INVESTIGATING THE TRENDS IN YOUR GAME

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How Every Day

Impacts The Way You Play

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Golf is a game of improvements. The idea is that the more we play, the better we'll become, but this isn't necessarily the truth. In fact, the more you play, the more you can become injured or hurt. How many times have you gone to the driving range after work, hitting ball after ball but leaving with the same result and sometimes even a sore back? Over time, that soreness you sometimes had after playing develops into every time after playing.

This is the body's warning to us that something is not right and should be immediately addressed before practice makes permanent.

For those who choose to be proactive, let's discuss what not to do. In my practice, I have seen both sides to this coin. The bigger mistake comes from those who decide that they're going to try to resolve the issue on their own through stretching, strengthening or a combination of both.

These conventional exercise methods can be purposeful, but situationally speaking, they could do more harm than good. This becomes a problem because most people separate the body into areas of tightness vs. weakness, but this is deceiving and rarely accurate.

A common misconception that has become widely taught and accepted is the myth linking tight hamstrings to lower-back pain. If this is true, it's important to identify why the hamstrings have become tight and begin treating the why before attempting to break down the body into treatable components based off feel.

In most cases, however, tight hamstrings are usually not the problem. In fact, it's the opposite. Redirecting our attention to the front of our bodies is where you will find hip flexors, which are muscles that flex or bend the hip. This is a problem area for a vast majority of people, as many of us lack flexibility here.

But, again, why did these muscles of flexion become tight? Typically, this results from too much sitting throughout the day in poor postures that create lazy habits that will reduce your capacity to tolerate movement outside of those postures.

Now, take what I just said and add a golf swing to it. The swing pattern and mechanics would most likely be significantly flawed and compensatory, which are a recipe for disaster.

Looking at the bigger picture here, our goal should directly focus on the correction of these altered movement patterns or postural dysfunctions. This requires us to take a deeper look into our everyday movement relating to our individual lifestyle needs.

What position do you spend the majority of your day in? Do you sit at a desk for most of the day? Do you do a lot of standing or walking? Are you required to lift heavy objects or perform physical labor? Do you spend your day commuting from one place to the next?

These questions are an excellent place to start and can help you understand your capacity toward movement and the dysfunction commonly associated with it.

To make sense of all this, we must somehow examine our locomotive tendencies. We do that using a simple tool known as the Functional Movement Screen, or FMS for short. Gray Cook created this functional screen to develop a way to quantify movement patterns and risk for injury in healthy individuals.

This test does not diagnose but rather identifies observable limitations and asymmetries in the balance between mobility and stability using seven different yet basic movement patterns to help restore proper function and measure outcomes.
They are:

- Deep squat
- Hurdle step
- Inline lunge
- Shoulder mobility
- Active straight leg raise
- Trunk stability pushup
- Rotatory stability

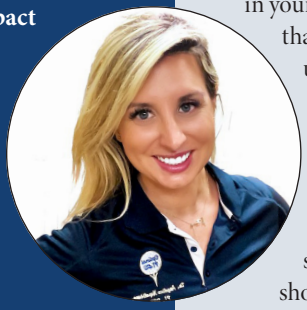
In the next issue, I will discuss each one of these seven patterns in detail, with tips on how to correct and restore movement efficiency to improve your golf game.

In the meantime, I would love to hear from you! Email me with any questions pertaining to your movement dilemmas/concerns or regarding movement, function, injury, pain and, of course, anything swing-related. Send emails to golftipsmag@gmail.com. **GT**

ASK THE DOC

With Dr. Angelica Napolitano, PT, DPT
aka the "Golf Doc"

Welcome to our "Ask the Doc" column, where I answer real questions from real people regarding their golf game and the physical limitations that may impact their ability to perform. I am a board-certified doctor of physical therapy and golf rehab and performance specialist. Each month, I will choose questions at random to answer. To enter your question for future editions, please email golftipsmag@gmail.com and keep a lookout each month to see if your question was featured.



Q: *This past year, my golf game was put on hold from having to quarantine, so I went from playing two to three times a week to nothing at all for months. I let laziness get the best of me during isolation and never got back on track with any sort of fitness routine. Now that it's warming up, I started playing again, jumping right back into my regular two to three times a week schedule without any physical conditioning or warming up, which I think has locked my neck up on the left. I am a right-handed golfer. What could I be doing wrong to cause this, and are there any stretches to help relieve this problem? Should I go see someone about this? Who is the best type of professional to go see?*

—Brandon L., Cherry Hill, New Jersey

A: This is a great question, as it is very common to see and is usually due to poor postural habits that create a rotational imbalance in our neck muscles. One way to check this is by setting up to the ball in your natural stance. If you notice that you have rounding of the upper back that is shaped like a C, which is what we call C posture, then it's likely that being quarantined for all those months with no exercise has caused your posture to suffer by pulling your head and shoulders forward.

In this posture, it's hard for us to rotate both the mid-back and head (thoracic and cervical spines) with difficulty moving into extension of the spine in the mid-back as well. It's also important for you to check range of motion in your neck in two different positions.

Test in seated position to start and rotate your neck to both sides. Any limitation? If yes, then do the same thing, but this time on your back. If your range of motion is normalized in this position, then it's possible that you are dealing with a stability motor control dysfunction in the neck. Simply put, it's a muscular imbalance in the neck between the right and left sides where one or more of the muscles that rotate the neck are instead working to stabilize the spine, thus reducing range of motion.

If this is truly what's happening, then stretches should be avoided, as flexibility is not the issue. Stretching would only temporarily relieve your imbalance and must be done to the muscles that have become over-facilitated and shortened. Instead, you can try range of motion exercises that are position-dependent with starting on your back. Once the movement pattern is mastered in this position, you can progress the exercise by adding in resistance to the range but remaining in the same position.

Further advance your way through this matrix by going onto your hands and knees in a tabletop position, then to kneeling and eventually into standing. Be aware that you should always consult a doctor of physical therapy when you experience any pain or functional limitation like the one described here for a proper diagnosis. So, it would be smart to make an appointment with a physical therapist before trying this yourself, but do so at your own risk. Good luck!

DISCLAIMER: *The advice and recommendations given here are intended to be purely educational and not to serve as or replace any medical advice given by your doctor or any other medical professional. Please consider the risks before trying any of the recommended suggestions and understand that* Golf Tips Magazine *and the author of this column are not to be held responsible or liable should any persons attempt to recreate this advice with resultant harm and/or physical consequence or repercussion. We advise that you consult with your doctor for proper medical clearance before any attempts are made, and please do so at your own risk.*