

Breaking The Golf Strength Training Myths

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Have you noticed that scores achieved by golfers have hardly changed in the past thirty years? Fifteen years ago the average amateur male golfer's handicap was 16.2. Today, the average amateur male handicap is 16.2. Golfers haven't improved despite technological advances in golf equipment. This scenario likely will not change until golfers realize there is a strong correlation between sport performance and sport specific training. Technology of new clubs will not lower your score, improved performance will.

Few golfers associate the need for improved physical condition in their quest for improved performance. Although golfers in general have been taught to avoid strength training in fear of losing range of motion, there are significant benefits to both game performance and injury prevention that can be gained through a sound strength-training program. To illustrate this consider the following points... Golfers generate 90% of their Maximum voluntary contraction during each swing. This is equal to the weight you could lift four times before fatigue. Only difference is golfers do this 40 times in four hours not to mention the fact that biomechanical studies show forces generated during a golf swing are high enough to fracture a vertebrae when not guarded by muscle stability. The fact is, golfers need to be stronger to survive the sport.

Golf is the only sport in the world where conditioning is not considered essential to performance in the sport. What separates the athletes who dominate their sport from their opponents? Think of Tiger, Jordan, Gretzky and their ability to perform "in balance". None were muscle bound men. Strength cannot be directed to enhance performance if the athlete is off balance, and unable to direct their strength in optimal directions. Their distinguishing qualities are motor control. The ability to exert strength quickly, and in a way with perfect synergy throughout the body linkage, and while in dynamic balance, characterize this skill. There is a sophisticated system involved in functional force development that depends on feedback from the visual, auditory, vestibular and proprioceptive systems. All of these systems must be challenged and conditioned to achieve optimal performance.

Many exercises "isolate" body regions, but will this be carried over onto the course? If strength training does not mimic the way muscles are used in functional activity, then it may have only a cosmetic effect on your body. It is important that the goal of training is specified and that the training prescription matches the athletes needs.

Nearly all actions in golf require involvement from the whole body. Therefore training should also involve the whole body. The trunk transmits the energy generated from the lower body to the upper body (or kinetic chain). The role of the trunk or "core" in force transmission should not be underestimated.

When golfers train with body building principles, the bodies ability to organize and synchronize complex multi-joint movements is impeded. This will result in the complete opposite of what a golfer needs to improve, which is function.

Unlike exercise programs developed upon bodybuilding principles, functional exercises are designed to restore, balance, length, strengthen, and coordinate movement patterns specific to the sport environment. The brain does not think in terms of isolated muscle, instead it recruits groups of muscles in uniquely programmed sequences. Your brain is like a computer. If you program it with poor quality information, that is exactly what will come out of it on the course. A golfers conditioning program must therefore be designed to integrate the entire body.