

## GOLF EDITORIAL

The recent Open Championship at Hoylake in Liverpool will have hopefully renewed players' interest in the game. Some will be disappointed at the lack of British success this year but there is plenty of young talent coming up through the ranks of the England squads so there is hope for greater successes in the future.

Golfers as young as 10 and 11 are being given the opportunity to be part of the England training squads, and have handicaps some people can only dream of. Thanks to the English Ladies Golf Association World Class training programme the amateur junior golfers have had a successful 2005 at both national and international levels.

Also due to lottery funding there is much more support for the young players who show potential. The grant allows the players' access to Physiotherapy screening and treatment, Psychology and Physiology. This should optimise young players' potential and will ultimately lead to greater success for Britain.

Golf is one of a few sports that can be enjoyed and played well by all age groups by both sexes and the handicapping system allows people of different ability to compete.

Golf is a light to moderately demanding sport, but playing golf does not get you fit for golf. It relies on skill and technique, flexibility around the trunk, shoulders and hips and good core strength. It also relies on a certain level of Cardio Vascular (CV) fitness that does not come from just playing golf.

The younger player tends to have superb flexibility but can often lack strength. The older golfer on the other hand relies more on experience and technique and may lack the flexibility of the younger golfer.

As we age, our connective tissue (which holds our muscles together) loses water, consequently the tissue loses its elasticity and we lose flexibility. However this is something that can be improved with the right exercises and stretches.

Spending hours hunched over a computer screen or driving can lead to stiffness in the upper body and tightness across the front of the chest – both of which can then restrict the golf turn.

If players then don't spend time warming up and stretching before a game they cannot expect to play well!

Our bodies then learn to compensate for this lack of flexibility, but unfortunately this can lead to over-load or strain to other joints. With time this may then lead to micro-trauma and injury.

The low back in particular is very vulnerable in the reverse 'c' position, when the spine is both fully rotated and extended at the top of the back swing. This is made much worse if the turn at the shoulder is restricted and can in time lead to injury. If you then spend hours on the driving range repeatedly overstraining a joint then this will lead to injury.

It is well worth investing a bit of time, in between playing golf, keeping the trunk and shoulders flexible with appropriate stretches. Also by maintaining a good posture at work you will be using some key core muscles without having to try too hard.

Carrying out some CV training such as hill walking or interval training 2 or 3 times a week will also help to get you a bit fitter. That way you will not be too fatigued and end up ruining your good score card over the last couple of holes!!

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**Golf screening is available with Su at The Cloisters Physiotherapy**



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