

The Five Keys to Off-Season Training for Golf:

Here we go again; it's WINTER and for most of us that means snow outside and the golf clubs stuck in the closet. Here's the good news. Just because the weather doesn't permit you to go work on your golf swing, doesn't mean we can't do something inside that will help maintain and improve your swing for this year's opening day. Here's a list of the five most important things to do during the off season to help keep your sway in tip top shape.

- 1) Putting indoors
- 2) Movement pattern training
- 3) Swing a lightweight club
- 4) Improve your strength
- 5) Improve your flexibility

Putting Indoors:

I know it's an old cliché, but it's true, putting is the most important factor to improve if you want a lower your handicap. There are a variety of indoor putting cups that you can buy and place in your office or home to get some practice during the off-season. Try to putt on a hard compact carpet surface and focus on timing and rhythm to groove a consistent stroke. Try to get it at least 15 minutes of putting every other day during the off-season and this will make big strides to improving your game on opening day.

Movement Pattern Training: **The K-Vest is Ideal for this Type of Training******

If you have a chronic swing fault that you just can't seem to get rid of each year, then movement pattern training is what you need to focus on during the off-season. **The problem with most reoccurring swing faults is that we practice the bad habits more than the good ones.** In other words, each time we swing we are repeating all the bad habits and we don't spend enough time practicing the new good movement to counterbalance these old set patterns. Use this off-season as the perfect opportunity to groove a perfect movement pattern so the old ones disappear for good this time.

For example, if you sway (your trail leg moves away from the target during the backswing) then focus this off-season on standing in front of **a mirror** and turning without letting your lower body move away from the target. If your head lifts up during the backswing, then stand underneath something in your house where if you lift up as you turn your head will touch the object. By focusing on one movement pattern and practice say at least three times a week you can conquer even the most stubborn swing fault during one off-season.

Swing a Lightweight Club:

How many of us would love to start this season with a 15 more yards on your drive. This is not as hard as it sounds if you train appropriately. The secret to improving your clubhead speed is to train your body how to stabilize high speeds of rotation. In other words, you can only swing as fast as you can stabilize, hence why most of us fall over or lose our balance if we try to swing harder. This off-season, go buy a kids driver or a lightweight club to swing. Research has shown if you spend three times a week swinging a lightweight club your body will learn how to stabilize higher speeds of rotation. Since the club is lighter that you're used to it will be traveling at a higher speeds than normal. Now all you have to do is try to maintain good balance and a solid posture as you swing the club.

Improve Your Strength and Flexibility:

Most of us know if we improved our level of fitness it would absolutely improve our golf swing. The problem is, many of us don't have the discipline to start a fitness routine or wouldn't know what exercises to perform even if we wanted to workout. I think the key principle that everyone needs to understand is that 10 minutes focusing on flexibility and strength performed three times a week can make a massive change in our ability to perform a golf swing. It doesn't take 60 minutes in a gym five times a week to notice a difference. I am confident most of us can find 10 minutes to set aside for improving our golf body.

So the next question is what should we do? Here is a short list of the key exercises you should perform for golf this off-season. All eight exercises should take less than 10 minutes to perform.

1) Abdominal strength - try to knock out at least two sets of sit-ups (any variety) to help improve your core strength. Each set should last until you feel a slight burn in your stomach.

2) Tricep strength - the large muscle in your arm that helps get width and speed in your downswing. Take a dumbbell and hold it straight over your head. Keeping your elbow above your head lower the weight behind your head and back. Then return the weight to the extended position. Do this 10 times with each arm for tricep strength.

3) Forearm/Grip strength - the research is clear on this one - longer hitters have better grip strength. Get a tennis ball and try to squeeze the ball as hard as you can for up to 5 seconds on each hand at least 3 times. This will build great grip and forearm strength.

4) Leg strength - The legs are the foundation of the swing. Try lunges for better legs this season. Holding onto a weight in both hands step forward with your right leg. Lower yourself down until your right thigh is parallel with the ground and your right knee is directly over your right foot. Now step forward with your left leg and repeat the move. Try 10 lunges with each leg.

5) Lat flexibility - the Latissimus Dorsi muscle (the Lat) is a key muscle for power development in the shoulders during golf. Unfortunately it is typically a very tight muscle in most golfers. Here is how you stretch it. Lie on your back with your knees pulled up to your chest and your arms directly over your head holding onto a golf club. Keeping your knees as close to your chest as possible, try to push the club along the ground as far away from your head as possible and hold. You will definitely feel this one in your Lats. Hold for 20-30 seconds and release.

6) Thoracic Spine Rotation - this is your ability to create a full shoulder turn. Sitting in a chair with a club held across your chest, try to rotate your shoulders as far as possible clockwise while keeping your knees together and pointing forward. Repeat in both directions up to 10 times. This will get easier.

7) Hip Rotation - one of the tightest areas on most golfers is their hips. Here is an easy exercise to start and develop better hip range of motion. Start by lying on your side with your knees bent and your legs on top of each other. Keeping your knees together, try to lift your top foot as high as you can without letting your knees separate. Repeat this back and forth 10 times and then repeat on the other side. For more difficulty, you can lift the top leg about 6 inches off the bottom leg and repeat the same exercise.

Good luck this off-season and now we can all look forward to an exciting new swing this year!