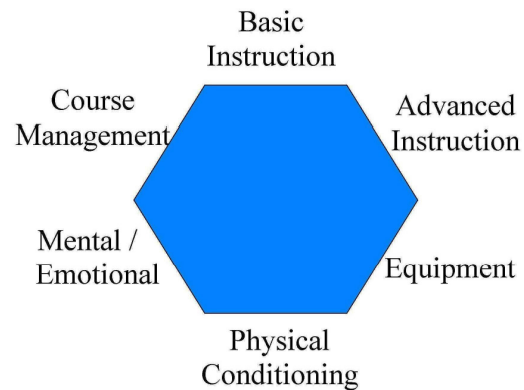


Winterize Your Golf Game

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

With December comes cold weather and for most of us it also brings limited golf. Playing less golf, however, does not mean that you cannot work on your golf game. In fact, the winter months can be the best time of the year to take your game to the next level.

Let's face it. How many times do you start a new golf season with high scores, stray shots, short drives, and the aches and pains of not keeping your body in good playing condition? If you start each golf season off sluggish then this article is for you. A few months ago I described what it takes to develop your game like the professionals. You have to work on the Basic Instruction, Advanced Instruction, Mental, Equipment, Course Instruction, and Physical Conditioning. Each and every one of these are essential in improving your golf game.



So if you are not on the course as often during the winter months, which of the six would you say you would benefit from the most? Yes, physical conditioning is the key in the winter to playing better golf. It will also keep you from being a “couch potato”, gaining weight during the holidays, and being more prone to injury in the spring.

The winter is the best time of the year to really focus on the physical aspect of your golf game in the spring. Physical conditioning for golf is much different than training for a marathon. To have a golf specific conditioning program you need to focus on your body's specific physical limitations. In other words, you need to find out what parts of your body are not working well with the golf swing.

An example of this might be someone who has gained too much weight in the middle and who has a lack of mobility in their upper back and hips. This golfer will most likely use their arms more than they should to get a full swing because they can not rotate their body very well. This will result in a golfer who will often over swing, lose their posture, and have other bad swing faults. All of this can be improved upon by performing the correct exercises and stretches. We can also work to get more power and distance if we train the right muscles.

Your golf specific conditioning program should focus on several things: strength, endurance, flexibility, mobility, stability, posture, and balance. All it really takes is 30 - 45 minutes, two or three times a week to make a dramatic improvement on your golf game and on your health. I would say that would be worth it wouldn't you?

Even with the pros, golf fitness is at the top of the list for them during the winter. If they let their bodies get out of shape they run the risk of losing tournaments and potential injury. A good winter golf conditioning program is essential no matter your skill level.

So what is a good golf specific conditioning program for the winter? Well, to be honest it should be different for every individual with a just a few similarities. Remember, your conditioning program should be uniquely designed to work on YOUR physical limitations. If we all had the same physical limitations then everyone's swing would look identical. How many people have you seen that can swing like Tiger Woods? Not many because most people do not have the physical fitness and health of Tiger.

The best place to start is to consult with a health or fitness professional that understands the human body and the mechanics of the golf swing. Only then can they evaluate you for your specific golf physical limitations and develop a fitness plan accordingly. You also want to take into play if you need to lose weight, gain strength, and or have balance and stability issues. There are also many books out there on golf fitness you can pick up or can find endless information on the internet.



Most good fitness plans will have you doing some cardiovascular workouts. Your cardio workouts (treadmill, elliptical, stationary bike, etc.) should be varied and should be balanced between long endurance and short, high-intensity workouts. Why? Well if you think about the game of golf it may last you 4 or 5 hours and therefore you need to be able to have the stamina to stay fresh for the complete round. If you're tired your mental and physical game will suffer along with your score. Add to that the short, quick, high-intensity energy needed to hit the golf ball. This requires power, balance, and precision. To improve on both your stamina to stay fresh through all 18 holes along with the energy needed for striking the ball a varied cardio workout is key.

For working with weights I really like interval training. This is where you intertwine your short "high-intensity" cardio workouts in and out of your weight training. By doing this you keep your heart rate up and also strengthen and tone muscles. Four to Five minute intervals switching back forth between your cardio and weight training will also keep it more exciting and make your workout seem to go by that much faster.

Another key to your golf fitness should be working on your core muscle strength. This will help you to maintain your posture during your backswing and help produce power during your downswing. Examples of good "core" exercises are crunches, obliques, and leg lifts. This will target all of your abdominal muscles.

Before starting any exercise regiment consulting with your health professional is advised. Remember that a health or fitness professional that has good knowledge of golf swing biomechanics will also be able to give you more specific exercises or stretches based on your specific physical limitations. If you have any health conditions or experience any unusual symptoms when you exercise please consult with a health professional immediately.

If you truly want to get the edge on your golf competitors or simply want to hold on to "honors" off the tee box with your buddies then a winter fitness program is essential. Please remember that it takes work, consistency and repetition. The first

couple of weeks will be tough, you will undoubtedly be sore, but just remember the prize in the end. I also encourage you to check in with your favorite golf teaching professional a few times over the winter. That way you will not only have improved on your physical limitations but the golf pro will also be able to fine tune your swing to your new physical abilities.

We “winterize” our toys such as boats and campers so that they will be in great condition come next spring. Why should your golf game be any different? Your clubs may be great, but they are only an extension of you. This winter while your buddies are flipping through the television channels and gaining weight from the lack of activity you can be conditioning your body to be even better shape than when you last walked off the course. Take the time this winter to get on a good fitness and conditioning program targeted to your areas of weakness and reap the rewards next spring with renewed health and a new level in your golf game.

About the Author:

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