many of my players – including Justin, who used this in the 2007 Masters when he finished 3rd – I ask them to stand behind the ball, inhale deeply, which initiates an alpha cycle in the brain, which is the best bandwidth to mesh the physical and mental (you often get this when you dream and start twitching as you 'live' the dream), and then exhale blowing the ball into flight. It's a pretty cool pre-shot routine because you can blow a high soft fade in which case you'd exhale slower or you could exhale sharply in the manner of hitting a stinger or punch shot into the wind. So that's what I try to bring out in *Kinetic Golf* – the food or music that the body wants to play golf to.

Gi: You spent several years coaching Justin Rose and took him to world number five and European No.1 – why did that relationship break down?

This is something I take responsibility for. My personality type is high turnover, by which I mean that once I have set my mind on something, a target or a goal, generally I will figure out the solution, apply it and make it work. I think I had my first chat with Justin down in South Africa in 2004, he asked me to take a look at his set up, and we sort of hit it off. But one of the reasons the relationship broke down was that I had achieved my goals with Justin, he was comfortably in the world's top 10 and I guess I switched off to an extent. Bored isn't the right word but certainly when I had ticked my boxes my mind certainly started saying 'what's next?', or 'who's next?'

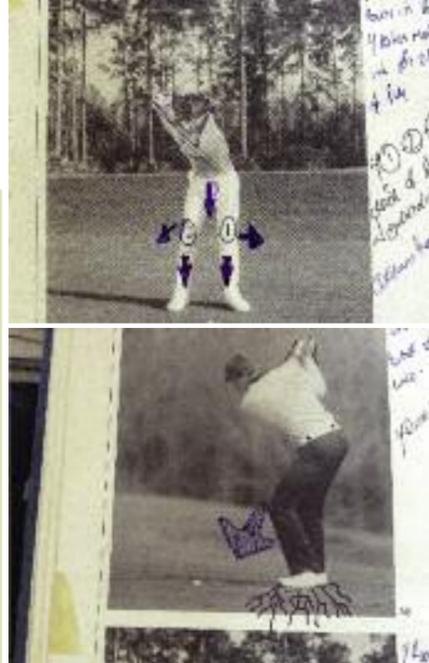
Of course it would have been great to have won a major with Justin, but more important for me was doing a good job. I had taken over from my old boss, David [Leadbetter] so if I ruined him my career was essentially done. The challenge is always to see a player go forward, and I achieved that – once I see a player is on his way I don't see much point in hanging around. I started working with Kevin Chappell, a hugely talented player on the Web.com tour at the time, 2009, and managed to take him from zero status anywhere to winning, breaking three tour records and finishing 3rd at the US Open – a fresh challenge that caught my imagination and interest.

Gi: Was there a hint of resentment when Justin eventually did break through at the 2013 US Open?

Zero resentment. You would hope that aside from a working relationship there is a personal relationship there too. When Justin won at Merion I sat at home and cried for joy. I know from a personal level how important it is to recognise the influence a great father was in your career and when Rosie looked up to the sky and gave a wink I was in tears. Totally chuffed. But anyone who knows Justin would know the US Open was always likely to be his breakthrough major. He's so gritty, a never-say-die attitude, it's totally in his wheelhouse.

But all that aside, when I reflect on the last few years the

Bradley's fascination with the golf swing – and indeed his love of art – is reflected in the well-thumbed pages of Nick Faldo's 1989 instruction book *The Winning Formula*; (Right): Topping the European Order of Merit in 2007 was a significant breakthrough for both player and coach



biggest reason I started to detach from the tour scene was the passing of my father in 2009. He died suddenly in 'unnatural' circumstances. On the day it happened I was flying back from Lake Nona where I'd been working with Justin. What I've figured out lately was that many of my career goals and ambitions were fuelled by a desire to make dad proud of me, as is so often the case. So if a player won an event, or there was a mention in the papers, I'd pick up the phone and call him: 'Hey, Dad did you see this?'. As soon as that entity was gone my desire went with it. It was only through talking with some of my closest friends like Morgan Mason, Jonathan Yarwood and Colin Turner did I get my mojo back in late 2013. In fact it's an important lesson for anyone who, whether they know it or not, live in the shadow or certainly do things 'for' their parents and the lesson is this: you are not your father or your mother – when I heard this from Colin it freed me up from the atrocity that had happened to my dad. You are not your parents...end of story.

Gi: The corporate world has become your oyster – more as a motivational coach than a golf coach. By accident or design?
Oh, totally by design. One of the things I learned about golf is that, above all else, human functionality is the critical mass. I've seen golfers with perfect putting strokes, players that I've taught, but because another aspect of life is gnawing away at them they will have to find a scapegoat and this is often finding fault with their technique – or what they are being taught – even when no fault is present. When I keynote or train company executives the work we do will be based around their functionality and ability to perform, not necessarily their skill level. Having employees engaged and happy in the work place will distinguish your company between a mediocre one and an exceptional one.

It's the same in golf – David Duval, Tiger Woods and Aaron Baddeley don't fall off planet golf because the clubface has moved a degree or two during the swing – it ultimately comes down to the quality of their thought process and the concepts of how you think things should be rather than the reality. Most humans medicate themselves out of reality, either through drugs, alcohol or strong alter-egos. So yes, I do still work with players but they have to show a strong, *really* strong desire to move forward in a aggressive way which in turn would match my vision and work ethic.

Gi: On the Wednesday of Open week you made some interesting comments on US radio about Jordan Spieth having 'the total business plan'. Fair to say that Zach Johnson displays almost identical characteristics?

No question. Golfers aren't golfers, nothing or the kind, especially at the highest level – to me they are organic business plans. How is it that Jack Nicklaus had a career in which he beat every great

player in majors won, from Ben Hogan to Tiger Woods? That's not by fluke, that's by design. Same with Woods. Other players like Ernie Els and Padraig Harrington, Phil Mickleson and, to a degree, our great Seve may blunder upon their own playing business plans from time to time but that doesn't necessarily mean they know how it works.

Let's be frank for a minute. There are three types of sportsman: high intellect, mid intellect and low intellect. Which one do you think suffers the most with up and down careers? It's the mid-intellect player every time. Why? Because they are always trying to work out whether they need to forget their technique and just play, or they are always trying to redesign things for a better tomorrow – i.e. they jump between the artist and the mechanic. They are either off or they are on. This is why Bob Rotella does well with players who are 'busy' in their thinking. His 'one look and go' is the perfect placebo for an active mind (I say placebo because more often than not there is something bigger going on behind the scenes than just the flow of a routine).

And the other two? The high-intellect golfer will design a plan based on his playing history, proven fundamentals and a smart work ethic; once this is done he will *leave it alone!* Paul McGinley is a classic case of this. I've never coached Paul and him never pull out his little black book to reference his past lessons or feelings. It's the same when he ends the session – out comes the book and he documents his feelings whilst they are fresh in his mind. Documentation and debriefing are the lifeblood of the golfing business plan. Far too many golfers rely on their memory after a body of work has been done – but you cannot rely on your memory, it's a fickle machine at best.

The low intellect golfer has talent in abundance – a high golfing IQ if you like – and he will never tamper with it. If the low intellect golfer opens up his Pandora's box, though, there's no way of getting back. That's why it's so important to *read* the player. So the high IQ designs and maintains his design, the low IQ golfer has no clue how they swing or perform they merely See, Feel, Do. Most tour players – the ones that re-visit tour school – are in the middle bracket but there *is* a way that they can change their default thinking 100%. Jordan Spieth is by design – he won't be going away anytime soon.

Gi: How would you describe Rory McIlroy's business plan?
Superb. The thing that stands out, for me, is his sense of 'team'. The other thing that is abundantly clear, and I hope remains so, is that team and its philosophy won't be interfered with unless there is agreement. Let me tell you something about most 'teams' surrounding tour players, everyone is guarding their cheque – the shrink will smash the coach...the coach will dismiss the shrink's work as a black art...the trainer won't like the

swing... It's very unusual to have a team like Rory's where everyone is united with a shared vision. In fact, all the off-course distraction Rory has had to deal with sort of highlights the strength of his golf team. Rory should be all about the golf and he's doing a great job of that. Spieth has this too, by the way. The key is not to go into a tournament at 100%, the secret is to go into a tournament at 80%. At 100% you can't climb; at 80% you can go forward.

Gi: In your view, is development as a golfer only possible when you recognise that technique is only one aspect of the package?
Yes, that's like the Formula One driver who thinks that if you give him the best car the thing will win the race on its own. Look at the World Golf Hall of Fame if you want to see quirky techniques that served their masters well. I would say the number one skill or realisation the top player needs is energy management. If you are wise with the information you receive you can then assign your energy in the right places and not be running around putting out fires in your career and life all the time.

Gi: Much was anticipated of Tiger Woods at St Andrews, and yet on the first fairway of the first round he was holding his head as his ball sat in the Swilcan Burn. What is your take on Tiger?
When you look at Tiger Woods, there was a guy who had the best business plan in sport. Period. Now if he does not alter that business plan, he's going to get the same old, same old results. I'm sick to death of hearing him say, 'I'm 9 months in, I'm getting close...' No, you're not Tiger. Not even remotely close. He finishes under

Up for the fight: the 2016 Ryder Cup at Hazeltine promises to be a bruising encounter for the visiting side – a prospect captain Clarke will relish

par at The Greenbrier and suddenly he's back on track? The Greenbrier is a resort course, not a championship course. He cannot survive the halfway cut at St Andrews where amateurs are tearing the course apart – and this at a venue where he set the all-time record Open scoring total.

What Tiger needs to do is detach himself from his current situation, take a long hard look and clear the decks. He needs to get his energy back. I feel for [coach] Chris Como because I don't think he was ready in his career trajectory to be working with someone like Tiger Woods. There is just not enough

evidence out there to suggest that he has the experience to deal with a player of Tiger's talent and strength of character.

A recent article in *Golf Digest* stated Tiger Woods is done. How quick everyone is to write him off – one of the greatest talents the game has ever seen. I do not believe Tiger Woods is done. All he needs is a better plan. Tiger's a brave competitor, gutsy but he's not only taken the best playing business plan in golf and ripped it up but



he's done what Seve and Sandy Lyle did, opening up Pandora's box and seeing how it all works. Like Seve before him, he's found out more about his weaknesses than his strengths and that's a reflection of his temptation to get 1% better – which sometimes you can't – and poor instruction. But I totally believe he can play great golf again – so long as he wants to.

Gi: Given the opportunity, how would you set about helping Tiger get his mojo back?

That sort of opportunity reminds me (self-confessed Bond geek remember) of when Daniel Craig was offered the role of James Bond – you'd only kick yourself if you didn't accept it. Yes, like many coaches out there I would relish that opportunity – and I feel that as long as he was compliant then he'd turn the corner. But let me repeat that: *as long as he was compliant*. The how? I have no idea until I get close and observe – and I'm not prepared to guess my way through a project. That's why tour coaching – i.e. coaching that goes on on tour – is largely irrelevant. The role of a coach at a tour event is to observe and oversee the grunt work that's already been done, not to find a new player and say, 'Hey, try my method.' Tiger was sold the utopian dream of a geometrically perfect golf swing and it turned into a nightmare. Pandora's box was truly opened and the contents tipped out. At the time he left Hank Haney *The Golf Machine* was making an ugly reappearance, followed by the cult 'Stack-and-Tilt' phenomenon, blah blah, blah... Essentially, I believe he was drawn into a world that took away his pictures and feelings, drained his artistic creativity and left him with the soulless quest for perfection. Yes, you need technique but not the mind-numbing crap of those two theories.

Gi: Looking ahead to Hazeltine next September, and your involvement as part of Darren Clarke's Ryder Cup support team, what are you working on?

I have just presented Darren with a bunch of options where I feel I can contribute and optimise my effectiveness. Next year's Ryder Cup is going to be possibly the toughest in the history of the biennial matches. It's quite obvious that Davis Love III has been given a redemption ticket for his Medinah nightmare. I feel the players, who ultimately have to want to play for the captain, will really have Davis's back going into the matches. Again, I sit and watch for a while...look at press statements, look at the venue, draw on a little history and see where my mind goes. Yes, there is design but it's intuitive design.

Gi: Images of Tony Jacklin winning the 1970 US Open, standing eyeball-to-eyeball with the outspoken Dave Hill?

Good point. Great year, 1970, apart from The Beatles breaking up!

Gi: How do Clarke's personal qualities stack up against McGinley's?

I don't really know Darren as well as I know Paul but if I was to put my finger on it at this stage I'd describe Paul's captaincy as someone who designed the machine, set the stage and pushed the boat out into the ocean knowing that the preparation was all he could control. It obviously worked! I believe Darren will have the same approach – I mean, why would he change the template all that much? But I think with Darren we'll see more of a Seve-esque fist-pumping approach which could be what we need in the away game. You can't be meek and mild during an away Ryder Cup – you have to let them know you are there and I sense already that will be part of his brief to me. As Seve would put it, we're going to bury you...

Gi: Could be some very dodgy suits?

Almost certainly. What is the colour of winning? 