

Your Golf Fitness Forum II

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The Complete Golf, Health and Fitness Training Program

Always remember that your body is your most important piece of golf equipment.

Since starting our contributions to *Golf Chicago!* we have received scores of questions about this very physical sport. Today we will continue answering some of the questions that we frequently are asked about golf. Always remember that your body is your most important piece of golf equipment.

Q: *Is it more important to start a golf-specific fitness program prior to the season or during the season?*

A: We strongly recommend that you start any sport-specific exercise program well before its season. That way you will be ready to take on the physical challenges of the sport right away. This type of pre-season training will also decrease your risk of injury when you start swinging again. Unfortunately we frequently see golfers who get very excited as spring approaches, hitting lots of balls, and then getting injured. That can certainly shorten an already short golf season. You use almost every joint and muscle in the body with the golf swing and all of these body parts must be flexible, strong and stable in order to play your best and safest golf.

Q: *What is your "core" that I keep hearing about, and how do you strengthen it?*

A: Your core muscles primarily consist of your lower abdominals—the muscles from your belly button down to your pubic bone, and your lower shoulder blade, or scapular muscles. Your lower abdominals support your pelvis and lower back and give you a stable platform to generate power. Your lower shoulder blade muscles help to keep your shoulders positioned correctly throughout the swing. This allows them to be used in their strongest possible position. When we activate these core muscle groups they support us in a supported upright posture.

There are many different ways to strengthen these areas and there are advanced exercise progressions that can be learned. Many people think that if they do

crunches and bench presses they are strengthening their core. In reality, if proper form and technique are not used, you can actually weaken these areas. The best way to begin working and finding your core muscle groups is to try to be an inch taller all day, everyday. If you sit, stand, walk and address the ball with a spine as long as possible, you will be working these muscle groups. You will probably start to fatigue in these two areas fairly quickly causing you to slouch by rounding the low back and drooping the shoulders forward. We need to stay tall and fight gravity all day. The pull of gravity seems to get stronger as we get older!

Q: *I'm afraid that if I start lifting weights I will bulk up and restrict my rotation. Is this true?*

A: We've all seen those body builders who can hardly get their arms to their sides because of all the muscle bulk. We don't usually see these folks swinging too many golf clubs either. The general principle to tone and develop strength without bulking is: lower weight with higher repetitions. You want to lift a weight that you can lift 10 times without maximum effort and still maintain proper form. Doing 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions, 2-3 times a week, is usually sufficient to build strength. There are more wrong ways than right ways to lift weights, so we spend a lot of time maintaining perfect form with all of the exercises that our golfers use.

Q: *How can some very overweight and out-of-shape golfers still play at such a high level?*

A: The bottom line here is talent. There are several tour players who are not the epitome of health who are still making a good living with their careers. Some of these players may also be good gamblers because they are playing roulette with their bodies every time they tee up. Like many people, making a change in their fitness level isn't likely to happen until something breaks down, possibly their lower back, shoulder, elbow,

heart, etc. Just because someone can perfect his imperfections doesn't mean we should strive to do the same. The new generation of tour players that we are now seeing seem to understand and appreciate the performance and injury prevention aspects of being custom fit for golf.

Q: *As an active retired golfer I want to play well into my 70s and 80s. What should I be doing to help me reach my goal?*

A: You can literally turn back the aging clock with proper exercise and diet. If we keep in mind that after age 30, most studies show that if we do not change anything about our lifestyle, we can expect a 10 percent decrease in strength and flexibility with each decade. Staying active and regularly upgrading your exercise program can make a world of difference. Another physical element that decreases significantly

over time if it is not challenged and trained is our balance. With our older clients it is often the balance training that has the most dramatic effect on their games. Standing on one leg while brushing your teeth is a simple way to start working on your balance.

Thank you again for your questions and we hope these articles are helpful. Please call 312-214-9079 or email us at bvoyles@sprynet.com with any other questions or concerns. Also visit www.bodybalancegolf.com if you would like more information about the "Body Balance for Performance" golf health and fitness training program. We are dedicated to customizing golf-specific programs to help golfers improve their golf performance while minimizing stress to the body. Until next time, stay tall and fight gravity.



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