

**BUILDING A GOLF SPECIFIC
PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM
GUIDELINES TO HELP SELECT HIGHLY QUALIFIED
FITNESS AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS**



**ALLEN HICKS, BA(Hon)PE, BScPT, FCAMPT, CSCS
REGISTERED PHYSIOTHERAPIST, KINESIOLOGIST, PERSONAL TRAINER**



BUILDING A GOLF SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

A golf specific performance improvement team should include a teaching professional, a fitness professional, and a medical professional.

Trying to find the correct information regarding golf swing analysis and lessons, golf fitness training programs, and golf injury assessment and rehabilitation can be very difficult and confusing. There are many golf teachers, health care professionals and fitness gurus of various backgrounds who promote their expertise in golf-specific training. It is recommended that golfers take some extra time to investigate the training and experience levels of the teaching, fitness or medical professional they are choosing to work with. This should help avoid disappointment, wasted time, or even worse, a training related injury. The programs, whether they are golf instruction specific, fitness training, or injury rehabilitation, should not be generic. They should be completely customized to the needs of the individual client.

This article provides a number of important guidelines that should be considered before choosing your golf performance team fitness and medical professionals.

THE GOLF FITNESS PROFESSIONAL

The golf fitness professional should have a relevant post-secondary degree (eg. Kinesiology, Physical Education, Human Kinetics). Additional qualifications would include a well recognized professional designation. The most well-recognized and respected designation is the National Strength and Conditioning Association's Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA-CSCS). This is usually the designation of most fitness professionals that work with professional sports teams, as well as NCAA teams and elite amateur athletes. Other well-recognized designations include those from the following organizations:

ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine)
NASM (National Academy of Sports Medicine)
CSEP (Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology)

There are a wide variety of backgrounds in the fitness industry, and most don't involve significant post-secondary education in areas such as anatomy, physiology, exercise physiology, biomechanics, nutrition, movement and posture analysis, athletic injuries, corrective exercise, or rehabilitation. Many fitness certifications can be attained in a matter of weeks, with no prior education or experience.

The fitness expert should also have completed some training provided by a legitimate, professional organization that specializes in golf-specific fitness and performance training.

The fitness program should be fully customized (even if it is delivered in a small group) according to an initial, comprehensive physical evaluation.

A golf fitness professional can design and deliver a program that addresses two key areas: performance and injury prevention. It should focus on improving posture, balance, mobility, stability, strength, and cardiovascular conditioning. The program should be individualized for each specific client, so that it addresses their areas of weakness, and does not hurt them. Many individuals are injured by performing exercises that are inappropriate for them. Hitting the ball farther, straighter and with more control adds great personal satisfaction and enjoyment to their game. Playing golf consistently and pain-free for a lifetime should be every golfer's achievable goal.

THE GOLF MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL

The medical professional must have an appropriate education in a discipline that treats musculoskeletal injuries. This often includes a physical therapist, an athletic therapist, or a chiropractor. The individual should have documentation that they have graduated from an accredited educational institution and have passed the appropriate state certification and/or licensing examination.

The medical professional should have an excellent understanding of how to assess and treat musculoskeletal injuries and conditions. They should possess specific knowledge of the golf swing, and of strength and conditioning practices, so that they can communicate and work effectively with the teaching professional and the strength and conditioning professional.

They should also possess specific knowledge regarding evidence-based treatment of musculoskeletal injuries. This is not as common as it should be. Many medical professionals in the above groups do not follow current best-practice guidelines and methods. How do you determine who the good medical professionals are? Ask about their treatment philosophy and treatment principles. For example, do they assess and treat each individual differently, or is the treatment similar for every person/client. For example, if a chiropractor focuses primarily on manipulation, and ignores exercise prescription, go somewhere else. If a physical therapist focuses on using every modality in the clinic (ultrasound, IFC, laser), but does not focus on techniques to improve your mobility, stability, and motor control, find a different provider. The same holds true for an athletic therapist. Physical Therapists who have attained further post-graduate training, such as their Diploma in Advanced Manual and Manipulative Therapy (FCAMPT) will usually indicate this when listing their credentials.

SUMMARY

Your golf performance team should be able to provide you with a comprehensive analysis of your strengths and weaknesses, including aspects such as:

- posture analysis
- balance assessment
- objective measurements of flexibility
- Stability and strength
- cardiovascular conditioning
- a biomechanical video analysis of your golf swing
- analysis of your swing faults

The members of the team should be aware of your short and long term goals regarding your game performance, and you physical health and conditioning.

The fitness program design should be periodized with planned re-evaluations to ensure objective physical and performance changes are being made according to your goal structure and timeline.

The fitness program's goals and objectives should be fully integrated with your professional instruction, mental training and properly fit equipment technology. Statistics and measurements should be collected and monitored throughout your fitness program to make sure that you are making measurable progress toward your performance goals.