

## **Chiropractic's new role in the golf community**

In case you haven't noticed the beautiful relationship between chiropractic, golf, and practicing in the sunny state of Florida, I am here to show you the endless possibilities that exist. In this 4-part series I will discuss how the chiropractor can attain both great results in working with golfers and become known as the golf doctor in his or her area. My goal of this series is to lay out the most effective way to evaluate, treat, and design programs for the golfer. I will begin by outlining what golf fitness and injury prevention entails and what knowledge you need to succeed in this field.

Let me preface this article by refuting a myth; you don't have to be a golfer to specialize in the treatment, injury prevention, and fitness of golfers. However, knowing the biomechanics of golf and the human body is essential to understand what the golfer's body is subject to during the golf swing and the possible causes of injury. This knowledge will also be critical when conversing with local golf professionals when you start to work with their clients.

The absolute foundation of any golf fitness program is the golf performance evaluation. This assessment is necessary to determine any physical limitations which will lead to swing faults and/or over-use injuries. The golf performance evaluation should consist of a video swing analysis and a golf physical screening to properly diagnose the golfer. The role of the video swing analysis is to visually see any swing faults or flaws that may produce miss hits, loss of power, or injury. Today, many golf performance enhancement certifications train you to diagnose from video, but, not to give technique training. Technique training is out of your scope and should be left to the golf professional. If you don't feel comfortable with video analysis you can have the golf professional provide you with his or her assessment. However, it is important to know what physical limitations contribute to the swing faults identified.

The term swing fault describes any aspect of the swing that is not sound in its technique. These swing faults are caused by two issues; either a technique issue or a physical limitation. As stated previously, technique flaws are for the golf professional, whereas the physical limitations are for the golf doctor. For instance, the golfer with a flat shoulder plane during the backswing may not understand what a proper backswing should be, but during your evaluation you determine the golfer is lacking the necessary shoulder range-of-motion and/or chest and lat flexibility to perform a full and proper backswing. Can the golf pro alone fix this backswing? No, but with the help of the golf doctor who specializes in golf fitness and injury prevention, he can. The challenge of distinguishing swing fault from technique error is where the golf physical screen comes into the picture.

By following the video swing analysis with the physical screen, you can confirm the suspected physical limitations that may be producing the dreaded swing fault. I suggest a head to toe screening that tests the golfer's core stability, flexibility, joint mobility/stability, balance & coordination, and muscular strength & endurance specific to golf. The screening will make the connection between swing fault and physical limitation by cross referencing your findings from the video analysis and the screening. The golf swing is full of these swing fault-physical limitation connections and differing between a technique flaw and a physical limitation is paramount in the success of the doctor and golfer. On top of that, you will make the golf pro look better due to the simple fact that

after clearing up or lessening the physical limitations, the golfer will be able to execute what the pro is asking of him or her. When you consistently achieve these results you will see many referrals from golf professionals seeking to get their golfer in better “golf shape” or to clear up nagging injuries.

Now that you have uncovered the golfer’s weakest links, your next step in the process is to design a corrective exercise program based on his or her golf performance evaluation. The program’s initial goal is to clear up the issues deemed to be physical limitations as to improve performance and to prevent the injuries that these limitations cause. Strict adherence to these exercises will allow the golfer to turn his or her weak links into their strengths. Once the golfer has reached this point you can now develop a program that is more advanced and geared towards performance enhancement. If you were to build a program without clearing up the physical limitations, you most likely would be feeding their dysfunction. This dilemma could actually cause more swing faults and definitely increase the risk of over-use injury.

This process of evaluating a golfer described above should be for the relatively healthy golfer without acute injury. The basis for a golf fitness program can simply be for performance enhancement and injury prevention, or can be abbreviated to search for the root cause of an over-use injury. In this instance, I recommend treating the golfer’s acute injury conservatively until the pain has subsided enough to allow normal movement. At this point it is time to perform the video swing analysis to look for any swing fault that could be causing the over-use strain to the given structure. With video in hand, next perform an abbreviated golf physical screening that pertains to the swing faults discovered. Your prescription to the golfer would then be to continue conservative treatment, address the physical limitations found in the abbreviated screening, and refer the golfer to a golf professional to check his technique flaws that may be causing the pain syndrome.

This protocol for treating the golfer is not only comprehensive and effective; it will get the attention of the local golf community as to your expertise in the field. In the subsequent parts of this series I will describe in detail *Golf specific functional testing*, *Program design for the golfer*, and *Treating the injured golfer*.