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with Ramsay McMaster

United Kingdom
29-30 April 2007

South Africa
25-26 June 2007

New Zealand
late August 2007

Canada
late October 2007

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The Second World Golf Fitness Summit

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To be held in **Orlando, Florida from April 19-22**, this conference will be the second gathering of the top strength and conditioning experts for golf in the world. Topics include understanding injury inducing golf biomechanics, testing for physical limitations that affect performance, mental development of players, power and speed development, and exercise progressions for developing posture, stability, mobility, and coordination.

The summit is broken down into **four** distinct sections:

1) Physical Screening - Thursday covers our general philosophy on player development. We will review basic physical screening methods that are used to isolate physical limitations and discuss research data collected from all over the world. Basic exercise progressions to attack these limitations will also be covered. This day is focused on building the basic foundation for every golfer.



2) Performance Enhancement - Friday is all about improving performance on the course through physical conditioning and motor learning. Speakers will focus on research and practical applications in the gym and on the range for improving different aspects of the swing. Developmental programs and exercise guidelines for juniors, as well as mental preparation for all players will be discussed. Finally, learn how to implement teaching protocols for players with various physical limitations.

3) Injury Prevention & Treatment - Saturday is all about golf injuries. The day begins with a review of injury statistics of amateurs versus professional golfers. Injury inducing biomechanics and corrective protocols to address these issues will be discussed. Other topics include: lower back pain, hip pathologies, shoulder injuries, orthotics and shoes, soft tissue treatments, and return to play protocols.

4) Power / Speed Development - Sunday focuses on the number one reason players hit the gym - More Power! Learn how to develop speed and power in your recreational and elite golfers. Topics will include, plyometric training, rotational velocity programs, swing drills for power, and building a strong base for power. If you work with golfer's who need more distance, then this is the day for you!



Ramsay McMaster

Ramsay is a world leader in the field of Golf Physiotherapy. Ramsay's golf specific screening and profiling has been used by many of the world's top Tour players. He is the golf fitness consultant to many National Programs including: The PGA's of Australia, New Zealand, Britain and Ireland where he has written their golf



fitness and injury prevention curriculums. He is a current member of the Titleist Performance Institute's Advisory Board and is the Director of the Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic in Melbourne, Australia.



Ramsay's topic will be:

Golfer's Under Rehabilitation

Ramsay will highlight the various stages and benchmarks to help player's return from injury, as well as the role of the coach in the Rehab process.

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How to Prolong the Longevity of Middle Age / Baby Boomer Golfers

By Ramsay McMaster Golf Physiotherapist / Rohan Clarke Golf Digest

Most golfers would love to play the game three or four times a week, but aren't able to do so for health reasons or work commitments. Mark Saville was no different. How often he could play was restricted because of chronic injuries. And as the managing director of a successful manufacturing business, the 30-handicapper didn't have much time, either.



Mark, now 50, has been conscious of his health ever since he suffered a heart scare when he was 40 years old. With four grown-up children, he was determined to focus more on his golf, which he plays at the National and Peninsula Golf Clubs, near Melbourne.



However, golf aggravated his injuries and Mark used to be very sore and tired after playing 18 holes despite doing a lot of general conditioning work in the gym. On top of that, his ball striking had relatively no length and I would say he was quite uncoordinated. His concepts were very poor and he wasn't sequencing his body correctly.

So Mark wanted a rehabilitation pathway to make sure he was doing everything properly. Having run his own business, Mark believes you've got to have some form of pathway to achieve your goals, whether in a business or sporting environment. That is, you've got to outsource and find people who know about a field of specialisation. He was looking around and picked up Australian Golf Digest and read the article about golf-specific training [Golfers As Athletes, October 2005]. He felt that matched what he wanted to do: golf, health and lifestyle fitted into one package.

Mark contacted me and we had a chat about a holistic approach to golf. He liked the idea of a team approach where a coach, physiotherapist and trainer were giving him information. he wanted a golf-specific coach, in particular someone who understood physiology. I introduced him to Mark Holland, head coach of the AIS Golf Program, as well as Trent Malcolm, a golf-specific trainer who consults as part of our team at the clinic.

Mark was so amazed with his results after 12 months, he encouraged his wife Kerry to consider golf-specific training with Trent, as he felt this was the key factor in his improvement. Trent recommended a postural screening be undertaken prior to beginning a golf-conditioning program. Kerry joined Peninsula 18 months ago, initially reducing her handicap through regular lessons. She had a nagging shoulder injury that had developed since taking up golf, which she felt this was hindering further progress. Mark and Kerry were keen to work together as a couple, even though they had their own individual goals.

A Course of Action

We started by looking at their overall postures with a muscular and skeletal screening. This included a Titleist Assessment test, which is a functional procedure using a goniometer to measure their range of movement against leading tour players. We found they were both posturally unaware of where their bodies were at due to the aging process, lifestyle and work. They had both become very “flexed” in their range of movement.

We gave them golf-specific exercises and drills to enhance their movement. It’s worth noting that as people get older, they lose body awareness and balance. In golf, you lose feel and body rotation. Our emphasis with Mark and Kerry was to improve those aspects. It not only helps in golf but also prolongs longevity and well being, so that you can do more day-to-day functional activities when you retire.

In particular, men need to be aware of “poking chin”, especially if they’re used to sitting in front of a computer screen all day. Businessmen like Mark often do a lot of travel so their spines tend to get very stiff around the neck and lower back from sitting at conferences or during flights. Their hip flexors often become very tight. And, usually, there might be some ongoing issues with their knees if they’ve played a lot of sport.

In Mark’s case, he had suffered from double hernias and a back problem. Plus, years of high-impact sport had taken its toll. He played squash intensively over a period of time – three or four times a week in his 30s and 40s. the torsion, load and shock that goes through your body while playing squash is substantial. The squash pattern had a very big effect on his golf swing. He had a forward thrust with his arms, like in squash where you squat down, flex, and use a one-arm movement. That movement in his golf swing put a lot of stress through his groin. So our focus was to eliminate all the patterns caused by squash and replace them with a strong efficient golf movement.

Kerry, 49, had a generic belief in strength and conditioning. When exercising, she was working muscles in isolation. Therefore, she didn't realise that power in the golf swing came from sequencing her body and 'feeling' certain muscles work. Like a lot of women, she didn't feel the club was part of that movement.



Typically, women golfers have a lot of sway through their hips, so they need to work on their lower and deep abdominals. Wearing high heels can affect their balance and flexibility through the calf muscles.

Childbirth also makes a big difference to posture. As they get older, women must strengthen the muscles that are put under a lot of strain during pregnancy (e.g. pelvic floor and lower abdominals). And like men, many women may develop "poking chin" and weak shoulder blades. Their deep-neck stabilisers need to be strengthened and they need to work on their triceps to prevent "flabby tuck-shop arms".

The Result Justifies the Means

Eighteen months ago, Mark and Kerry had nagging injuries that restricted them from playing and improving their golf. Initially, they came in to see me for two days. Now I re-screen and upgrade their programs every three months, varying from a four-hour session up to two days at a time. They visit Mark Holland for a lesson every three or four weeks and they train weekly with Trent.

I am pleased to say that Mark is now able to play four times a week. Pain-free. He can play 27 to 36 holes a day and he has lowered his handicap to 20. His ball striking has improved dramatically. Last year, Mark won the Winter Cup at the National. So he's gone from being a complete hacker to a competitive golfer.

Kerry is playing once or twice a week and has reduced her handicap to 29. She now feels her body and club are working together, whereas before she was just swinging a golf club. And for someone who was nervous about joining a golf club, Kerry has found that golf is a vital part of her social connection. In today's society where many people are lonely and don't have partners, a golf club is a great place to meet new people.



Mark and Kerry Saville both improved through golf-specific exercises and drills.

From a personal perspective, Kerry has discovered she can speak to people with common interests and similar goals. That social aspect of golf should never be underestimated.

I think the most satisfying aspect with Mark and Kerry is to know they're spending more time together through a mutual interest. Their passion for golf has enriched their relationships with friends, who they will accompany interstate and overseas to play golf.

They have a desire to stay active, both mentally and physically. And they still believe they can improve at 50. I think that's a great attitude to have. And it's achievable. With the information available now, you can actually improve your health.

- Ramsay McMaster



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What Makes a Good Coach?

By Dr. Karl Morris

Over the past few years, I have been really lucky to meet some truly outstanding coaches. Some of the more famous names would fit into that category as being outstanding, whilst other 'names' underneath all the hype, turn out to be 'truly ordinary'. I have met coaches who you have never heard of who blow me away with their knowledge and passion for the game and the results that they get at grass roots level.

For too long now, it has seemed that the 'mental game' has conflicted with coaching in the fact that a lot of 'mental coaches' will say 'just focus on the target' or 'just visualise' or 'be the ball'!! Well, over the years, I have seen a lot of players trying to 'be the ball' and the ball has still ended up in the woods!

You have to be able to blend technical with physical, mind and body, left brain with right brain. Very soon, I will release a new programme that will give the most indepth information about blending technical with mental. No bull, no hype just some new soundly researched facts that draw on the latest findings from the world of neuro-science.

Pressure

"Pressure! That's what I put in my car tyres!" said the great basketball legend, Charles Barclay, who had his own take on the concept of 'pressure' as applied to a sporting situation.

It seems these days we can't move for pressure, everybody seems to be under its spell. Your doctor is under pressure; teachers are under pressure, even youngsters talk so often of being 'stressed out'!

Some people seem to handle it whilst others just crumble in the face of it. We all talk about it, but what is pressure really and how do we go about dealing with it?

Just take a look at the two lines here and I think they give us a clue as to what pressure is all about.

The two lines here are identical in length but they **appear** so different depending on how we look at them. If you take the arrows off the end they would both look exactly the same, however, with the lines in place, our **perception** is altered and the mind is fooled into thinking that the lines are a different length.

With a lot of the players I work with, we spend a lot of time on the concept that **perception** is **reality**. Whatever you believe a situation to be will, indeed, become your reality.

If you believe missing this putt would be 'the end of the world' or a 'disaster', then, chances are somewhat increased that your body will respond to the situation with tension and anxiety and tightness. I heard a wonderful story from one of the world's greatest coaches, Pia Nilsson, who has worked for years with Annika Sorenstam. Prior to the final round of the first U.S. Open that she won, Annika confessed to Pia she felt really nervous because she had the chance to win such an 'important' tournament.

The championship was being held in New York State and Pia asked Annika how important the tournament would look if they floated up above the whole of New York. 'Still pretty important!' came the reply. 'Well, what about if we floated up and were looking down on the whole of the USA and then even further to the whole world with all its problems, wars, famine, natural disasters and the like?'

The smile which broke out on Annika's face was the signal that she had grasped the point: the US Open was really important but let's keep it in some sort of perspective in terms of a world event.

For me, this illustrates the power of perspective and it seems now so many of the younger players on tour are better at dealing with this than perhaps previous generations. So many new first time winners seem to suggest today's tournament Pro could well be better armed technically and mentally at an early age. Witness Wentworth's Ross Fisher, recently in Dubai, the way in which he handled playing with Tiger Woods and the perception that even though he didn't win 'his time would come'.

Sound mental game training is now part of the regime of most top players and the mental toughness displayed by the likes of Ross Fisher bear testimony to the fact the brain can be 'trained' to deal with potential 'pressure' situations.

How do your perceptions affect your game and how are those perceptions increasing or decreasing the amount of 'pressure' that you feel?

Not for one minute am I diminishing the importance of winning in golf or the incredible pleasure that success can provide, however, you just need to be aware when you have let your 'pressure gauge' boil over as a result of placing too much importance on the outcome of a game of golf.

The legendary Byron Nelson had his way of dealing with pressure by telling himself that no matter what happened out on the course, his wife would still be glad to see him when he got home and, even if she wasn't that glad, he knew for certain his dog was ALWAYS glad to see him - no matter what score he had posted that day!! Age old wisdom that certainly applies just as much, if not more, to today's golfing pressure situations.



It is also important to understand that to 'experience' pressure your mind has to be in a certain time zone. The ability we have mentally to go out into the future is deadly when we apply it to sport. The feeling of pressure is the mind creating scenarios of what might or might not happen at some point in the future.

The good news is that although the mind can do time travel thankfully the body cannot.

The 'gateway' to the present moment is through the body. So next time you are feeling the pinch out on the course place your attention on something physical in the here and now. The feeling of the ground under your feet the sounds around you and probably the master key to present moment awareness, your breathing.

Placing your attention on your breathing (body) will literally ground you in 'the now' with the added bonus that deep abdominal breathing will relax any muscle tension.

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Putting – that “other game”

By John Crampton

Golf Specific Sports Psychologist

Ben Hogan referred to it as the “game within a game”. Rolling a ball across a closely cropped piece of grass into a 4.25-inch hole is simple – just watch a 6 year old!

Put a putter in the hands of a player who is trying to score well, and you will see some very strange attempts to “roll that ball”. Putting well involves being able to consistently start the ball online, along with an ability to judge the pace of the putt across the slopes depending on the hole. If you can do these 2 things, all you have to do is add an ability to imagine the amount of “borrow” required to deal with those slopes.

There are many cultures involved in putting, some dealing with the challenge of starting the ball on line by using a range of grips to minimize club face misalignment, some dealing with the potential of stroke variation by utilizing club design, be it club head or shaft length. Others deal with having something to blame, and a bank account able to deal with the search for a new putter that has all the answers built in. I’ve always worked on the principle that it is me that is attached to the putter, and that it is me that makes or misses a putt.

Most golfers expect to hole more putts than they do. Televised tournaments show the players who have “figured out” the greens that week, so we all get the impression that we should be holing putts regularly. You don’t see the players who are having difficulty with the pace or line – the majority of the field.

Mark Holland has always used the line “I didn’t miss the putt, the ball missed the hole” for putts that started and travelled exactly as intended, but were mis-read. You know what “I missed the putt” means in his system. You need to be able to deal with both possibilities.


Vision plays a large part in aligning a putt and in “calculating” how hard to hit it. Strength plays a role in creating stability and therefore control. Practice is essential to develop base technique, speed control and confidence. Tactical decision-making and shot-selection systems are what differentiates good putters from the field.

Chair Leg Putting

The basic skill required to putt well is the ability to start the ball on line, ie to hit a straight putt. Green conditions make it impossible (useless) to expect the ball to roll straight for any more than a couple of feet before it starts to break. Just as a gymnast works on their handstand as the basis of their skill work and confidence throughout all their routines, the golfer should base their confidence on the greens on their ability to hit straight putts over 2 feet.

Chair Leg Putting involves hitting 200 putts per night from 2 feet against a chair leg **WITHOUT GETTING BORED & CHANGING THINGS**. The aim is to develop a repeating set up system, eye sequence, eye control system, rhythm, balance system, stroke, pace control, and shot commitment. Advanced players can add the “after image putting drill” to chair leg putting to guarantee minimal head/eye movement and to maximise confidence in stroke effectiveness

Players who work on the basic skills involved in chair leg putting develop a strong confidence in their pattern & system. This confidence relates directly to being able to get the ball started on line. With this confidence players are better able to understand what Brad Faxon means when he says “Its more important to be decisive than correct” when reading greens and settling on a start line.



Most players can be accused of “over-reading” greens. That is, looking for subtle breaks that may or may not be there. Pace control at the hole is far more valuable than perfect line. A ball rolling at the correct speed at the hole opens up the size of the entry point and increases the margin for error for the player who tends to get caught up in the search for the perfect stroke.


Putting brings the whole issue of expectations and dealing with pressure situations to a head, and all players need sound systems to address these issues. Without confidence building/maintaining systems a player who is struggling with pace and line can find their confidence loss feeding back through their whole game as an added pressure to having to hit pitches and chips, approach shots, and tee shots straighter and/or longer. Rhythm is the usual first casualty, followed by attitude, tension and flow control, and score.

Elite players develop a great range of skills in pace control and green reading. They develop philosophies on what should be expected on the green. They know what a should make, could make, and would be nice to make putt looks like. Despite all the recent trends towards bringing the launch monitor technology into putting, this part of the game still remains the area where touch is crucial. Unfortunately, touch is something that is very difficult to measure and challenging to teach/improve.

There are some well-tried and tested ideas that allow us to take the pressure off trying to turn a could make putt into a poorly hit “need to make” putt. Its interesting how long some of these ideas have been around, and how easily some of the concepts are forgotten in the search for the latest \$300 putter. I was looking through some old golf magazines of my father’s when I found this article.

The Psychology of Putting – Playing into circles

(from “Golf – August 1, 1939”)




An interesting story that has a bearing upon the psychology of putting is recorded in the “Canadian Golfer”. It appears that some 25 years ago a Mr Warren was practising his putting on the green in front of his club. He was off his short game just as most every golfer finds himself now and then. Mr Warren looked up as he was addressed by a golfer whom he recognised as Walter Travis. Now Travis, at that time, was considered the greatest putter in the world. For that reason when he offered a suggestion to the struggling Mr Warren the latter was only too anxious to harken to this master greensman!

A Piece of String – Nine Feet Long

“So you’re off your putting?” queried Mr Travis. “I’ll give you a hint which I don’t tell to everyone, for it is my own particular method and it works out pretty well!” With that Mr Travis instructed Warren to go into the club and procure a piece of string nine feet long. In addition, he was to bring back six golf balls. Travis also insisted that he borrow a rounded back putter of some kind. Warren hurried in and soon was back with the prescribed equipment.

“Now,” continued Travis, “make a circle of the string. That gives you an enclosure of about three feet in depth. The thing is to visualise this space to represent a hole three feet wide and a foot deep. Place your six golf balls about 15 feet back and picture yourself trying to sink them all in this huge opening.” Warren did as Travis advised. With ease he put all six into the big circle. After that Travis advised him to try it again. Once more Warren holed out six times in his imaginary three-foot hole. The next time Travis had him putt from 25 feet. Again with the mental picture of a gaping hole Warren placed every shot in the circle.



Travis then picked up the string and designed the same size circle around a regular cup. From 15 feet Warren then started putting for the cup. This time he only stopped two balls inside the string. Something had changed his conception of the task at hand. It was the very point which Travis, the master putter, wished to make. Obviously it was easy enough to put every ball in an imaginary hole a foot deep and three feet in diameter, but when trying to hit a 4 1/2 inch hole some sense worked against keeping the ball close to the cup when it stopped rolling.

Half Hour Picturing Three-foot Hole

Travis then advised Warren to try the experiment over by himself without the real cup in the middle until the idea of the large hole was his mental target. After a half hour of this Warren tried aiming at the cup with the string around it once more. This time he found himself stopping every ball within the circle.

Anyone Can Sink a One-Footer

Now the point was that when he had succeeded in doing this, as Travis then pointed out, he had left himself six second putts of no more than 15 3/4 inches. The diameter of the imaginary three-foot hole was only 36 inches. With the 4 1/2 inch cup in the middle, every ball within the space surrounded by the string was thus only 15 3/4 inches from the lip. Moreover, most of the putts were not right on the string edge, meaning that the bulk of his remaining second putts were only some 10 to 12 inches long. “And anyone can sink a one-footer”, chuckled Travis!

“Thus, golfers, you have a story – every bit as true today as it was 25 years ago when it was passed on to Mr Warren,” says the author of this article. “So if you go off your approach putting this year, try it. You’ll be amazed by the renewal of keenness you attain around the greens. Actually all the nine-foot string will do is to remind you of your real objective and fasten a new and concrete mental picture. The psychology involved is elementary, for the trick merely changes one’s outlook toward this at-times bewildering phase of the game from the seemingly unattainable to something that is obviously within the skill of almost anyone.”

Back to Today

I love some of the terminology. Rather makes you “harken back” to a previous era, doesn’t it? Even with modern greens, putters and “guided missile” golf balls, these ideas are still useful.


Can you see the relevance of chair leg putting now? The actual shape of the larger target spoken of back in 1939 depends on the break at the hole, for a 3 footer above the hole with a 4 ball break is not the same as 3 footer below the hole with no movement. Good putters are very creative in “seeing/feeling” the shape and size of the target that is realistic for the putt. They are then very good at matching the impact feel required to get the ball to be rolling at the correct speed at the hole to give the putt the maximum chance of falling in. They are certainly very good at matching impact feel to pace and line entering the larger target. They also are very good at smiling to themselves when the occasional quality putt to a larger target drops in.

Enjoy your putting, its where creativity and imagination meets score and expectation. If I was caddying for you and said “its not worth anything until you pick it up out of the hole”, how ready are your putting systems and philosophies to make a good stroke?

What Is Your Game Telling You?

By Kevin Kirk

US PGA Professional and Level 1 Titleist Certified




Greetings to you from Cypresswood! Those of us who play golf realize at some point that the game is difficult and complex. We live by the cliché “The harder you work, the more you get”. If we work hard and have a good attitude, we expect to get rewarded. In golf, that is not always true. In many cases, we have seen golfers (including countless elite players) work hard and actually get worse! For those of us committed to improving our golf this year, that can be a scary thought.

It seems that the trick to improving may not be “working hard”, but “working smart”. This month’s article focuses on some ideas that I hope will help you make sure that the work you are doing is leading you toward your goals and to some sort of timely, measurable improvements.

So, let’s go back to the title of the article. What is your game telling you? Depending on how you look at it, that can be a very tricky question to answer. For many of us, the struggle to see our game clearly has to do with the fact that our egos, perceptions and beliefs cloud the truth and wreak havoc on our golf game.

What we need is accurate, reliable information. Generally speaking, there are two major types of information – subjective and objective.

Subjective information is based on ideas, beliefs, perceptions, interpretations and emotion. It is rarely based on things that can be quantified or measured. I would like to go on record as saying that the best golfers and coaches use a great deal of subjectivity to perform/coach at the highest levels.



Intention, intuition, awareness and emotion are all necessary to optimize performance in golf. Most people however, do not have the training or experience in using these tools, so their subjectivity actually becomes a limiting and sometimes destructive force in their golf game.

Objective information, on the other hand is in quantifiable, measurable and based on proven scientific principles/results. Like subjectivity, pure objectivity has the potential to have a very limiting effect on your ability to make progress, learn and perform. Ultimately, we must be able to design an approach to training and performing that encompasses both subjectivity and objectivity. (If you are not completely confused by now, you should be)

So are we all doomed to randomness, poor play and an inability to make progress in reaching our goals? The good news is no!

Each time we play a round of golf, our game is trying to tell us what we need to do to improve. Along with recruiting the help of a qualified instructor, you are going to need to keep up with some basic information.

We are going to refer to this information as statistics or “stats”. For the purpose of this article, we are going to use “stats” in 3 major ways.

1. Assessing the round you just played

Below, you will find a basic stat program to collect both subjective and objective information that will provide you and your instructor with a complete and accurate picture of what is happening each time you play a round of golf.

Subjective

(1-5 Scale)

- Swing ____
- Putting ____
- Chipping ____
- Pitching ____
- Bunker ____
- Mental ____
- Tactical ____
- Physical ____
- Nutrition ____

Objective


- Fairways ____
- Greens in regulation ____
- Up and downs ____
- Sand Saves ____
- Putts ____
- Score ____

Observations

- Trends/Tendencies
- Weather
- Course

The information you collect by filling out this form can be used to help you prioritize your post round practice, formulate questions and identify things you need to discuss with your instructor.

2. Measuring Progress / Identifying Trends



I encourage you to set some goals. Hopefully these goals were definable, measurable and timely. The good news about keeping up with your stats is that it allows you to measure your process and identify trends in your game throughout the year. This requires you to keep a journal or record of the stats you are generating. It can also allow you to see if your training strategies/program are working or need to be adjusted. Without stats, it is virtually impossible to accomplish that task.

3. Comparative Studies

Keeping accurate and complete stats will also allow you to compare your own game from year to year. Additionally it permits you to compare your game to other players, which is important if you are aspiring to play at a higher competitive level.

Conclusion

So what is the answer to the question, “What is your game trying to tell you”? My response to you is the following. Every golfer has a riddle to solve in order to make progress. By consistently assessing your performances and keeping track of the data over time, you will begin to develop a very clear picture of your game and what you need to do to reach your goals. I strongly encourage you to enlist the help of a qualified instructor to accompany you on your journey since the road is sure to be tricky and confusing.

- Kevin Kirk

Finding a Golf Specific Trainer

By Simon Webb & Trent Malcom

Golf Strength Conditioners

with Rohan Clarke Golf Digest

I was tempted to give this column the title, "Charlatans, snake-oil salesmen and personal trainers." Golf fitness is becoming more popular but, unfortunately, some personal trainers have jumped on the bandwagon and believe they're experts. It's a bit like when everyone latched onto yoga and Pilates. Some trainers are very good at it, while there are others who say they're good and put yoga and Pilates on their business cards.



Many personal trainers have no background in golf, yet they will readily grab a golfer and offer a fitness program. I know for a fact that some trainers have provided the supplement Creatine to golfers in order to bulk them up. It's disturbing that they've been supplying it with no medical expertise.

From my experience, the uninformed trainers think, "Let's get power." They often use exercises that I describe as the 'Deadly Sins' of training for golf: bicep curls, pec deck, bench presses, chin ups, extension flyers and overhead dead lifts with no shoulder control. Sit-ups and abdominal crunches are just horrific for golfers.

Those exercises were designed to increase the 'kick-butt' muscles. But they give a false perception of control. That false sensation will totally override the feels you want in a golf swing, thereby hindering the correct sequencing.

The other fault of uninformed trainers is to work muscles in isolation. The golf swing requires the upper body, torso and the lower body segments to work together. I always relate the sequencing of the body in a golf swing to playing a set of piano keys. When you only work one set of muscles, there is no rhythm or fluency in the pattern. It's the equivalent of playing just four keys on a piano.

A European Tour player recently visited The Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic in a very bad state. He had been given a lot of upper-body exercises such as dead lifts (lifting weights and holding them above the head like a weight lifter). He was also asked to do bench presses and bicep curls, which made his body 'top heavy'. Now, he has to completely change his body, purely as a result of very poor information given to him. It will take at least a year to get rid of all those bad habits and patterns that have infected his golf swing.

A golf swing is like a spinning top. It works on an axis and smooth radius. But if you placed a big chunk of Blu-Tac on a spinning top, then it would start to swerve and tilt in the wrong direction. As a golfer, you're already leaning over the ball. You've increased the front muscles that affect your centre of gravity and also increase the tone and flexion in your body. Therefore, you really need the opposite muscles – the anti-gravity muscles – to keep you upright (e.g. the triceps, lower-trapezius, 'lats', 'gluts', and lower and deep abdominals).


These are the muscles that should be used in golf-specific training. I recommend the crucifix drill and posture bar lifts. Most importantly, these exercises should be done while standing in order to simulate the movements of a golf swing.

More war stories from the gym

Some people are tightly strung. Others are too loose and need to get tighter. A six-foot tall male is likely to have different tolerances to a 5-foot-3 woman. So there are different body types among golfers and that's why you need to be "screened" by a physiotherapist. It's important to have a correct diagnosis, so that a trainer or conditioner knows the muscle lengths and flexibility range of a golfer.

I've heard many horrific stories that have occurred in a gym-like environment. One involved a US Tour player who fractured his rib while overstretching. He was quite a tight golfer and the trainer had no concept of his body type. The player's arm was over his head in a hip-and-trunk stretch when the rib "popped". The injury forced him off the tour for eight weeks.

One trainer used cable-and-weight exercises that were meant to simulate the golf swing. That's an absolute disaster. He wasn't trained as a PGA professional, yet he was getting a player to move into the different planes of a golf swing. That actually destroys the golfer because it encourages a really bad movement and technique under load. Because the body has been under such a strong load, the brain starts to accommodate that movement. So the player eventually swung the club in that manner. Subsequently, his instructor had a lot of trouble fixing this ingrained pattern of movement.



In another case, a personal trainer told a trainee professional to do 200 bicep curls on either arm. The trainee came in to see me and couldn't straighten his elbows! We had to ice and massage them for a week. He was stuck in a "Thunderbirds" position with stiff, fixed, bent elbows. The personal trainer thought that you need strong biceps to hit a golf ball. But most people who play a lot of golf already have tight biceps. So bicep curls will just exacerbate the bicep tension.

Some personal trainers assume that pro golfers are "tight" and would benefit from a lot of yoga. But they don't realise that a golfer loses "feel" with a certain amount of excessive overstretch. There's a place for yoga but top golfers need a tension threshold in order to keep their swing compact.

What to look for in a personal trainer for golf

I've found that the best golf trainers are the ones that seek information and work closely within a team. Good trainers take a golfer's "screening" from a physiotherapist, so that they know the person's diagnosis and preexisting injuries. Only then will they establish a fitness and conditioning program for the golfer.

Good golf trainers take an interest in the game and continually build their knowledge by attending seminars and workshops (such as the PGA of Australia's Teaching Summit or Titleist Performance Institute lectures). In particular, they have a passion for golf. Most play regularly and spend time at golf courses to watch how PGA professionals teach the game.

Look for a trainer who is golf sophisticated rather than someone who is stuck in his own little world. If someone asks you to do 10 x 10 x 3, it's means they're not thinking about the training volume. They're giving a recipe of their favourite robotic exercises.

What do 'reps' mean? If you can only feel a certain movement four times, then why would you do it 10 times? You would be losing the feel for what you want to do. Therefore, you're losing the control and giving your brain different information. So you've confused the brain on quality of movement.

And that's what the golf swing is all about – quality of movement under control and pressure. You're in the wrong gym if you find yourself straining under a barbell with teeth clenched and eyes popping out of their sockets as your face changes colour from white to red to blue.

Four questions to ask a golf-specific trainer

1. How many hours a week do you train golfers?

Simon Webb, Victorian Institute of Sport, physical preparation specialist:
"My involvement with the VIS golf program means that I am always training golfers throughout the week. The number of hours varies greatly depending on the time of year. At its peak, I would do more than 20 hours per week with as many as 30 elite golfers, often in small squad-based sessions.

2. What muscles do you use?

Trent Malcolm, consultant to The Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic, exercise physiologist: "Important prime movers and stabilisers in the golf swing. They are the:

- torso – internal and external obliques, rectus abdominis, erector spinae, transversus abdominis and multifidis;
- lower body – gluteus maximus and medius, adductors and quads;
- upper body – triceps, deltoids, traps and rhomboids, lat dorsi, forearms.



3. Have you done any golf-specific conditioning courses?

Simon Webb: "I studied human movement at Deakin University before I began working with the VIS golf program in 1996. In the past 12 months I attended the World Golf Fitness Summit in Florida (where I will be presenting this year) and assisted at the Titleist TPI certification course at Southern Golf Club in Melbourne."

4. What golf teaching models and philosophies do you know?

Trent Malcolm: "I integrate the technical goals of the coach with my exercise programming as much as I can, to create an exercise program that is specific to the client's swing and their physiology."

- Simon Webb & Trent Malcolm



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Is an anterior tilted pelvis hurting your game?

By Denis McDade

An anterior (or forward) tilted pelvis is common amongst people who spend extended periods of time sitting down (ie. Office workers and students). Sitting for extended periods contracts and shortens the hip flexors and muscles of the lower back, causing a reciprocal inhibition of muscle groups on the opposite side of the body, namely the gluteal and lower abdominals.

These imbalances cause excessive arching of the lower back, a flabby abdomen and force the body to recruit synergistic muscles such as the hamstrings and lower back muscles to assist the gluteals in performing hip extension (This pattern of imbalance was named 'Lower Crossed Syndrome' by Czech Physical Therapist, Vladamir Janda).

An easy way to check your pelvis position is to check your beltline whilst looking at your profile in a mirror. Your belt should appear to be parallel to the ground. If it is tilted forward, you may have an anterior tilted pelvis. If it angles back, you may have a posterior tilted pelvis.



Anterior Pelvic Tilt at Setup

Golfers who have an anterior tilted pelvis at setup often come up out of their posture to avoid the overbalance towards the ball that naturally occurs as they swing the club back. This can cause problems with hand path, clubhead path and shoulder plane and require the golfer to make compensations in the downswing.

Worse still it can cause a 'reverse spine angle' as the glute and abdominal muscles are either inhibited or too weak to maintain the angles created at setup during the backswing. A reverse spine angle leaves the golfer susceptible to lower back injury because of the excessive stresses it places on the structures of the lower back as the golfer compensates in the downswing and followthrough.



Reverse Spine Angle

(Note change in spine angle from setup to top)

The good news is that because the pelvis is generally tilted because of lost muscle tone and muscle imbalance, it can be corrected with simple exercises. Now is the time to get your body screened and a corrective program underway if you think you may have a problem. Your back will love you for it and you will play better golf for longer!

Good Golfing!

Denis McDade

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Head Coach, Victorian Institute of Sport Golf Program

Member Advisory Board Titleist Performance Institute