Pilates for Golf

Tricia Welch

Comprehensive Program

Chicago January 2017
Abstract

Living and working in a golf destination resort and community, the majority of my clients are recreational retired golfers. They understand the fundamentals of the game but not always the conditioning elements they need for not only continued play, but for game and scoring improvement.

My core clientele are baby boomers who have begun to experience the effects of aging in their bodies. There is definitely a large demand for more knowledge and for an understanding of the role Pilates can play to deter the aging process and to balance the body from front to back and from side to side.

This group of people needs more than a few squats and a couple of practice swings to go out and play 18 holes without feeling the effects either on the course or after their round.
# Table of Contents

- Title Page 1
- Abstract 2
- Table of contents 3
- Introduction 4-5
- Case Study 6
- Program (BASI Block) 7-9
- Conclusion 10
- Bibliography 11
Introduction

Proper mechanics in a round of golf require strength, flexibility, and a strong core. There are several performance benefits that can help golfers to be more balanced, symmetrical, and therefore stronger in their game:

- Increasing range of motion in shoulders can help optimize a backswing
- Torso flexibility improves the swing motion which results in better distance
- Symmetry of back muscles can help create a smoother swing
- Holding the body in proper form can decrease injury
- Strengthening the core will improve alignment and posture through a round
There is constant movement throughout a round of golf yet none of it is symmetrical. Twisting during a swing, squatting to read a putt, carrying a bag through a round are just a few things that can cause imbalances in muscle structure and development over time. Golf stresses the body in unique ways that can lead to chronic injuries. Some muscles could be weakened and others overused, causing imbalances.

Imbalances could encompass those of lower back, hips, legs, arms and shoulders, leading to higher risk of injury particularly for those over 50. Drives may become shorter, swings may become less accurate, and stamina or overall energy level could also be affected.

- Worldwide, it is estimated that 50-60 million people play golf on a regular basis. In the United States alone, more than 26 million people now play the sport. (National Golf Foundation 2006)

- The most common sites for injury among amateur men are located the low back (36%), elbows (32.5%), hands and wrists (21.2%), and shoulders (11%). Amateur women golfers have the greatest occurrence of injuries in the elbows (35.5%), followed by low back (27.4), shoulders (16.1%), and hands and wrists (14.5%).(Metz 1999)
Case Study

Kelly is a 55-year old client I have worked with over the last three years. She has retired from her position as a corporate lawyer and moved to our golf resort community. We started working on private training in the gym to increase overall strength and conditioning three years ago which she desperately needed after hours of sedentary desk work over the years. She then started playing 3-5 rounds of golf weekly, playing tennis 1-2 times a week, and does 2 additional days of strength and agility training in the gym. Her activity level has increased tremendously since retiring.

Because of the increase of activity we realized she was compensating on several movement patterns. In observing Kelly, you can see tight chest, rounded shoulders and a small kyphotic curve through the upper spine. She is also tight through the hips and adductors. She is weak in the glutes. Her right side is weaker and less stable because of her movement in her golf swing from right to left.

Throughout the addition of Pilates sessions, I have focused on creating strength and stability of her lower body, and increasing lateral flexion and rotation of her upper body, thereby decreasing torque on her lower back. These exercises have produced core strength to help Kelly increase her drive distance. We have focused on increasing extension through the upper back to improve posture and tightness through her chest.
Program /Block System

**Warm Up/ Mat**

Pelvic Curl This warm-up helps create movement in the spine and mimics some rotation from golf swings.

Supine Spine Twist

Chest Lift

Chest Lift with rotation

**Foot Work/Reformer**

Parallel heels A nice way to warm up hamstrings and

Parallel toes quadriceps while focusing on pelvic

V Position Toes stability. This is also useful for ankles

Open V Heels and feet.

Open V Toes

Prancing

**Abdominal Work/Cadillac**

Roll Up with Roll Up Bar Focus on building abdominal strength while

Mini Roll Ups creating pelvic lumbar stability.

Mini Roll Ups Oblique

Roll –Up Top Loaded

**Hip Work (Strap Work)/Cadillac**

Frog This sequence is helpful to identify imbalances

Circles (Down, Up) from side to side and challenges to pelvic lumbar

Walking stabilization.

Bicycle

**Spinal Articulation/Chair**

Pelvic Curl Useful for spinal movement and abdominal control
**Stretches/Reformer and Pole**

Standing Lunge  
Helpful in stretching hip flexors and hamstring and in opening upper body. Creates rotation

Pole Series:  
Shoulder stretch/overhead stretch/ patterns for the obliques while keeping a stable

Side stretch/spine twist  
pelvis. This could also be performed on the course

**Full Body Integration (F/I)/Cadillac**

Sitting forward  
Works on spinal mobility, back extensor control, and oblique stretching

Side Reach

Kneeling Cat Stretch

**Arm Work/Cadillac**

Chest Expansion  
Using the Standing Arm Series challenges stability from the feet up. It can identify

Hug – A-Tree  
imbalances in upper body and increase

Circles (Up and Down)

Punches  
range of motion through the shoulder joints.

Biceps

Butterfly

**Full Body Integration (A/M)/Cadillac**

Sitting Back  
Good for stretching the shoulders

**Leg Work/Mat**

Side Leg Lift  
The Gluteals Side Lying Series has helped to increase strength which has promoted

Forward and Lift  
more balance and stability.

Forward with Drops
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lateral Flexion/Rotation/Reformer</th>
<th>Mermaid</th>
<th>Aids in rotation and balance in Upper body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back Extension/Reformer</th>
<th>Pulling Straps 1</th>
<th>Assist to strengthening upper back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pulling Straps 2</td>
<td>and extension through spine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Conclusion**

Pilates can benefit our golf game, not only by improving the mechanics of how we recruit and move muscles in our body, but also by building more strength and flexibility in our bodies at the same time.

Pilates can, in fact re-educate our bodies to overcome the compensations we’ve made due to the habits of our everyday lives such as sitting, driving, using our smart phones, and due to recreational activities such as golf and tennis.

After working with Kelly, she has increased her drive length, has less pain through her shoulders and upper back, and has the ability and stamina to play on the course, court, or gym six days a week with more fluid movement and correct form and muscle recruitment.
Bibliography

Books


Corey Kathy, Corey Paul. Fitness Journal Volume 3, Issue 8
Create a Pilates Conditioning Program for Golfers

Metz, J. The Physician and Sports Medicine
Managing Golf Injuries

Websites

The Golf Experience .Com (Illustration)