Power Development for the Adult Golfer - Part 1

If you or your clients would like to hit the ball further, read on.

By Mike Boyle - Posted January 11, 2008

Michael Boyle
www.strengthcoach.com

I have a confession to make. I know very little about golf. I have trained golfers but I don't play. If this is the case, why should you continue to read? Because I do understand sports and how the body moves. Some consider me to be one of the world's foremost authorities on training for ice hockey, and I never played that either. The fact of the matter is what many people tell you about training for golf is absolute crap.

My goals are simple.
1- To encourage you to think.
2- To give you tools to use to improve your golf game
3- To get you to see power for golf from a different perspective.

If you or your clients would like to hit the ball further, read on.

The first and most obvious question, is power training just for young athletes? Absolutely not! Certain methods of developing explosive power may suit young athletes better but, power helps golf, tennis and lots of other activities. Power development actually becomes more critical as we age.

Why? Lets look at some stats:

Between the ages of 65 and 89 explosive lower limb extensor power (think lower body power) has been reported to decline at 3.5% per year compared to a 1-2% per year decrease in strength (Skelton et al. 1994). This means that as we age we actually lose power faster than we lose strength. Wait a second, what's the difference? The difference is that we can maintain strength with conventional weight training, in power training we need a speed component.

I know this may be a little confusing but to train for power we need to find safe ways to move more quickly. You need to add a speed component to your training. The question really is not should we train for power, it's how can we safely train for power.

Lets begin with a little background. Power is dependent on two things; mobility and strength. As golfers or as golf fitness professionals, we must train a golfer to concurrently increase mobility, strength and power. The most obvious question is “What's mobility”? Isn't it the same as flexibility? Not really. In simple terms, mobility is about motion of the joints. Immobile joints will lead to inflexible muscles but, stretching doesn't improve mobility in most cases. Without mobility, we get dysfunction. Dysfunction means we don't move the way we should. With dysfunction we get pain. It's important to note that in the words of Physical Therapy legend Stanley Paris “pain follows dysfunction- pain cannot precede dysfunction.”

Mobility work is all about getting the right stuff moving. In some cases that means longer muscles in some cases it means better joint motion.

One of the big keys to improved mobility is to improve the quality of your muscle tissue. How do you feel after a good massage? Generally, you leave feeling like you can move the way you did when you were younger. In an ideal world, the best thing to do is to get a massage from a good soft tissue therapist every week. However, that can get a bit pricey. A less expensive way is to get a foam roller and perform a self-massage sequence every day before you work out. Foam rollers are inexpensive and are addictive. You won't believe how much better you'll feel after a session with the roller. Think of foam rolling as ironing for the muscles.
The next step is static stretching. Some “experts” have cautioned against static stretching because stretching may decrease immediate power but, the benefits clearly outweigh the losses. Remember your number one goal is to keep yourself or your clients healthy.

Just remember, mobility is usually lost in the right areas and gained in the wrong areas. If the hips can’t move, the lumbar spine will. If the shoulders can’t turn, the lumbar spine will. The lumbar spine is our weak link. We need to work on lumbar spine stability and mobility in the hips and thoracic spine. Mike Robertson, a performance enhancement specialist in Indianapolis, IN makes a simple recommendation. We need one day of mobility work for each decade of life. Ten year olds can do mobility exercises once per week and move great. Sixty year olds need six days of work on mobility per week.

Bibliography

Robertson, Mike. BulletProof Knees, self published 2007

www.strengthcoach.com

Next week Part 2- Rotary Exercises

Michael Boyle’s new Power Development for the Adult Golfer is available at www.mytpi.com.

Michael Boyle is a Boston based strength and conditioning coach, writer, lecturer and the editor of strengthcoach.com. He has lectured on Power Development for the Titleist Performance Institute at the World Golf Fitness Summit in 2007 as well as at the Level 3 Golf Fitness Specialist Course. Michael’s other products are available at www.performbetter.com.