

GETTING YOUR

ACT TOGETHER...

CONNECTION AND SEPARATION

There was a time in golf's not to distant past when those who played the game were not considered athletes in the true sense of that word. They were thought to be poorly conditioned and engaged in a sport that required little real athletic challenge.

Golf's unpleasant little secret — immediately revealed to anyone who takes up the game with a serious thought of playing it well — is that a good consistent golf swing requires a remarkable amount of true athletic ability. The coordinated body movements in the golf swing are about as complex and athletically challenging as those required of pole vaulter — strong legs, hand eye coordination, tempo, grace, total body awareness. All these movements plus an intense, short fused, mental trigger that sets it all in motion headed in the right direction.

Individually, each movement is relatively simple — swing the arms, transfer the weight from one side to the other, rotate your hips. But when you put them all together in a physical environment that includes that golf club in your hands, an invisible plane that must be honored from the ball, to the back of your head, and then to the ball again, it gets a bit more complex. Add to the equation those questions in your mind about how far to hit the ball, the conditions of lie, wind, footing and that ache in your left knee and suddenly the real challenge of the golf swing becomes depressingly apparent.

To get back to simple, experienced golf fitness trainers focus on two specific routines that focus on essentials of a solid golf swing that can be followed anywhere — at home, in your office or at the fitness center — to improve your game. The first is designed to create a greater degree of shoulder rotation while maintaining a stable lower body base — **separation**. The second, will ensure that even with your improved upper body rotation and increased swing arc, your arms, upper body, hips and legs continue to work as a coordinated unit, throughout the swing — **connection**.

Many golfers, in an effort to achieve more distance, compensate for their lack of shoulder rotation by over activating their hips or creating an extra arm hinge in a misguided attempt to get the club to parallel to the ground at the top of the backswing. The result, too often, is an uncoordinated downswing and very frequently a “hit from the top” that plunges the club head into the turf about four or five inches behind the ball.

The solution is to strengthen your legs and trunk to provide a stronger more stable base of resistance to counter the upper body to rotate. When you make the proper rotation, you should feel the muscles stress and tighten in your side under the left arm (for a right handed swinger). This is the resistance or “coil” that adds power to your swing. Improve your upper torso and trunk flexibility to better enable your shoulders to rotate.

At the same time, work to strengthen the shoulders and arms for added control and coordination during the transition from backswing to downswing — remember to remain **connected** as you increase the power and acceleration through the downswing.

For best results, consult a PGA professional to be sure that the athletic moves you aspire in your golf swing are, in fact, realistic improvements to your game. Over the last 16 years as a golf professional I have seen many students who have simply consumed too much swing information (and misinformation). As a result, they have self diagnosed themselves into a mindset that is focused more on what they are trying not to do, rather than on the few positive thoughts that could give them the basics of a consistent, functional golf swing.

Equally important is to have a thorough golf swing motion and posture assessment from a PGFA certified golf fitness instructor. For an instructor in your area, or illustrated descriptions of the following exercises review the **United States Golf Fitness Association** web site at www.USGFA.com.

For those of you who are ready to get started, the following is a relatively brief routine of beneficial exercises targeted toward improving your stability, rotation and power. Be sure that before starting any golf fitness program, you consult your physician.

This routine divides the body at the waist so you work first on strengthening your legs and trunk with *squats, goodmorning, reverse trunk twists, bent knee raises, seated trunk twists and abdominal crunches*. For upper torso strength we focus on: *chest flys, reverse flys, dumbbell shoulder press, pullovers, ulner flexion, tricep extension*. This is a great set of core exercises that will help you develop a strong stable base to support to better facilitate the increased torque and power your body will be able to produce.

These exercises are done two or three times per week combined with the

following upper torso and trunk flexibility drills. The following stretches can be performed daily: single leg pelvic tilt, horizontal shoulder abduction, forward and sideward assisted shoulder elevation, assisted pole twists (rotate upper torso only, maintain stable legs and hips).

It is important to remember the exercises listed are only part of a more complete golf fitness program. The single most important step you can make to improve your physical approach to the game is to contact a certified golf fitness professional in your area and have a bio-mechanical assessment of your swing in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of your posture.

Remember to be able to improve your game you must start by upgrading your physical condition, your strength and your flexibility. Golf really is for athletes.



Seated trunk twist



Pullover



Chest fly



Squats



Good Morning



Pole twist

Gary Wise

Golf and Fitness Director,
Hilton Sandestin Beach & Golf Resort.
PGA Australia Member.
USGFA Advisory Member.

SUBSCRIPTION INFO