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Robert Laberge/Getty Images

Michelle Wie ended her season with a 76.7 scoring average.

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My Shot: Moving Forward

Spelling out the steps Michelle Wie must take to succeed

By [CAROLINE SILBY](#)

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The tide has finally turned for Michelle Wie. The girl with unlimited potential had a disappointing season, and she has suddenly been transformed from wunderkind to underachiever.

For me, this characterization couldn't be more off base. In truth, what has happened to Wie is not unique for an elite young athlete. As a sports psychologist who has advised thousands of young competitors, many of them women, I regard Wie's performance problems as a necessary struggle. Athletes of her caliber often become debilitated by doubt and can lose ownership of their own goals. But these are merely consequences of inflated expectations and overpraise — not lost skills or lack of will.

By no means is all hope lost, but a few things have to happen first. Wie's critics must back off, as she will likely struggle more. Her parents should wake up; their priority should be guiding their child — not raising a champion. Michelle herself has to play the next shot forward.

F Be factual: At the Ginn Tribute you were playing poorly, and your slumped body language and sighs indicated feelings of helplessness. Stick to the facts of the game (i.e., my timing is off) and follow with actions that move your energy outward (i.e., talk to your caddie) instead of withdrawing inward.

O Get organized: Set your agenda based on what is best for your long-term well-being. Your body and mind need time to recover from stress and injury. Be aware of the external events occurring in your life, such as the transition to college or parental conflicts, and their potential influence on performance.

R Respond: React to what you have been taught and your instincts for golf rather than the noise that surrounds your celebrity. At the Hawaii Pearl Open you ignored the commotion over your 378-yard drive and nailed a perfect nine-iron into the green. At age 18 your confidence will increase and decrease quickly, so there's no need to respond to every thought and feeling.

W Win: You've won before, although maybe not as often as you'd have liked. Put yourself in positions where victory is a real possibility — even if it means playing at a lower level of competition — and focus on re-creating the feelings you've had during past victories.

A Accept mistakes: As Michael Jordan said, "I've failed over and over, and that is why I succeed." Keep poor performance in perspective, broaden your goals by setting a range of performance levels from best to acceptable and take credit for forward movement.

R Reconnect: Get in touch with the parts of your game that make you feel in control. You've said, "The best part about golf is when you hit the ball long. It feels really good." You can have imperfect feelings (i.e., lack of confidence) but still be in control of your game.

D Define success for yourself: When you said, "I think I can beat Tiger when I'm 20," it reflected a clear vision to challenge yourself. You now know the feeling of missed expectations, but don't let that cause you to avoid future challenges. You've also said, "I don't mind when I hit a ball in the woods. I think of it as an adventure." This perspective frees you to shoot for your goals.

*Caroline Silby, Ph.D., M.Ed., is the co-author of *Games Girls Play: Understanding and Guiding Young Female Athletes* (St. Martin's Press).*

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