

Getting Ready for Golf Season

As many golfers in central Ohio are preparing for a new golf season this year, several aches, pains, and poor golf shots seem to appear. Most performance issues and injuries on the golf course often occur due to improper set-up and specific mobility and/or stability limitations. The Titleist Performance Institute (TPI) is an organization based out of Oceanside, California that certifies golf professionals, medical professionals, and fitness professionals internationally to address these very concerns. TPI is comprised of a board of these professionals that evaluate and perform the most current research on improving golf performance and preventing or treating sports injury. TPI has developed an evidence based screen to evaluate each individual golfer for identifying physical limitations that contribute to performance issues and injury. The TPI screen can be performed in less than 5 minutes and is a necessity for identifying mobility and/or stability problems that directly impact the quality of your golf swing and risk for injury.

Due to the rotary nature of the golf swing the highest rate of injury is to the low back. Estimates of amateur golfers with low back pain are as high as 51.67% and 23.7% on the PGA tour. The five most common mechanisms of injury in golfers are:

- 1) Poor body mechanics- most common in amateur golfers
- 2) Poor swing mechanics- most common in amateur golfers
- 3) Excessive Practice (Overuse)- most common in professional golfers
- 4) No Regular Customized Exercise Program
- 5) Poor Nutrition
- 6) Improper Club Fitting

There are significant shear forces and stress that occur to the low back that can be reduced if your body is fine tuned for this motion. Unfortunately, most golfers do not address the physical limitations or fundamentals that increase stress to the low back.

One of the major risk factors for injury and swing flaws is postural dysfunction. Posture issues can be classified into 3 categories for golfers: C posture, S posture, and Neutral posture. C posture is defined as a rounding of the upper back with hips tucked under at address (making the appearance of a "C"). C Posture occurs in 33.1% of amateur golfers.



S posture is defined as an excessive curve at the low back with the hips sticking out (making the appearance of a “S”). S posture occurs in 25.3% of amateur golfers.



Neutral posture is defined as the ideal position with a neutral spine angle in between the above two extremes. Once the postural category is established it is easy to screen an individual and develop a stretching(mobility) and strengthening (stability) program to achieve the desired neutral position. When

a golfer can achieve the proper posture at set-up your risk for swing flaws significantly decreases as well as your risk for compensation and injury.

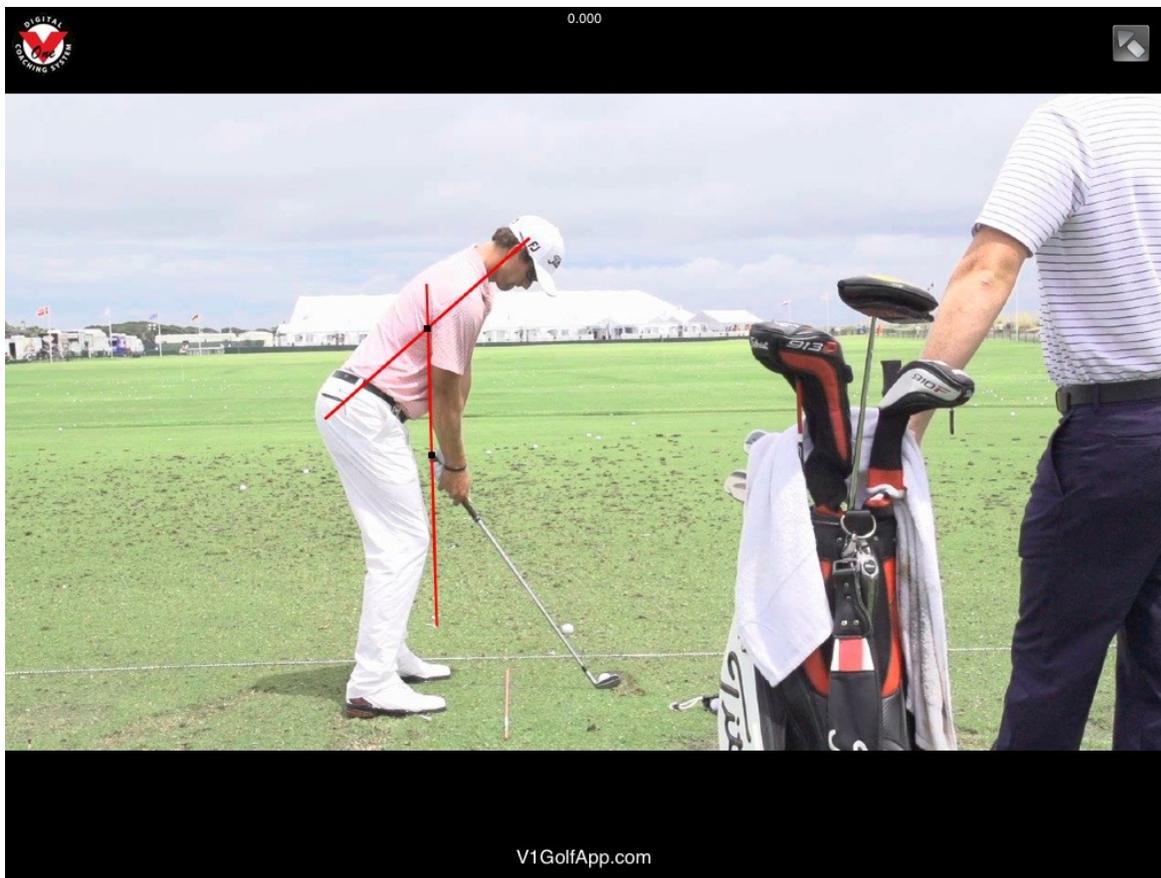
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Arnold Palmer once said, "Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated; it satisfies the soul and frustrates the intellect. It is at the same time rewarding and maddening - and it is without a doubt the greatest game mankind has ever invented."

Golf can be a hard game. One of the hard things about the game of golf, as in life, is that there are many things beyond our control. We can't control the wind or the weather or a bounce we may get. When viewed in this light, it becomes evident, that we have to be very good at being in control of the things we can control. What are those things? In large part, they are those things that happen before we swing; our grip, our posture, our ball position, our alignment, our thoughts, and to a certain degree, our swing. These basics set into motion a series of events or chain reaction that occurs throughout our swing. When one of these is off, it will create more moving parts that will need to be "timed up" at impact. The most efficient machine is the one with the fewest moving parts. The downswing, from the top of your backswing to impact, takes less than a second to complete, and the more things you need to "time up" in that less than a second, the more inconsistent you will be.

Let's examine posture. No one sets out to have poor posture, but poor posture can ruin your golf swing before you even start! Limitations in mobility and stability have a detrimental effect on your ability to set up in correct posture and your ability to efficiently and effectively transfer energy through your body into your swing. Efficient golf swings start from the ground up, and poor posture can inhibit and one's ability to do so. The majority of golfer can be lumped into two posture categories that have negative effects on your golf swing; "S" posture and "C" posture. Both limit the ability of the pelvis to stabilize and rotate throughout the swing, causing numerous swing faults and making that "less than a second" downswing a virtual timing nightmare. Poor posture will not only get one started poorly, it will lead to the inability to maintain one's posture throughout the swing and will create more moving parts that make returning the club to impact consistently, impossible.

Proper posture, as seen below with 2013 Master's Champion, Adam Scott, has a neutral pelvis position and a straight back (no excessive arching in the lower back or rounding in the upper back), bending from the hip sockets, with a slight flex in the knees. Your weight should be evenly distributed on both feet with the weight more towards the balls of the feet. Your hands and arms should hang naturally and the back of your shoulders should be in line with the front of your knees.



Barry Hinckley is the head golf professional at Jefferon Country Club and a TPI golf professional specializing in golf instruction and addressing the body-swing connection with 10 years of experience on professional tours.

Please contact Justin Weisbrod, MPT and/or Barry Hinckley, PGA if you are interested in scheduling a TPI assessment and/or lesson to diagnose and fix your limitations contributing to your injury or not reaching your full golf potential.