

Showing Some Spine

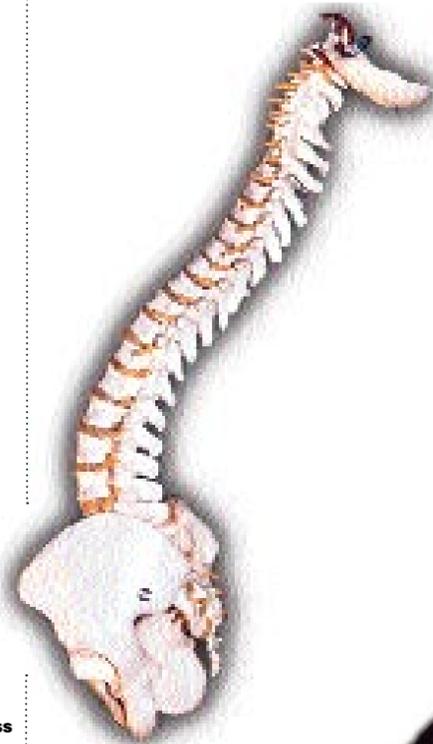
THE MAJORITY of golfers spend many hours practising improving their technique. Many are also unaware that their attempts to advance will fail due to their physical limitations. This article will look at some physical impediments which are linked to the spine.

BY RAMSAY MCMASTER
WITH SANDY JAMIESON

One significant factor that we all know for sure is that any lateral or horizontal deviations in the spine will result in a reduction of the spine's ability to rotate. Players with these conditions generally take either shorter swings or more typically over rotate their hips, straightening their rear leg or suffering some kind of breakdown in arm and hand action in an effort to swing the club back further. Often these players are aware of the swing deviations and are frustrated at not being able to change them.

Have a look at the following physical limitations and see whether they relate to you. Then look at the resultant swing impediment. Again ask yourself, does this look like

SWAY BACK



Sway back can occur in the lumbar (lower back) region where there is an excessive backward curve of the spine itself. To compensate for this curve the golfer usually has a forward tilt of the pelvis. Typical causes for this condition are tight hip flexors and poorly developed junior growth spurts. The tendency for a golfer with this condition is to stand up losing their balance during the backswing. This is due to the weight being in the front of the hips (hip flexor muscles) which limit the correct

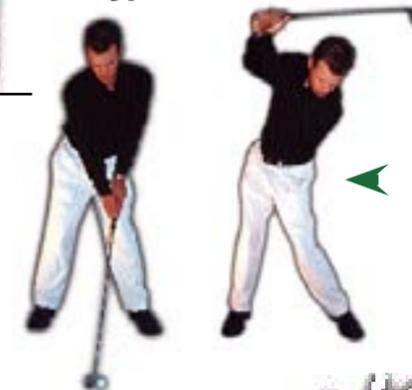
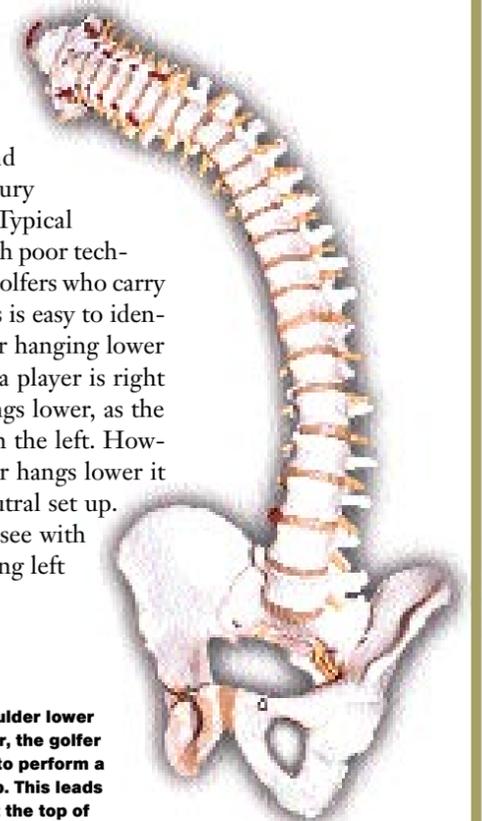


The set up looks almost normal - pelvis maybe slightly forward - but tight hip flexors which cause this condition will force the golfer more upright during the backswing.

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SCOLIOSIS

Scoliosis is a lateral deviation of the spine. It can occur anywhere along the vertebra although it is most common in golfers at the thoracic and lumbar regions. Excessive scoliosis can cause injury to the shoulder and neck areas in all golfers. Typical golfers with this condition are elite players with poor technique and excessive practice regimes, junior golfers who carry school bags and lap top computers. Scoliosis is easy to identify. It will typically show up as one shoulder hanging lower than the other. This is a minor problem if a player is right handed and it is the right shoulder that hangs lower, as the right hand is located lower on the club than the left. However if the right handed player's left shoulder hangs lower it becomes significantly harder to achieve a neutral set up. The most common swing deviations you will see with these typical scoliotic golfers are shoulder aiming left causing pulls, skying and slicing.



With one shoulder lower than the other, the golfer will struggle to perform a neutral set up. This leads to problem at the top of the swing, such as the reverse pivot seen here.

KYPHOSIS

Kyphosis is an increased forward curvature of the spine and causes rounded shoulders. This mainly occurs in older golfers. Typical causes for this condition are excessive arm work, poor posture or weak muscles. It occurs predominantly in the thoracic region of the spine and causes a hunched posture. This condition will have a problem in which the golfer will have too much lower body breakdown during rotation.



Rounded shoulders will leave the golfer hunched at set up and the lower body breakdown trying to achieve correct rotation.