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Get Ready: Golf

Score like the pros with
nine golf-specific moves

Golfers are athletes, so you'll need to train like one to avoid nagging injuries and boost your game. And yes, the age-old proverbs still hold true: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure... A stitch in time saves nine. Whether the goal is to shrink your handicap or avoid a slipped disk, perform these preventive maintenance exercises right now. Come golf season, a pain-free, fluid swing will help you hit the green when it counts.

GOLF Q & A

How to drop strokes from your next round

Q I purchased a new set of clubs, yet I still ache after an hour at the driving range or a few holes on the golf course. What's the deal?

A Technological advances aside, the club does not play the game; the golfer does. In addition, many recreational golfers do little physical activity other than play golf on the weekends.

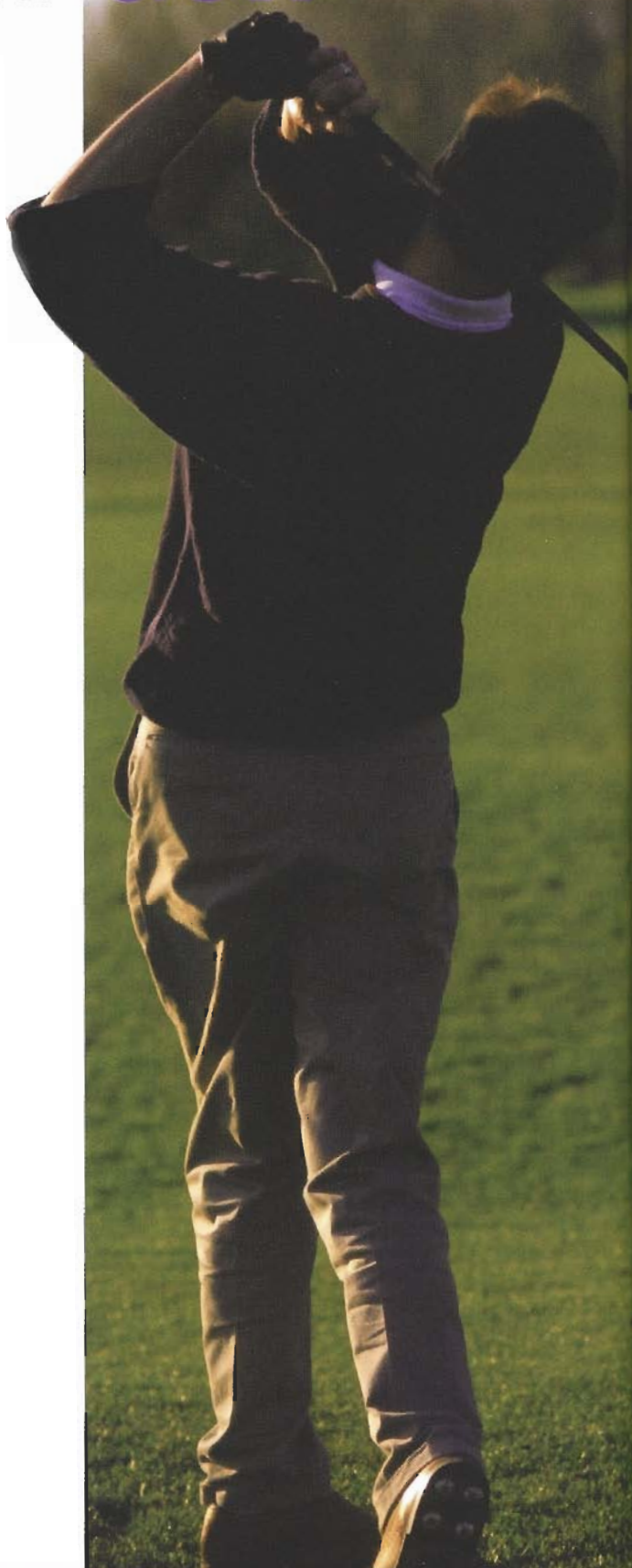
To withstand the stresses of the sport, incorporate a well-designed, personalized exercise program, says California-based strength and conditioning guru, Paul Chek. Just be sure the training plan addresses three key areas: 1. hip joint flexibility; 2. spinal flexibility (especially between your neck and lower back); and 3. deep abdominal muscle strength and stability. Chek out (sorry, bad pun) the golf-specific exercises on the next page.

Q A golf instructor once told me, "Perfect practice makes perfect." Can you explain what he meant?

A When it comes to mastering your swing, repetition is the mother of skill, provided there is skill in the repetitions.

It may take 300 trials (repetitions) before a movement or exercise feels "natural." Problem is, every time you perform an action with poor technique, it becomes easier to do it incorrectly and harder to do it right. This explains why you may hit 100-300 balls at the driving range on a Saturday afternoon, but fail to break par. Worse yet, it may take between 3,000 and 5,500 repetitions to "unlearn" your bad swing mechanics, says Chek.

Continue to take lessons with an expert and then practice to reinforce your new skills.



GOLF-SPECIFIC WORKOUT

Building strength or power without a foundation of flexibility and stability is like putting a Formula One engine in a beat-up '72 VW Beetle. You might have fantastic horsepower, but the car will fall apart before you get around the block, says Chek.

These moves improve flexibility, stability and strength in the golf-specific muscles of your shoulders, abs, low back, hips, glutes and thighs. Hold the stretches for 30 seconds each. Do three sets and 10 reps of the stability and strength exercises.

FLEXIBILITY



Seated 90/90 hip stretch



Standing shoulder internal rotator stretch



Standing shoulder external rotator stretch



Seated groin stretch



Prone back extension



Side lying shoulder/spine stretch



Supine hip opener

STABILITY & STRENGTH



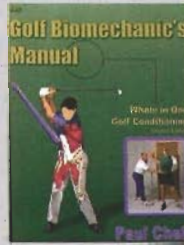
Prone cobra



Standing body weight lunge

SWING LIKE THE PROS

School the competition with cutting-edge golf training tools



Before you drop your next paycheck on some hi-tech golf gear, check out *The Golf Biomechanic's Manual* by Paul Chek. This first-class training guide helps you identify and correct problem areas, plus shape up for the game. Added bonus: A complete workout requires little more than a set of dumbbells, a stability ball and an elastic band. \$79.95, chekinstitute.com



You don't have to go much further than the local driving range to hear more F-bombs dropped than a Dave Chapelle stand-up routine. Yes, golf is a challenging sport that involves balance, strength and coordination. So why does this gentleman's game make you swear like a drunken sailor? Put simply, lack of formal training. Less than 13 percent of the 27 million adult golfers ever take a formal lesson, according to the National Golf Foundation in Jupiter, Florida.

But what if you have limited time, refuse to pay \$150 per hour for some teenage caddie to tell you to "be the ball," or worse, get heckled by your buddies every time you step on the green? Enter GolfPro2Go.

Forty bucks allows you to take a dozen swings in front of a NASA-like video-capture kiosk (strategically placed in golf shops, country clubs and airports). The system sends your data to a Master PGA Professional (less than 1 percent of all pros hold this credential), who analyzes your mechanics and sends a customized video lesson via e-mail. You practice the recommendations at your convenience and, voila, impress the would-be hecklers next time you play 18 holes.

\$40/lesson, golfpro2go.com