

“Upgrading Your Most Important Piece of Golf Equipment”

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

It is no surprise that your golf game is directly related to the quality of your equipment. If the quality of your equipment was not important we would all still playing with our first set of clubs. A golfer’s spirit comes alive when they turn that six into a three by chipping in from 20 yards or hitting that great bunker shot to stop the ball 4 inches from the hole. That’s where we hope better golf balls, putters, and clubs will help us out. The truth is, however, that most golfers forget about upgrading their most important piece of equipment – their body.

Improving your golf game is directly related to how well you take care of your body. If your body doesn’t perform well then your clubs can’t perform well. Likewise, a golfer hates it when the first round of the year turns into the last of the year because of an injury on the course. The more strength, endurance, flexibility, balance, and stability a golfer has will determine his or her ability to not only have a better golf score, but will also help in the prevention of golf related injuries and will lead to a healthier quality of life.

Upgrading your most important piece of golf equipment, your body, plays an essential part in how well you perform on the course. Most good golfers will also tell you that your clubs should be an extension of your body. Let’s think about your driver. It only works as well as your body works. Your backswing, club head speed, and point of impact are all related to how well your body is conditioned to perform.

To upgrade your body to perform better you need to condition it on and off the golf course. Off the course you need a regular exercise regimen 3 to 5 days a week that includes strength, cardiovascular, and flexibility programs. If you are unsure on what exercises to do then consulting a personal trainer at your local fitness center would be best and always consult your doctor if you encounter any pain or symptoms when you start any exercise program.

A good cardiovascular exercise can be jogging, cycling, swimming, or just walking at a good pace. For strength conditioning a good program of free weights or a machine based workout is great. Lastly, and most important, make sure you work on your flexibility by stretching before and after any exercise or hitting the golf course. Injuries often occur to muscles and ligaments of the body when they are not properly stretched out and warmed up.

Even Tiger Woods, one of the greatest golfers of the game conditions his body to perform. In an article in Golf Digest, Woods wrote “My total body workout -- it's really more maintenance and toning now than muscle building -- combines aerobic exercises and weight training for an hour or two, three to five times a week. Although I have a lot of natural flexibility, I still work hard to maintain it.”¹

Once you are at the golf course a solid pre-game warm-up is crucial before hitting that first drive. To improve performance you have to prepare your body. A study done by Monash University over a 7 week period found that golfers who had a specific warm-up program just before and after play increased their club head speeds on average by 24% versus hardly any change in a control group who did not participate in the warm-up. Another study found that 70% of the golfers in their study never warm-up prior to starting their round with only 3.8% who had an occasional warm-up.^{2,3} These studies illustrate that not only do most amateur golfers not properly warm-up before a round of golf but if they did they could improve performance on the course.

Your warm up should always start by getting to the course early. Take care of your club house duties, and then hit the driving range. First do some active range of motion exercises for your neck, shoulders, hips, and low back. Make sure to stretch each of these as well, and then move into taking a few shots with each of your clubs on the driving range. Finally, spend a few minutes on the putting green to get a feel for the greens and to build your putting confidence before hitting that first tee.

We all have that “go to” club in our bag that can give us a lift on our round. Whether it gives us a shot down the center of the fairway or helps us sink a 40 foot putt. It’s important because it keeps you in the game. I encourage you not to forget your most important piece of golfing equipment that will keep you in the game --- you! When it comes to scoring most people say you make or break your score around the greens. Truth is most of your scoring happens before you arrive at the first tee. Make sure to upgrade yourself to a better healthier you and watch your performance excel on and off the course.

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Sources:

1. Golf Digest, February 2004, Woods, McDaniel
2. Br J Sports Med., 2004 Dec; 38(6):762-5
3. J Sci Med Sport, 2003 Jun; 6(2):210-5.