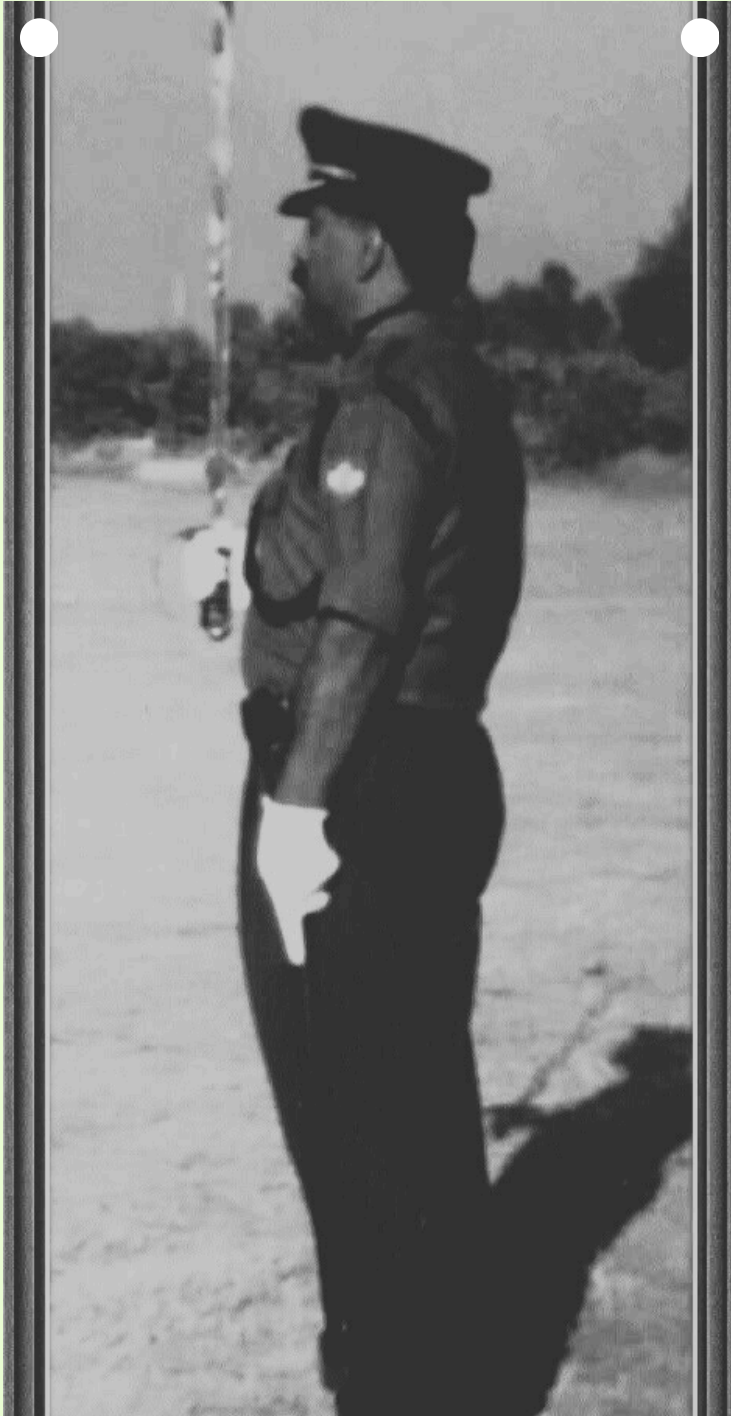


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**COL. AJAY SINGH (RETD)
INDIAN ARMY**

From Battlefield to Fairway:

A Veteran's 35 Year Journey

- **The Making of a Champion**
- **Golf, A Way of Life**
- **Sports in Curriculum**
- **Start of Golfing Journey**
- **Importance of a Good Guru/Coach**
- **Coaching Virtually**
- **Charity Begins at Home**



PREFACE

This interview features a former Military Colonel of the India Army with over thirty five years of service experience at the front line of borders of India. Through our conversation, we explored valuable insights into his sporting background, mental strength, field operations, and the transition from military to retired life. The interview has not been edited, and it preserves the authenticity of the personal experiences. The views expressed reflect their individual observations and experiences from their years of service.

During his illustrious military career of 35+ years, Col. Ajay Singh served all over India. He led extensive operations in Jammu & Kashmir and the North-Eastern regions, commanding the unit and sub-unit along the Line of Control (LOC). He was involved in the Indian Army's high-altitude warfare at Siachen - the World's highest known battlefield.

Col. Singh is a graduate from Indian Military Academy (IMA) in Dehradun, India. He holds a Master's degree in Human Resources and Personnel Management from Pune University.

COL. AJAY SINGH WITH HIS WIFE SWETA SINGH IN CANADA - 2022





THE MAKING OF A CHAMPION



Let's start with your background

Sports as a Youngster

Right from childhood, I have considered myself a sports person, having played all sorts of games. I led my school's cricket and football teams at various competitive levels, representing both state and country. Additionally, I've participated in high-impact sports like football and handball.

Transition to Military Training

I subsequently joined the Indian military, which involved an intense training program. As my career demanded significant physical and mental fortitude, I managed to balance a mix of both sports and my military commitments. Later, due to movement-limiting injuries that prevented me from participating in high-impact sports, I transitioned to golf. This naturally evolved to become my primary sporting pursuit.

“When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.”

Mental Strength Resilience

Serving in the armed forces for nearly 35 years instills exceptional physical and mental resilience, preparing one to face any challenge. The a saying **"When the going gets tough, the tough get going"**. Having served in diverse locations and situations, these experiences forge a stronger character, ultimately developing a person who is ready to tackle any obstacle with confidence.

Any specific anecdotes comfortable to share?

There have been numerous occasions, not just one or two, as I have served as an infantry officer on the front lines. Every day in the operational area posed a new challenge. Specifically, one of the most memorable instances occurred while operating on a glacier at an altitude of over 18,000 feet, where the air is thin and oxygen levels are significantly reduced. Even walking just a few hundred yards took a considerable physical and mental toll on individuals, making both aspects of the experience particularly challenging.



Golf, A Way of Life



COL. AJAY SINGH AT A PRO-AM TOURNAMENT IN INDIA

Sports in Character Building

Sports is an excellent medium for building character. It instills team spirit, emphasizing that you're never alone in the game—success relies on the entire team. This sense of collaboration is one of the most important aspects that comes to mind. Additionally, sports help cultivate leadership qualities, teaching individuals how to guide and motivate others toward a common goal.

Draw a parallel?

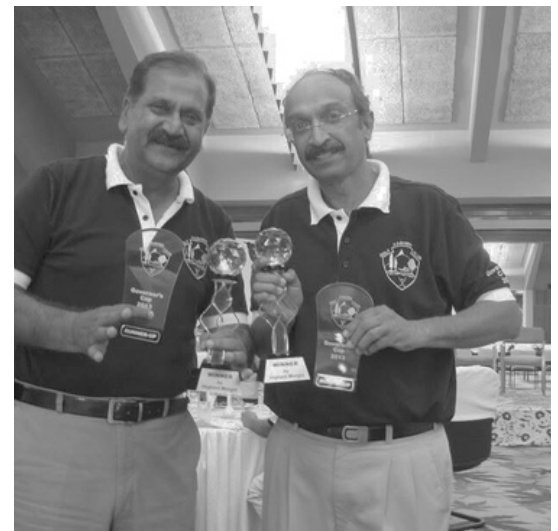
At times, there are numerous unknown challenges. For example, as the captain of a football team, you must make crucial decisions, such as determining which players to field and who will be part of the starting eleven. This applies to any other sport as well. Leadership qualities are essential in such situations, as you must figure out how to move the team forward. This experience teaches important characteristics that stick with you for a long time, becoming inherent traits that shape your approach to challenges in the future.



COL. AJAY SINGH PLAYING A ROUND OF GOLF WITH FRIENDS IN INDIA

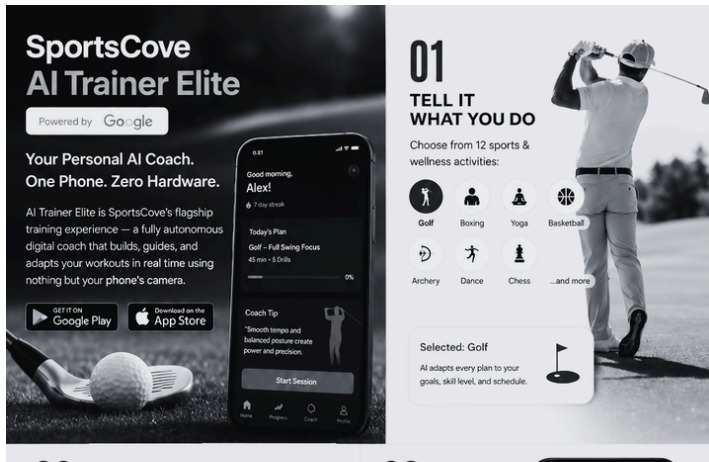
Choosing a Profession

In any profession, whether it's sailing at sea or pursuing any other path, teamwork is crucial. When I transitioned to playing golf, I found parallels between the game and life itself. There have been moments when I made a great shot, and the feeling of joy and elation was similar to experiencing something positive in life. However, the very next shot could be a mistake, or the ball might land in the water, leaving you feeling down. This fluctuation mirrors the ups and downs of life. Despite this, the key is to maintain focus and concentration, which should always remain steady.





GOLF ON SPORTCOVE



“Somebody can teach you, but then cannot train you, unless you have the intent of getting trained.”

Experience with Golf Training difference

The coaching I received was not very personalized. While there were some instances of individual coaching, it was not the norm. Today, however, coaching has evolved to a completely different level. I recently visited the USA and had the opportunity to experience a golf simulator for the first time. The simulator operator had me strike hundreds of balls, and then he pointed out the errors and faults in my technique. It was a much more detailed and personalized approach to improving my game.

Coaching Virtually

Online coaching wasn't available during our time; physical presence was essential. Coaching had to take place either on the golf course, where the facilities were available, or in a space equipped with training aids necessary for instructional drills. Back then, simulators didn't exist. Today, however, virtual simulators allow you to practice indoors, and you can even receive coaching indoors, if that's your preference. This advancement has made coaching and practice more accessible than ever before.

Basic difference in coaching now

Modern indoor facilities were not available back then, so a person had to travel to practice. Golf was also considered an expensive sport, with various associated costs. This is no longer the case. Today, it's not necessary to find time, go to the golf course, and schedule an appointment with a coach, hoping they are physically available. In the past, there would often be eight to ten people practicing at the same time, so the coach's attention and observations had to be divided among them, which limited the quality of individual guidance.

Where There is A Will, There is A Way

Today, it's a completely different ball game. I can connect with someone sitting in the US and share what I'm doing with them. A significant part of coaching is similar to how a tutor teaches—you are given the tools, but it's up to you to put in the work. A coach can guide you, but they can't train you unless you're dedicated to practicing the drills on your own time. The intent to train and improve must come from within. This is the key to effective learning and progress.

Basic Equipment

Just like in a battlefield, you need to be adequately equipped, but that doesn't necessarily mean it has to be an expensive affair. What matters most is addressing the ball correctly. In the initial stages, swing drills are crucial. If you don't follow these drills and exercises early on, incorrect mechanics can become ingrained in your mind, making it difficult to unlearn them and adopt new ones later.

Important of a Good Guru/Coach

Limitations in coaching

I picked up golf at a time when technology and facilities were not as advanced. Do you see my point? Today, we can connect with anyone anywhere through technology. We now have the ability to communicate seamlessly, and if I have a question, I can ask an expert and get immediate clarification. That wasn't the case back then.



COL. AJAY SINGH AT THE SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN MONUMENT AND OPERA HOUSE

How to choose a Coach

A good coach may not necessarily be a great player, either now or in the past, and likewise, a good player doesn't always make a good coach. A smart learner will seek out coaches who are observant and have the ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of an individual. A great coach works by understanding these aspects and helping the learner correct their mistakes. For example, if I have a physical handicap in golf, my coach needs to understand that handicap in order to tailor the training and help me improve.

What is a Coach to you

A coach's primary goal is to assess and analyze an individual's capabilities, and then train them in a way that maximizes their performance. First, I must evaluate the person's strengths and weaknesses, and then tailor the training to address both, ensuring that the learner achieves their full potential.

Informal Coach's effective?

I have seen many coaches who, while not necessarily professional, have a deep understanding of the nuances of a sport. They take the time to understand an individual's strengths and weaknesses and guide them accordingly. I have coached many people informally myself, but because my profession was soldiering, my focus was naturally on that. Most of my training has been with individuals who served on the battleground.



Charity Begins at Home



COL. AJAY SINGH ENJOYING RETIREMENT AT GREAT BARRIER REEF, AUSTRALIA



COL. AJAY SINGH WITH HIS SON AND EARLY STUDENT FOR COACHING GOLF, ANGAD SINGH

How easy is golf? Story..

A few years ago, I went to the Delhi Golf Course for a session. A close family member who came along said, "I've been playing cricket for a long time. Let me take the next shot. There's no problem. Just put the ball there, and I'll hit it with the club you're holding." He insisted, "I've been hitting moving balls all my life, so this static ball will be easy." He took his stance, and then the swing followed. Three... two... one... and the ball stayed still while he spun 360°! "My God, I couldn't even touch the ball!" He tried again and again, but ultimately, he just pushed the ball with his club.

At that point, I had to explain, "This is the core issue. Unless you understand the mechanics of the game, you can't just pick up a club and take a proper shot." With the help of a coach, he learned the proper swing mechanics, and when corrected, the ball traveled about 15-20 yards. My point was clear: to master the basics, you need a coach to guide you.

First inspiration is family

When it comes to coaching, it always depends on the individual's goals. For example, if I want my twelve-year-old child to become a professional athlete, I would enroll them in a specific sport and ensure they receive the right coaching. I personally know several people who have placed their children under the guidance of skilled coaches, and they continue to benefit from that training.

Family Ties

I know of families where the father, being a skilled golfer, serves as the caddy for his child in a local golf tournament. Mentally, the child feels more comfortable with their father as the caddy because the father understands their mental state better than anyone else. There's a tremendous amount of pressure on a player when they are on the golf course. They need to make a shot that reaches the green or stays in the fairway, and this pressure intensifies even further during a tournament. The father, as the caddy, is in the best position to calm and reassure the player, whether it's his son or daughter. This relationship between a caddy and a player is often quite intimate, built on trust and understanding.

Sports in Curriculum



Youth Sports and Fitness

The unfortunate aspect of the system, at least in India, is the noticeable shift in the younger generation's focus on sports and fitness. In the 1970's, the mindset was quite different, with a stronger emphasis on physical activity and sports. However, this focus has gradually changed with the newer generations, who seem to have different priorities and perspectives.

Physical Conditioning of Youth Today

The only physical conditioning many students receive is the brief exertion of carrying a heavy bag from home to the bus stand, followed by sitting at their desk to study. There is virtually no dedicated time for physical activities or games. This issue isn't confined to just one school, but reflects a broader trend. On a larger scale, schools today give very little importance to physical activities for children.

Intangibles

It is the activities outside the classroom that truly matter when it comes to building character. While studies are undoubtedly important, character development takes place beyond the classroom. It requires a combination of both physical and mental aspects, and this is where sports play a crucial role.

Start of Golfing Journey

I began playing golf later in life, starting in 1985. At that time, I was coached by someone whose name I can't recall today, as my memory of it isn't very clear (haha). The coaching was not part of a professional setup; it was provided by an individual who was assigned as a coach in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir. This gentleman was not a certified pro coach by any means. Nevertheless, the little I learned about golf, I started with his guidance. I do wish there had been more professional coaching options available back in the 1980s.

Postings

Due to my postings and the lack of consistent facilities, I wasn't in a position to fully take advantage of golfing opportunities. The nature of my profession as a soldier meant that such facilities were not readily available to me.



Ajay Singh

15 yrs

1. Golf



GOLF COURSES YOU REMEMBER PLAYING IN INDIA

01 Royal Springs

Boulevard Rd, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir

02 Oxford Golf Club

Oxford Golf Resort, Mumbai, Pune Bangalore Highway

03 Poona Club Golf Course

Airport Rd, Shastrinagar, Yerawada, Pune

04 Patna Golf

Bailey Rd, Rajbansi Nagar, Patna

05 Beldih Golf Course

Beldih Triangle, Bistupur Jamshedpur

06 Delhi Golf & Country Club

905 James St, Delhi

07 Army Dhruva Golf Course

Dhruva Environmental Park & Training, Udhampur

08 Southern Star Golf Course

Cantt Township, Camp, Area, Pune

**Probably a few more, but these are all I can
remember :)**

