



Three drills to increase shoulder turn

Club golfers seeking to get the most out of their swing often overlook the importance of supple shoulders.

Many club golfers suffer from a sedentary lifestyle. It causes bad posture and really affects shoulder function in the golf swing. One of the hardest places to generate rotation is between your shoulder blades and the base of the neck. Long periods sitting behind a computer, driving a car and lying on the couch can virtually 'shrink' shoulder width and cause the lower neck and thoracic spine to develop 'bamboo' stiffness.

With a hunched inflexion-type posture, you're unable to get the same torque and rotation as you would by standing upright. And the golf swing requires a rotational movement around a central axis. You should aim for greater 'extension' and 'width' in your swing like Greg Norman and Adam Scott, which is a great asset in swing dynamics.

Tour players have good shoulder turn and control. They have greater awareness around this area and actually pre-set this 'V-shape' of muscles before they start the backswing. The triangle between their shoulders and arms looks wide and solid. Compare that to a club golfer, slumping forward at address with a lack of width across the shoulders. With the arms so tense, they look like they're strangling a chicken rather than holding a golf club in an athletic posture.

Poor shoulder turn leads to a reliance on hand-eye co-ordination and manipulation of the clubhead with the hands. The elbows absorb a lot of the pressure, which can result in tennis elbow and wrist injuries. This often stems from a lack of shoulder-girdle control and postural endurance.

Poor rotation results in erratic golf. A slice or a hook can be a result of whether the shoulders are up or down at impact. Imagine the shoulders as a set of scales. If the scales are unbalanced, weight transference won't be as efficient. Ball flight will be affected as well as trajectory because the body isn't sequencing correctly. Your timing also suffers with poor shoulder function. It's the same with putting. If the right shoulder is trapped downwards, it can result in 'yippy' and quick wristy movements with the hands because the shoulder muscles aren't working through the stroke.

I've learnt this from working with PGA professionals. The common denominator is the clubhead finding a poor pathway to the ball because the shoulders are so twisted and contorted. Compensatory movements are made and power begins to leak from the swing. The result is a loss of



Superman stretch

With this first exercise you're trying to extend and open up the body. Stand against a wall and place a spiky ball at the base of the skull and another on your tailbone. This helps to maintain a correct spine alignment. To hold the spiky balls against the wall, your shoulders should naturally lift upwards and back. This promotes extension as well as reducing rounding of the shoulders, especially after sitting in a sedentary position. Raise the arms above your head and keep the shoulders wide. Reach for the sky like Superman. Keep yourself symmetrical and do a little 'bouncing' on the spot. That is, transferring weight between the heels and toes without taking your feet off the ground. It's a good oscillatory movement. Do this for 15-30 seconds, depending upon what you can withstand, control and endure.

clubhead speed and overall distance.

In the accompanying photos, NSW-based trainer Chris Smith performs three drills that can be used to improve your shoulder-girdle control and turn. By setting aside five minutes each day, I'm certain you'll gain more balance and rotation in your swing. That should lead to more consistent golf and better scores.

Dynamic crucifix drill

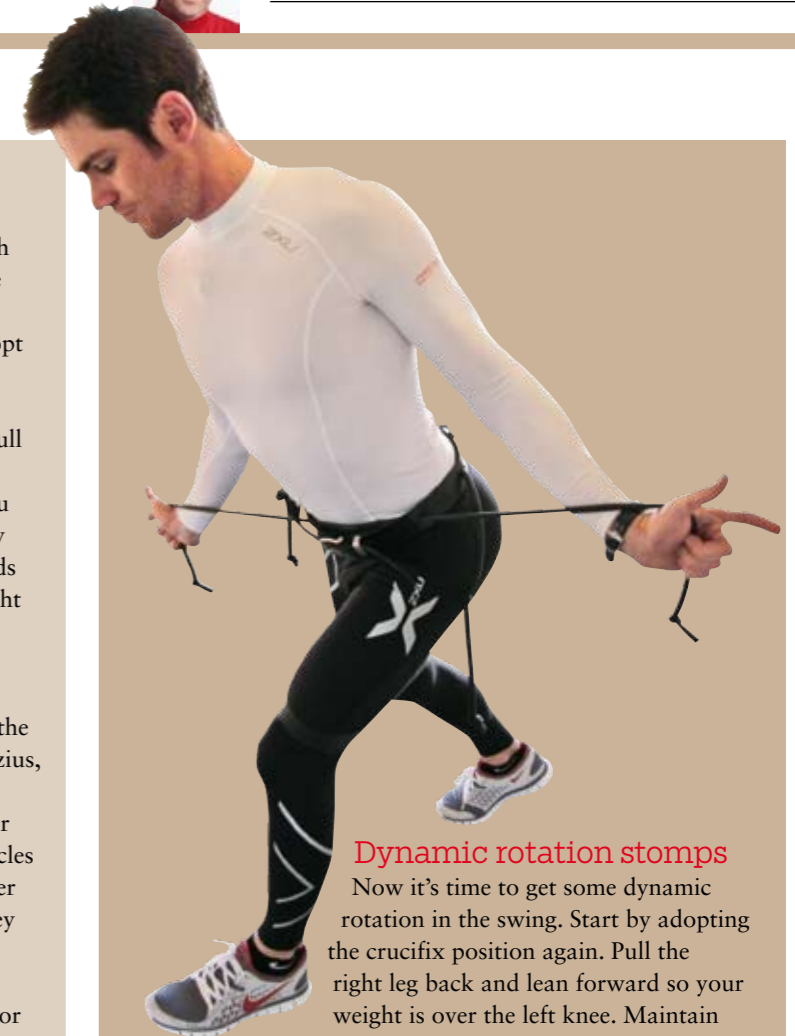
This drill requires the use of a posture belt, which has been demonstrated in recent columns. Secure the posture belt around your waist and then the rubber knee band. Hold onto the tubing and adopt a crucifix position. Outstretch your arms like a goalkeeper with elbows bent in alignment with your ribcage. Maintaining a pistol grip, slowly pull the tubing up towards shoulder level. 'Waggle' it backwards in small oscillatory movements so you get a lot of 'feel' through the shoulder blades. Try to do this for 10 seconds, increasing to 30 seconds as you build endurance through your left and right shoulder-girdle complex. Repeat twice.

The aim is to get some control through the shoulders. This drill activates those 'V-shape' muscles at the back and between the shoulder blades – lower trapezius, deep neck flexors, serratus, subscapularis, triceps, rotator cuff group. They're the muscles responsible for good shoulder rotation in the golf swing. They need to 'fire' to stabilise your shoulders and pre-set the body for takeaway. They also help with good putterhead control.



IMPORTANT:

Before you do these exercises, talk through them with your local trainer or physiotherapist. If you have any existing injuries, I strongly recommend that you do these exercises under supervision. And if you experience sharp pain or soreness, stop immediately.



Dynamic rotation stomps

Now it's time to get some dynamic rotation in the swing. Start by adopting the crucifix position again. Pull the right leg back and lean forward so your weight is over the left knee. Maintain your spine angle at all times. Do a little bit of 'stomping' by tapping the ground through the arch of your left foot. It should feel as though you're on hot coals. If you're doing it correctly you will feel the left gluteal begin to 'fire' on the inside of your left thigh. Slowly stomp and rotate your arms back and forth around the left hip. It should feel like your foot is stomping five times as quickly as the arms are rotating. It's a rhythmical stomp. Swap sides and perform the drill around the right hip.

This exercise helps to achieve 'separation' between the hips and shoulders as well as keeping a good spine angle in rotation. What tends to happen with increased shoulder turn is that you get compensatory movements through the hips and lower legs, such as hip sway and knee bending. So this drill will stabilise the lower body while increasing your range of shoulder movement. The shoulder-girdle complex can 'fire' properly and establish correct shoulder planes in your golf swing.

For more information about personalised golf fitness programs or to purchase a spiky ball/posture belt, visit ramsaymcmaster.com or phone the Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on (03) 9569 9448.