



Four drills to improve mobility and balance

Defy the onset of winter and use the pool to improve your golf game.

Understanding how the body functions in the golf swing is an essential part of the game. Through working with leading tour players, I've found that water is an invaluable medium to learn more about your own swing.

Last issue we showed amateur golfer Tim Stewart swinging an old golf club through a pool of water. It demonstrated how water provides

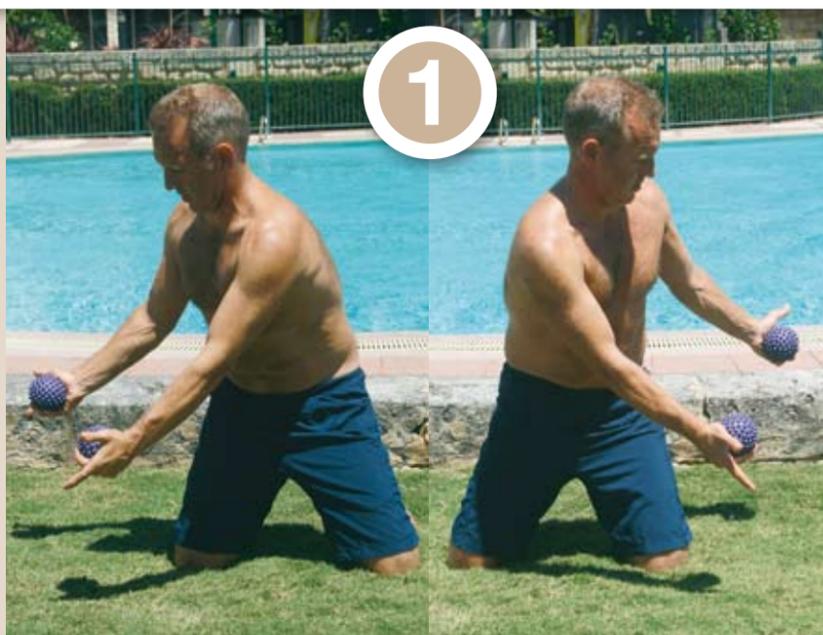
feedback, allowing you to better understand swing plane and feel the resistance of the clubhead.

Here are four practical water-based 'rotational' exercises that can improve your mobility and balance in the golf swing. You'll also enhance your feels. As you can see, I've performed these drills out of the water to better illustrate the body positions and movements required.

Drill 1 – 'Middy' rotations

For the first drill, kneel down in a shallow pool of water at nipple height. Ideally, hold a pair of spiky balls in each hand and slowly simulate the golf swing. Rotate the arms as you would normally sequence the club in a backswing. Then begin the downswing, through impact and into a full finish. As this is a loosening up exercise, the emphasis should be on controlled movement, feeling the rhythm of the golf swing. Still, it's a difficult task because you have to stabilise your lower base.

This drill uses the turbulence created by the water to concentrate the rotation through your stomach. You are trying to initiate the timing muscles in your pelvis, becoming more aware of that lower base because of a lower centre of gravity. Apart from the sensation across both shoulder blades, you should be able to feel the rotation through the hips, glutes, inside thighs and lower abdominals – the muscles that are essential for pelvic control in the golf swing.



Drill 2 – 'Schooner' rotations

To progress the first drill, repeat the exercise while standing in deeper water, once again at nipple-height. You're now dealing with longer levers to better simulate the golf swing. Keep your legs stable, so that you can feel the force through the seven muscle groups, which I call the 'Golf Christmas Tree' (1. neck stabilisers, 2. triceps, 3. lower trapezius/scapular muscles, 4. lower and deep abdominals, 5. posterior glutes, 6. inner quads and adductors, 7. pelvic floor).

Do this drill slowly at first to build your feels and gradually build up the pace to get more turbulence as a strengthening exercise. You're working from the ground up, so you're feeling the 'ground force' of the water. By that, I mean you can feel the lifting of the arches on your feet as you would in a golf swing. The emphasis here is on controlling your lower base, while you're rotating and stabilising your shoulders.



Drill 3 – 'Quadrilateral' rotations with balance

Still standing, balance on your left leg and lift the right so that the knee is level with your waist. Outstretch your arms for balance and maintain a good spine angle. Then slowly, swing your right knee so that it crosses over in line with the left hip. At the same time, swing your arms to the right to counter-balance. Start off slowly so that you can feel the force through the chain of the body. Then increase the speed, which will increase the resistance through the turbulence of the water. Then, change legs and repeat the exercise.

You'll find greater balance with this drill, plus you're gaining awareness of how the body works in two-dimensional 'diagonal' rotations. It encourages your right shoulder to work with your left hip (as well as the right shoulder with the right hip). So you're getting that feeling of crossover patterns, which complements what you're trying to achieve in the golf swing.



Drill 4 – 'Spiral' rotations with balance

If you're a right-handed golfer, balance on your left leg and raise the right leg behind you. Outstretch your arms for balance, holding a pair of spiky balls. Your body will tend to lean forward like a figure skater with one leg outstretched. Then, simulating the backswing, slowly rotate your hips and arms to the right. Hold and turn back to the centre.

It's important to control the hips in the golf swing and this exercise strengthens that left side. It allows you to 'peel out' on your backswing and control that left hip as you come through on the follow-through. You should really feel the impact position as this drill 'fires' your posterior gluts.

To counterbalance the exercise, swap legs so that you're standing on your right leg. Then, slowly rotate the hips to the left, hold, and then back to centre. However, most right-handed golfers should do more repetitions while standing on their left leg.

Last month Ramsay foreshadowed several drills using kickboards, however these more advanced drills are planned for a future issue. For advice on a golf-specific training program, contact Ramsay McMaster on 0407 432 282 or e-mail golfphysio@ozemail.com.au. To purchase a golfer's 'Fitness Survival Kit', call the Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on (03) 9569 9448.

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