

Fit for Golf

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All players in all sports like to start a game positively. In golf this is building upon the opening shots into a round that is consistent and error free (as much as mere mortals can), into a round that reflects your capability. As a fitness consultant, a coach, and a former athlete, I cannot stress enough the benefits of a short, well-constructed warm-up routine. This applies to golf, and particularly to the drive off the tee with a wood, or long iron. The analogy that I often quote to coaches and players is starting your car on a cold frosty morning. Once the car is started, driving on to a motorway and accelerating to maximum speed immediately is not advisable. The maltreatment of your car would I'm sure result in mechanical breakdown, sooner, if not later, as it will with your body.

The striking of the ball by swinging the club head often achieves speeds at impact in excess of 60 mph, and in so doing creates tremendous sheering effects on the discs in the back, and muscles and connective tissues of the neck. To reduce the chance of injury, and improve the efficiency of the swing, I recommend this short 10 minute warm-up carried out immediately before you take the first strike off the tee. ■

This issue's fitness tip

Carrying your golf bag around the course could be the best way to improve the strength and conditioning in your legs and back, but it could also be the reason your back and shoulders are giving you constant pain. Ensure that your bag is fitted with a double-support harness similar to that of a rucksack. This will elevate any imbalance when carried, and provide an excellent fitness benefit to improving your game.

The Warm Up

The purpose of this series of articles over the next few issues is to focus on improving fitness; to enable the playing of better and more consistent golf. This will be relevant if your goal is to play from scratch, or just enjoy the challenge to improve and have a friendly game.

The enjoyment of playing golf is often curtailed, before, during and after each game. This is particularly true when muscles ache, joints creak, along with the presence of pain and general discomfort. As a consequence, collapsing in the changing room and removing your golfing shoes, or packing the clubs in the boot of your car becomes akin to 'mission impossible'. Improving your general fitness can help contribute to a better score, along with the feeling of better well being. To identify these factors, a quick summary of the requirements of the game is necessary, and will give clues to how fitness is important.

golf bag and trolley without any strain on the body.

The increasing involvement of fitness consultants working with the top golf professionals has been a major factor in improving the development of the game. This is particularly true as the number of tournaments played on the pro circuit increases the need for the players to produce low scores regularly to make the cut. The fitness programme many professionals follow includes, running and stretching, and more recently strength training. Another emerging trend in the professional ranks is older players managing to maintain a high level of play well in to their forties, or even fifties and sixties. The exercise undertaken helps to offset the ageing processes that decrease muscle mass and strength, decrease mobility and aerobic fitness which can all contribute to a decrease in performance and

Skill Requirement

Effectively strike a ball with a golf club

Physical Requirement

- postural stability back
- mobility of limbs shoulders/hips
- muscular strength legs/arms

As well as the stroke play physical requirements to enable the consistent delivery of quality shots, you need to be capable of trekking over the undulating terrain of a golf course while carrying or pushing/pulling a

play. To improve your game, and at the same time gain the benefits of better health, must be a desirable goal for all involved. So, let's start the series where the game begins - on the first tee.

10 Minute Warm-Up

Stepping

- Find a small hillock, or a space to exercise (not a problem on a golf course)
- Climb, descend (alternate legs) start slowly increase tempo 30 seconds

Twisting

- Place a club behind your back under the armpits
- Stand with your feet apart (as with your normal driving stance)
- Look forward and down, rotate along the axis of the body (ensure the head stays still)
- Left then right, increasing range and tempo as the body becomes looser Repeat 10 times - 3 sets with a short rest between

Shoulder rolls with arm extensions

- Stand with your feet apart (as with your normal driving stance)
- Grip club as per normal swing
- Club head to ground
- Pull shoulders back, hold 5-10 seconds, forward then relax. Repeat 10 times - 2 sets with a short rest between

Sweeping swings

- Starting position as previous exercise
- Slowly at first bring club back to hands at shoulder height (pause)
- Forward to front hands at shoulder height (pause)
- Slowly at first, increase tempo till maximal speed achieved but retain control (ensure the head stays still) Repeat 10 times-3 sets

Practice swings

- 5-10 full practice swings

Now you're ready and prepared for the first all important tee off!