



The tale of two baby-boomers

Age should not be a factor for golfers when it comes to keeping fit and injury-free.



Enhancing Mark's range of movement was one of the first issues to be addressed.

screening be undertaken prior to beginning a golf conditioning program. Kerry joined Peninsula 18 months ago, initially reducing her handicap through regular lessons. She had a nagging shoulder injury that had developed since taking up golf, which she felt this was hindering further progress. Mark and Kerry were keen to work together as a couple, even though they had their own individual goals.

A course of action

We started by looking at their overall postures with a muscular and skeletal screening. This included a Titleist Assessment test, which is a functional procedure using a goniometer to measure their range of movement against leading tour players. We found they were both posturally unaware of where their bodies were at due to the aging process, lifestyle and work. They had both become very "flexed" in their range of movement.

We gave them golf-specific exercises and drills to enhance their movement. It's worth noting that as people get older, they lose body awareness and balance. In golf, you lose feel and body rotation. Our emphasis with Mark and Kerry was to improve those aspects. It not only helps in golf but also prolongs longevity and wellbeing, so that you can do more day-to-day functional activities when you retire.

In particular, men need to be aware of "poking chin", especially if they're used to sitting in front of a computer screen all day. Businessmen like Mark often do a lot of travel so their spines tend to get very stiff around the neck and lower back from sitting at conferences or during flights. Their hip flexors often become very tight. And, usually, there might be some ongoing issues with their knees if they've played a lot of sport.

In Mark's case, he had suffered from double hernias and a back problem. Plus, years of high-impact sport had taken its toll. He played squash intensively over a period of time – three or four times a week in his 30s and 40s. The torsion, load and shock that goes through your body while playing squash is substantial.

The squash pattern had a very big effect on

Most golfers would love to play the game three or four times a week, but aren't able to do so for health reasons or work commitments. Mark Saville was no different. How often he could play was restricted because of chronic injuries. And as the managing director of a successful manufacturing business, the 30-handicapper didn't have much time, either.

Mark, now 50, has been conscious of his health ever since he suffered a heart scare when he was 40 years old. With four grown-up children, he was determined to focus more on his golf, which he plays at The National and Peninsula golf clubs, near Melbourne.

However, golf aggravated his injuries and Mark used to be very sore and tired after playing 18 holes despite doing a lot of general conditioning work in the gym. On top of that, his ball-striking had relatively no length and I would say he was quite unco-ordinated. His concepts were very poor and he wasn't sequencing his body correctly.

So Mark wanted a rehabilitation pathway to make sure he was doing everything properly.

Having run his own business, Mark believes you've got to have some form of pathway to achieve your goals, whether in a business or sporting environment. That is, you've got to outsource and find people who know about a field of specialisation. He was looking around and picked up AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST and read the article about golf-specific training [Golfers As Athletes, October 2005]. He felt that matched what he wanted to do: golf, health and lifestyle fitted into one package.

Mark contacted me and we had a chat about a holistic approach to golf. He liked the idea of a team approach where a coach, physiotherapist and trainer were giving him information. He wanted a golf-specific coach, in particular someone who understood physiology. I introduced him to Mark Holland, head coach of the AIS golf program, as well as Trent Malcolm, a golf-specific trainer who consults as part of our team at the clinic.

Mark was so amazed with his results after 12 months, he encouraged his wife Kerry to consider golf-specific training with Trent, as he felt this was the key factor in his improvement. Trent recommended a postural

his golf swing. He had a forward thrust with his arms, like in squash where you squat down, flex, and use a one-arm movement. That movement in his golf swing put a lot of stress through his groin. So our focus was to eliminate all the patterns caused by squash and replace them with a strong efficient golf movement.

Kerry, 49, had a generic belief in strength and conditioning. When exercising, she was working muscles in isolation. Therefore, she didn't realise that power in the golf swing came from sequencing her body and 'feeling' certain muscles work. Like a lot of women, she didn't feel the club was part of that movement.

Typically, women golfers have a lot of sway through their hips, so they need to work on their lower and deep abdominals. Wearing high heels can affect their balance and flexibility through the calf muscles.

Childbirth also makes a big difference to posture. As they get older, women must strengthen the muscles that are put under a lot of strain during pregnancy (e.g. pelvic floor and lower abdominals). And like men, many women may develop "poking chin" and weak shoulder blades. Their deep-neck stabilisers need to be strengthened and they need to work on their triceps to prevent "flabby tuck-shop arms".

The result justifies the means

Eighteen months ago, Mark and Kerry had nagging injuries that restricted them from playing and improving their golf. Initially, they came in to see me for two days. Now I re-screen and upgrade their programs every three months, varying from a four-hour session up to two days at a time. They visit Mark



Strengthening the abdominals is a key to establishing a more efficient golf swing among women.

Holland for a lesson every three or four weeks and they train weekly with Trent.

I am pleased to say that Mark is now able to play four times a week. Pain-free. He can play 27 to 36 holes a day and he has lowered his handicap to 20. His ball-striking has improved dramatically. Last year, Mark won the Winter Cup at The National. So he's gone from being a complete hacker to a competitive golfer.

Kerry is playing once or twice a week and has reduced her handicap to 29. She now feels her body and club are working

together, whereas before she was just swinging a golf club. And for someone who was nervous about joining a golf club, Kerry has found that golf is a vital part of her social connection. In today's society where many people are lonely and don't have partners, a golf club is a great place to meet new people. From a personal perspective, Kerry has discovered she can speak to people with common interests and similar goals. That social aspect of golf should never be underestimated.

I think the most satisfying aspect with Mark and Kerry is to know they're spending more time together through a mutual interest. Their passion for golf has enriched their relationships with friends, who they will accompany interstate and overseas to play golf.

They have a desire to stay active, both mentally and physically. And they still believe they can improve at 50. I think that's a great attitude to have. And it's achievable. With the information available now, you can actually improve your health.

Ramsay McMaster is a world authority on golf-specific physiotherapy. For more information about golf-specific programs for couples, phone The Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on (03) 9569 9448.



Mark and Kerry Saville both improved through golf-specific exercises and drills.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RAMSAY McMASTER

