

Summer is over now and the golf season is winding down. Sadly, many of us will soon be hanging up the golf shoes for the winter, if you haven't already. Personally, my golf clubs will sit in the back corner of my garage until I decide to dust them off next spring. However, if you are like many golfers that I know and improving your game for next golf season is important to you, there is a chance that you may want to take a couple of lessons from a golf professional this winter. You may even practice your swing at an indoor range from time to time.

What if I told you that I know of a way to make your golf swing better than ever? How would you feel if I said that, this winter, you could make swinging your golf club easier and much more consistent? What if you could noticeably increase your club head speed? Trust me when I say that you can do all of these things this winter. If you want to be a better golfer next year, then the cold weather season should be viewed not as the off-season, but more as pre-season.

No, I'm not going to tell you to purchase a new device that will dramatically improve your score. And no, we are not going to spend more time discussing another microscopic point about your swing. We are going to discuss the most important piece of equipment that you take with you out onto the golf course...your own body!

Many golfers make jokes about their own physical shape, but in the same breath complain about how poorly they played that day. I say, commit to making this year different. Don't forget that without your body making them perform, those golf clubs in your bag (including that ultra-light over-sized titanium masterpiece) are nothing more than very expensive metal sticks.

For a great cold weather golf performance program, there are several general areas that need to be included. In my opinion, these are:

- Overall Physical Shape
- Core Strength and Stability
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Proper Postural Alignment

Although the above named areas are separate areas of focus, they are all inter-connected and go hand-in-hand. Let's take a look at each one.

Overall Physical Shape

Let's face it...many Americans are in horrible physical shape. When it comes to golf, if I'm being brutally honest, most players are in such poor shape that their swings are affected and must be altered quite a bit. By committing to a physical fitness program, even one that is not necessarily focused on golf, you will most likely feel much better and perform much better. Your program this winter should include overall body

strengthening, moderate aerobic conditioning, and a few nutritional shifts. An oversized waistline doesn't rotate very well through a golf swing does it?

Core Strength and Stability

The standard biceps curls and bench press need not apply here. You can have the strongest arms and legs in the world, but if they are attached to a marshmallow...what difference will it make in your golf game? Not much. The power and speed of your club swing is increased by integrating core strength and stability with balance and coordination. The pattern of your swing is a series multi-dimensional movements. Core strength and stability integrated with these movement patterns, will allow you to be more consistent with your swing and more efficient at transferring the power generated in your lower body through to your club head.

Flexibility

I can't say enough about the importance of flexibility. The bottom line is that golfers with poor flexibility hit the ball shorter distances, get injured easier, and are essentially limited in how they move. If you want to hit the ball farther, you need to create a greater angle between your shoulders and hips during the backswing. Many speak about the importance of having a flexible torso, but in my opinion, you should focus on the flexibility of your entire body since your entire body is involved in your golf swing.

Balance

Let's look at this in a very basic way. Golf is played outside. Thus, your body and feet are never in exactly the same position twice on a golf course. When you swing a golf club, quite a bit of force and momentum is generated. Slight variations in terrain, weather, and lie of your ball will all affect your swing. If you want the direction of this forceful swing to be as consistent as possible, you must plan for these variations. Just going to a gym and doing a circuit on machines all winter will not achieve this. The environment created is far more predictable than that of a golf course. You must work on moving your body through space in various ways and on a variety of surfaces...not just moving the parts of a machine.

Proper Postural Alignment

Having good posture is key to hitting a great shot. When addressing the ball and preparing for your backswing, finding proper posture is crucial to beginning your swing in the correct plane of movement. Maintaining proper posture and body alignment is in direct relation to strength and flexibility. Overall body strengthening and stretching will help you to address the ball with proper posture. However, having someone observe your posture or taking a picture of your alignment during setup can be very helpful to determine what your problem areas may be. Then you can incorporate certain exercises and stretches to more effectively focus on them.

There are many other benefits of getting involved in a cold weather golf performance program that range from prevention of injury to overall enjoyment of the game. When trying to decide how to spend your cold weather months, just remember that the next golf season is only about 6 months away. In 6 months time, you can easily improve in all of the above mentioned areas. In 6 months time, you can feel better and perform better. In 6 months time, you can considerably improve your body...the most important tool you will take with you on the course! 6 months will be here exactly 6 months from now whether you like it or not. Why not like it?

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