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How To Integrate Weight Training Properly Into Your Golf Exercise Program

By Sean Cochran

Are you too confused about weight training for golf?

There are many opinions in the golf world on whether weight training is beneficial or counter-productive to the golf swing.

On the PGA Tour it is a well-known fact that the majority of professional golfers are implementing golf fitness exercises into their training regimen. The goal of such golf fitness exercises is to improve their play on the golf course.

First and foremost, as a professional strength and conditioning coach on the PGA Tour, I see the benefits of a golf specific exercise program are well documented.

The confusion for most amateur golfers probably centers around what specific training modalities and exercises should they include in their golf fitness programs and what are the professional golfers doing.

I get a lot of questions on how are the professional golfers programs set-up, what specific exercises do they incorporate in their programs, and are the exercises in such programs similar to those found in local health clubs. A lot of people ask me if they should include actual dumbbell and barbell exercises into their golf exercise program.

The goal of this article is to provide you information on what the components, modalities, and exercises that compromise a good golf fitness program.

I will also provide you with a breakdown and sequence of a good golf fitness program.

First and foremost, I need to define a few terms to help you create an understanding of the basic goals of a golf fitness program. The main goal of a golf fitness program should be to improve your golf game through the development of your physical body. In order for you to meet this goal, the golf exercises within your program must develop the body relative to the golf swing.

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At this point, I must explain a few things about the biomechanics of the golf swing. The golf swing is a total body athletic activity. Meaning the entire body is utilized to swing the golf club. Just as in baseball, you do not throw with only you're your, but rather your entire body. The same is true of the golf swing; you swing the golf club with your entire body. This in the world of strength and conditioning is defined as an "integrated total body athletic action".

The golf swing is easily defined as an athletic action incorporating the entire body to execute. Knowing this point, a golf fitness program must incorporate exercises for the entire body. A term we like to call "integration". Integration is the utilization of exercises that incorporate the entire body. For example, the golf swing incorporates a rotational movement of the core (abdominals, lower back, hips, and obliques). An integrated golf specific exercise incorporating all these muscles would be a physio-ball Russian Twist in which all these muscles are working in a rotational pattern.

This is very different than isolating each muscle of the core and training them separately with isolation exercises such as abdominal crunches. The point to be made is; integrate the muscles of the body rather than isolating each muscle in a golf fitness program.

Secondly, the exercises within a golf fitness program must be "cross-specific" to the anatomical positions, movement patterns, and energy requirements of the golf swing. Simply stated this means train your body with exercises that place your body in the position you perform the golf swing, utilize exercises that move your body through the ranges of motion of the golf swing, and develop the needed energy requirements of golf.

For example, a golf swing is performed in a standing "athletic position". Knowing this fact, it would probably be of greater benefit to perform a physio-ball squat rather than a seated leg extension for the golf swing, why? Because the physio-ball squat places your body in a position similar to a position in which the golf swing is executed. A leg extension isolates the quadriceps in a seated position, which does not train the body in an integrated movement pattern, nor in a position similar to the golf swing.

Cross-specific training results in a "transfer of training effect" onto to golf swing. This simply means the exercises you are performing directly affect your golf swing in a positive manner. One goal of a golf fitness program is to get the greatest amount of benefit from each of your exercises.

If you keep these two principles integration and cross-specific in mind when developing your golf fitness program. The choices made in the selection of exercises will undoubtedly be better for your golf swing.

Once these basic principles are understood you may begin the process of developing a golf fitness program. A golf fitness program consists of a series of modules. The modules are essentially different pieces of the program geared towards developing a specific improvement within the body. As a whole, the separate modules together comprise a golf fitness program. For example, flexibility training is one module that is contained within a golf fitness program. The goal of the flexibility module is to develop the flexibility parameters within the body required of the golf swing. Listed below in sequential order with a brief definition are the modules that comprise a comprehensive golf fitness program.

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1. Flexibility Training: exercises to develop flexibility within the body required of the golf swing.
2. Balance Training: modalities geared toward improving your balance capacities in relation to the golf swing.
3. Joint Integrity Training: Exercises to develop strength and endurance in the joints of the body. Injury prevention based exercises for the shoulders, hips, and knees.
4. Core Training: Exercises to develop the required stabilization, strength, and endurance in the core region of the body for the golf swing. Utilizes a variety of modalities and equipment such as physio-balls, medicine balls, tubing, and dumbbells.
5. Total Body Training: Integrated total body strength, endurance, and power training exercises. Geared towards developing the needed strength, endurance, and power within the body in a cross-specific manner relative to the golf swing.

The most important principle to remember relative to the modules comprising a golf fitness program are the goals of each module and the order.

Training order is of the greatest importance with a golf fitness program.

Often times the golfer will attempt to develop power within their muscles before achieving the proper levels of flexibility that the demanding golf swing requires.

If you train this way, you will most likely develop power in the body, but you will likely not be able to use it effectively.

For example, if you develop greater amounts of power in the core region of the body, but don't have the flexibility to execute a full shoulder turn. The ability of your body to utilize your increased power will be less than optimal. I can't emphasize to you enough, keep the training order consistent as I outlined above.

Finally, the number of exercise choices you have in terms of flexibility, balance, joint integrity, core training, and total body exercises for the golf swing are too many to count.

There is also many types of equipment you can use for each component of your golf exercise program.

You can use stretch cords, tubing, medicine balls, dumbbells, and all other types of equipment within a golf fitness program. The points to keep in mind when choosing the actual exercises for your program are: 1) Do the exercises train the body in the anatomical positions of the golf swing? 2) Do the exercises take the body through the ranges of motion entailed within the golf swing? And 3) Do the exercises develop the required energy requirements of the golf swing?

If you use these questions in the decision making process of exercise selection, the final program you

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develop will most certainly be beneficial to your golf swing.

Sean Cochran

**** The contents of this article are not to be considered as medical advice. Always consult a physician before beginning or changing any fitness program.****

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Sean Cochran is one of the most recognized golf fitness instructors in the world today. He travels the PGA Tour regularly with 2005 PGA & 2004 Masters Champion Phil Mickelson. He has made many of his golf tips, golf instruction and golf swing improvement techniques available to amateur golfers on the website

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How To Correctly Weight Train For Golf Like Tiger, Vijay, And Phil

By Sean Cochran

I often hear from amateur golfers about how training with weights makes them feel "tight" and it ruin's their golf swing. Traveling on the PGA Tour I disagree with this point of view completely. It is well known that the top players on the PGA Tour; Tiger, Vijay, and Phil workout regularly. They praise the benefits of their workouts in the development of their golf swing. I am a first hand observer of what they do in the gym on the days they play.

As a result, I see the reasons why amateurs do not workout as excuses rather than legitimate reasons. I would guess that the difficulty amateurs have with weight training or working out in relation to the game of golf is how to do it correctly. This article will discuss how to properly workout to improve your golf game.

Weight training is not bad for the golfer if done correctly.

Weight training done incorrectly is bad for the golfer.

This is where the amateur gets sidetracked, frustrated, and ends up thinking weight training is bad for golf. A typical weight training program found at many health clubs can be detrimental to the golf swing. These types of programs can make you feel "tight", adversely affect your golf game, and leave you frustrated.

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The reason why these "generic" training programs are counter productive to golf is their inability take into account what is required of the body in relation to the golf swing.

Golfers need to be very aware of a few important concepts when weight training in relation to the golf swing. First and foremost, any training program for golf needs to be cross-specific. A cross-specific training program develops the body to the positions, movements, and requirements of the sport you participate in.

Granted everyone's swing is slightly different but the base components are the same. All golfers rotate around a fixed spine angle, transfer weight forward and back during the swing, generate clubhead speed, attempt to square the club at impact, and complete the swing in a balanced finish position.

The main goal of a cross-specific training program is develop your body physically around the golf swing. This induces what is termed a transfer of training effect onto the golf course. Simplified this states that the training you do in the gym pays off on the course in a positive manner.

Designing a weight training program for golf is a simple process if done correctly. The best place to start is with flexibility. Golfers need to be flexible. The golf swing requires you to move the club through a long range of motion, thus requiring your body to be very flexible. Areas of the body that typically require large amounts of flexibility for golf are; the hamstrings, lower back, hips, and shoulders. Oftentimes the amateur's swing can improve from just adding flexibility exercises to their training program.

Another aspect of a cross-specific training program for golf is balance training. Balance is the ability of

the body to control its' center of gravity and body parts efficiently. Balance exercises address both the nervous and muscular systems of the body creating greater efficiency in its ability to control body movements and center of gravity.

After you have looked at the flexibility and balance components of a training program for golf, it is time to shift gears to the "weight training" side of the equation. The golf swing requires the development of strength within the muscles of the body. You need muscular strength to maintain a fixed spine angle, create an efficient weight transfer, and develop clubhead speed.

The development of strength in the muscular system is where the amateur commonly makes mistakes. Remember all the exercises in a cross-specific training program for golf must revolve around the movements of the swing, and create a benefit to your play on the course.

Typically, strength training is thought of as a group of exercises that create "bulk" and build the "beach muscles". Bench pressing 300 and developing biceps like Arnold does not mean you'll drive the golf ball 300 yards.

Developing strength for the golf swing is very different from "football" or "bodybuilding" strength exercises. The golf swing uses the whole the body, from feet to fingertips. As a result, golfers need to strengthen the entire body cross-specifically to the movements of the golf swing. A key to strength

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training exercises for golf is to integrate the entire body into the exercise patterns, rather than isolating a specific muscle (a.k.a. bicep curls and bench press).

For example, bicep curls may make you look great for the beach or fill out your golf shirt, but you do not swing the golf club with your biceps only. You use your entire body, and as a result the strength training part of your program, must incorporate the entire body. Exercises such as ball crunches, Russian twists, single leg squats are beneficial strength training exercises for golf.

Completing the template of a golf specific training program is endurance training. The golf swing is a repetitive movement. In a single round of golf the swing is repeated numerous times. A week on Tour might find players swinging the golf club well over 1000's times. As a result, it is necessary to develop the endurance capacities of your muscular system.

Developing endurance in your muscular system allows you to repeat a movement over and over again without getting tired, a key component of the golf swing. Once the body becomes tired, the ability to swing the golf club properly becomes impeded resulting in miss hits, lost distance, and poor shots. Bottom line, you need to make the same swing consistently to score consistently. Endurance training assists in this process.

To summarize; weight training and working out is beneficial to the golfer, if and only if it is done correctly. The wrong choice in the type of training program, exercise selection, or even exercise sequence can hinder your golf game. Choosing a training program that is cross-specific to the golf swing and induces a transfer of training effect onto the golf course is best. This type of program incorporates; flexibility, balance, strength, endurance, and power exercises relative to the golf swing providing benefits to your body and golf game.

Sean Cochran

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