

Ready For Competition ?

By Scott Laurent

With Summer in full swing chances are your gearing up for some competitive golf, whether it is a scramble for charity or a full-blown tournament. Understanding how important your overall fitness is to your potential as a golfer has become more mainstream than ever as an approach to preparing to be at the top of your game when it counts. If you are one of the many who have taken the off season and began a fitness routine including strength training, cardiovascular training, and possibly worked on some flexibility and balance training, then you are really excited to see all of the fruits of your labor as the heart of the season approaches.

Well, what if you haven't done any pre-season fitness routine and are not currently participating in one of the many facets of exercise to help your golf game? Well luckily for you, we have put together a quick tip list of some of the important aspects to consider when preparing for competition, to help maximize the potential for your mind and body. Consider it a cheat sheet you can tear out and use as a reference, to help you as the big day approaches. Now if you happen to be one of the individuals mentioned earlier who are doing great with their fitness for golf this year, you too can still benefit by reading on as these tips will help compliment what you already understand and will help further your gains already made. The following sections include information on Back and Spine Health, Nutrition, and Relaxation and Focus. Read on and enjoy, and most importantly have fun with your competitive play this summer!

Chiropractic golf tips for the big day

- Just prior to your rounds, warm-up, don't stretch. Before taking that first swing, take a brisk walk to get the blood flowing to the muscles. It's hard to stretch muscles that are not loosened and warmed up and you take the risk of tearing a muscle.
- Avoid a cart to keep warmed-up by walking from hole to hole. Riding in a cart can also cause compressive stress on the spine from the bouncing around.
- Pull; don't carry your golf bag. Carrying a heavy bag for 18 holes can cause the spine to shrink, leading to disc problems and nerve irritation.
- Keep your entire body involved. Every third hole, take a few practice swings with the opposite hand to keep muscle balance and even out stress on the back.
- One bad swing, striking a root or a rock with you club can damage a wrist. If unsure whether you can get a clean swing...take the drop.
- Drink plenty of water! Hydration is important for your intervertebral discs which are your shock absorbers of the spinal column. Water lubricates joints serving as a lubricant during movement of the joint.
- Adopt a diet rich in dark green and other colorful vegetables, which are sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, bioflavonoids and other phyto-chemicals. Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are useful for enhancing the repair of connective tissues directly affecting your spine.

- An aggressive lumbar spine treatment program should be established with a chiropractor as both a therapeutic and preventive measure before getting into the heart of the season and tournament play. Remember an ounce of prevention!

[Courtesy of Dr. Stacey M. Kisting, D.C. - Mountain View Chiropractic Center, Boulder, CO](#)

Good Nutrition for Competition

- DO- Eat a carbohydrate rich meal the evening before, the amount of carbohydrates ingested in the days before the tournament will dictate how much energy your muscles will have stored for play that day! For example, a pasta dish with a marinara sauce, some vegetables and some lean protein.
- DO- Eat a breakfast consisting of complex, slow release carbohydrates. Healthy fats and some lean protein are equally important. A good breakfast could be some whole-wheat toast, with peanut butter and sliced banana.
- DO- Eat frequent snacks during the day of the tournament as it will help keep your blood sugar stable, and help you avoid dips in performance. These snacks should be high in easily digested carbohydrates, like fruit, energy bars, dried fruits, or energy drinks. Try to consume 100-300 calories every two hours or so.
- DO- Drink water before the game. Proper hydration begins off the course. Typical course conditions in the mountain states include summer heat, high winds, and altitude; all factors that increase your water requirements.
- DO- Carry a water bottle. American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends the average person to drink 500 ml water (17 fluid ounces) about 2 hours before exercising, and continuing to drink 4-8 fluid ounces every 20 minutes or so during exercise.
- DON'T -Drink alcohol and caffeine; neither will help your game. Both act as diuretics and will cause fluid loss. Alcohol will affect your coordination negatively, caffeine increases your heart rate and decreases your ability to concentrate, and both will impair your cognitive game and your ability to read the course.

[Courtesy of Karin Antoni B.S. Physical Therapy, CPT Owner- Aktiv Fitness](#)

Relax and Focus-The Mind and Body Connection

- Practice on good breathing exercises, which have you breathe through your nose filling your lower diaphragm first and then filling your chest cavity. Not only does this contribute to relaxation but it also helps increase the amount of focus you have due to the increased oxygen you take in compared to the shallow upper chest breathing that usually takes place when a little anxious on the course.
- Manage distractions with practicing of Re-focusing or Centering. Many athletes use this to combat the distractions of the crowd or other competition conditions. An example of this would be immediately after a distraction, to focus on an image of yourself being protected by a

shield or bubble or perhaps a guiding line pulling you back towards the center of the pin as positive energy.

- Positive self-talk has been proven to make the difference in winners and runner ups during competition. Many people will lose the game in their heads first before ever taking a swing. A true combination of stopping negative thoughts and evoking positive thoughts can be attained through simple exercises such as using “Stop” techniques which have you say or think “Stop” immediately after a negative thought and then quickly refocusing on a positive thought.
- Try using visualization skills which generally have two objectives, one helping with relaxation, such as imagining yourself in a peaceful environment to help relax yourself during competition and the other is more performance related such as the mental rehearsal of sinking that put for birdie. Using the visual relaxation skill first and then immediately using the mental rehearsal of performance has proven to yield the best results overall when it counts.

[Courtesy of Scott Laurent B.A. Psychology and Sport, CPT Owner- Ready to Exercise](#)

Written by Scott Laurent

Scott has a BA in Psychology and Sport. He is a certified personal trainer and was a semi-pro athlete. His consulting business, www.readytoexercise.com, helps people who are contemplating, just starting, or having difficulty remaining in an exercise program. He can be reached at scott@readytoexercise.com