



Swiss ball workouts for golfers

Here's a quick and easy way to fire up your golf muscles, and improve your strength and flexibility.

Most golf professionals realise the importance of having a flexibility, strengthening and conditioning program. These days, a lot of tour pros use a Swiss ball as part of their daily workout. I suspect that nearly every tour player has a Swiss ball in his home. And, you'll see them in all of the medical facilities on tour. If top players are using Swiss balls to work out, then there's every reason that you could benefit, too.

If used correctly, a Swiss ball will allow you to build up your postural control. It can also be used to get extra flexibility and core stability. It's a moving sphere, so it requires you to do 'balance re-education'. From a practical point of view, it's light so it can be carried around and used anytime, anywhere, like in a locker room or office.

However, there are certain requirements with Swiss balls that many people don't realise. First, you've got to use the ball dynamically to improve your posture. Just because you sit on a Swiss ball doesn't mean it's going to help – many people actually slump into bad postures. The other big mistake is to buy the wrong sized Swiss ball. If it's too small or big, you're likely to slump or compensate. It's important to be measured so that your legs aren't hanging off the ball and to prevent you from leaning too far forward. Also ensure the ball retains its pressure because a deflated ball can lead to soft posture as well.

I like to think of a Swiss ball workout as an intrinsic challenge that you give yourself every day, rather than just rolling around on it with no purpose. My drills are a little

different from generic Swiss ball workouts because I arrange them in a golf-specific sequence. It's a bit like the gears on your car. I want to make sure that you're 'layering up' your skill and motor control as you do these 'tasks', especially before a round of golf. If you use the last exercise first, then you won't get as much control as if you do them in the correct sequence.

This month I explain the first three drills of my golf-specific Swiss ball workout that has seven levels of skill and control. Next month I'll provide the remaining exercises of the schedule, which takes less than 10 minutes to complete. However, this program takes some time to build up from level 1 to level 7. So contact your local physiotherapist if you experience sharp pain or difficulty with any of the exercises. But I guarantee your golf

will benefit from the workout. You'll see the relevance in the golf swing and it will allow your golf muscles to 'fire'.

Level 1 – Multi-functional stretch

The first exercise is to add flexibility and mobility to your body (*opposite page*). This multi-functional stretch allows you to get 'range' on your body, especially if you've been sitting for long periods of time. It will stretch out your side muscles and give overall flexibility through the hip flexors, trunk and shoulders.

For right-handed golfers, lie on top of the Swiss ball on your right-hand side. Tuck your chin in and stretch your arms above your head. Then, extend your right leg behind you as far as you can, so that you're opening up your entire body on the right-hand side. Hold for 15 seconds, and then repeat twice.

The benefit for golfers is that it gets rid of 'crunch factor'. That's the term I use to describe at impact when the body 'sheers'

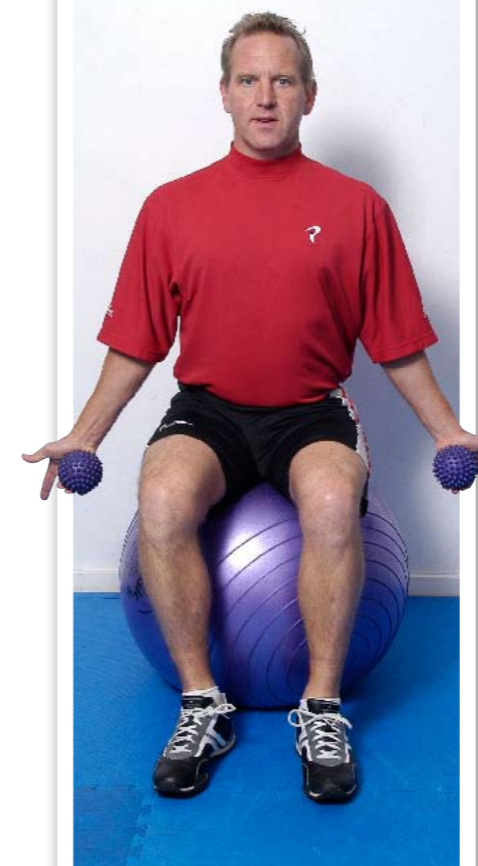


Level 3 – Dynamic push ups.

Level 1 – Multi-functional stretch.



Level 2 – Dynamic bounces.



and gets into an awkward bent position without proper rotation. The spine gets crunched on the right-hand side, which leads to acute back pain! This exercise negates that crunch by increasing flexibility. It opens up your right side, allowing more range and 'timing' in your backswing and follow-through.

Level 2 – Dynamic bounces

Second gear of the workout is a balance-posture drill. Begin the exercise by sitting on the Swiss ball with arms outstretched, holding a pair of 'spiky balls' with a pistol grip (*left*). Then, with both feet on the floor and keeping a good upright posture, slowly bounce up and down. At the same time, raise and lower your arms so that your hands start to bounce onto the Swiss ball. I recommend you do the exercise three times, for 30 seconds apiece.

You should feel your shoulder girdle, trunk and leg muscles all working together and a sensation of getting 'taller'. So it's really 'firing' your core, postural muscles. You're awakening the golf muscles and should feel your body getting into a strong, upright posture, which is essential for a good golf set-up.

Level 3 – Dynamic push-ups

The third level of exercises also promotes a stable address position. Place the Swiss ball against a wall and assume a semi-horizontal position over it with both arms extended onto the ball to support your weight (*above*). Remember to maintain a good spine alignment through the neck, shoulders, trunk and pelvis. This will allow a better axis to rotate around which is essential for a consistent, dynamic golf swing. To advance this drill, keep your toes on the ground then start to 'bounce' through your calves so that your heels are moving up and down. This will allow your lower abdominals to 'fire' in the golf swing. Repeat the exercise twice, for 15 seconds apiece. You can progress this drill further by taking the ball away from the wall and supporting yourself entirely.

For more information about Ramsay's "Train As A Tour Player" golf camps, contact The Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on (03) 9569 9448 and 0407 432 282 or e-mail golfphysio@ozemail.com.au.



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