

GOLF



PERFECTLY

FITFOR SPORT

with Luke Perrin

Watching the very best golfers hit the ball, you get to see how effortlessly the body moves from backswing to follow through with hardly any inefficiency in their swing.

As age comes upon us all, this effortless movement can be harder to achieve and if you compared the competitors in the Open with last week's

Seniors version, you will have seen shorter backswings (and follow-throughs) and more of a lunge through the ball on the odd occasion, just to get that extra "oomph".

For the Over 50s golfer, that long smooth follow-through can soon become a memory, along with the distance and control it gave. Gone quickly can be the club-head speed and the low single figure handicap that they battled away with each weekend. Can you get it back – the answer is actually YES!

The more 'perfect' follow-through you have, the more likely the ball will go where you want it to. We are talking balance and the flexibility to turn the hips and shoulders through a good range of

motion, but it can all stop with just one muscle not working properly.

You could be as strong as an ox with your drivers made from the latest advances in technology, but just one tight muscle can not only drastically limit your distance and accuracy, and your flexibility – it can greatly increase your chances of injury.

To do a complete flexibility and muscular performance assessment – to complete process of finding out what is exactly wrong with the body – is more in-depth for this article to go into, so for now, we shall break down the follow through motions through the main joints, and describe simple exercises to perform to help improve a certain part of



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your swing.

If you are approaching or have reached the age where you become a (richer) teenager again – over 50s – then this is a guide to getting back and keeping that effortless finish to the swing you worked so hard to get. Everyone admires a stylish follow-through!

The lead picture (ABOVE) for this feature perfectly illustrates a problem follow-through technique.

It's easy to see the golfer's right arm come across his face. This is due to the fact he has very limited motion rotating his upper body to the left, and absolutely no lateral flexion (side bending) to the right. Both are essential in your swing.

So as you move from

backswing to follow through in a right handed golfer, the spine and hips should be rotating to the left, but the spine should be rotating quicker. When this happens, the abdominal and back muscles help you smash the ball down the middle of the fair way, and then slow the body down at a comfortable rate. When the spine and hips are so tight and are forced to move at the same speed, it's impossible to use your powerful trunk muscles, and that leaves your poor low back to do the work.

An exercise to help you move through this a little easier is to put your left leg just in front of your right, around shoulder width apart, both knees slightly bent (no straightening) and reach

GOLF

Bears sharpen claws after timely win over dogged Derbyshire

MIDLAND LEAGUE

Rather like a Premier League football team who have a 1-0 lead at half-time and who, perhaps after a 'hair-dryer' team talk, produce five or six goals in the second 45 minutes, Warwickshire knew that this year's Midland League is very close and individual match point difference (goal difference in football) would be invaluable so a big win mid-season was required against Derbyshire.

Having lost the morning foursomes 4-1 in last month's match, Louis Meryon, their slightly happier County Captain, took a lead (albeit 3 points to 2) into the ten afternoon singles, the first stage towards a match win but nothing to indicate that points difference would be increased, as long as the win actually came.

Some early news wasn't good, with the Bears down in four matches before the turn but in none of these matches was the deficit more than a hole. In the other matches, Warwickshire were making hay on Robin Hood's excellent putting surfaces - barely six months old after being re-laid and which will only go on to become renowned throughout the region.

Rob Browning, playing at No1 for the Bears, made six birdies in the fifteen holes he needed to tilt the scoreboard in Warwickshire's favour. Three birdies in the first five were the start that gave Andy Sullivan his lead which he converted on the 17th.

The third and fourth singles were crucial: Sam Dodds and Chris Dougill both took advantage, and how they needed to, of Rob Hood's four par fives with birdies at every one. They both needed two more red numbers to take their games on the last and the 17th respectively.

The Handsworth duo of Dave Westwood and Karl Smith had joked about who was to blame for their morning foursomes loss but next year's Warwickshire County Captain watched his Derbyshire opponent slot home a birdie at the last to lose his game whilst Smith was under par in winning 3&2, giving the Bears the match. That left four singles on the course and Meryon wanting as many wins as possible. Three duly came. Maxstoke's Antony Gascoigne showed the class he has produced for more than a decade, including an eagle in his scoring blitz as he won 3&2. The other two wins were even bigger with the long-time friends and virtually unbeatable



Gareth Jenkins, comfortable winner for Warwickshire against Derbyshire

partnership of Gareth Jenkins and Ian Stranks both easy winners and equally as adept as Gascoigne at birdies and further eagles.

It all added up to 11-4 in Warwickshire's favour so they waited with baited breath for the result from Drayton where Worcestershire were visiting Staffordshire. The morning matches went to the Pears - 3½ - 1½ - with Worcestershire captain Rod Armstrong sending out club pairings in matches one through three, Moseley, Kings Norton and Fulford Heath respectively, a tactic which produced two and a half of those points.

Taking a two point lead into the afternoon, victory beckoned for the League Leaders, especially with an opening point from Chris Nugent. However, Staffordshire bounced back after the arrival on their captain's own course. The Staffs skipper, fresh from the wedding of his step-daughter, provided a 'stirring' lunchtime team talk which included several references to donkeys. They responded well. First, Aaron Wright beat Oak winner Paul Garey and in matches five through eight the Staffordshire quad of John Whitehouse, Richard Prophet, Freddie Sheridan-Mills and Neil Wain were all comfortable winners.

There were two early matches which went all the way to the last and Dave Walley sank a 15ft birdie putt to ensure Staffordshire would halve both matches. Worcestershire needed both the remaining two single for a just a half.

Graham Wallace duly provided one point in Match 10 but the battle between the two players with probably the most experience of all the twenty players present, the Pears' Steve Lane and Tony Cheese, was destined to go all the way. Cheese was one up with four to play only to lose the next two. Both hit the 18th in two with Cheese 20ft away and Lane five feet closer. When Cheese saw his birdie putt drift by, it was a nerveless lag to give the visitors that vital last win.



Left leg just in front of your right, around shoulder width apart, both knees slightly bent (no straightening) and reach right hand to the left as far as possible at hip height. Try to keep right shoulder below the left shoulder ...



Start by keeping the left leg slightly bent (left). Now the rest of your body including right leg should rotate 90 degrees to the left. Use your arms to help spin the body round. The right foot should end up in a 'T' shape position in front of the left foot (right), with your arms as far round to the right as possible at waist height. Head should stay facing forward.



AGED ...

right hand to the left as far as possible at hip height. Try to keep right shoulder below the left shoulder and head facing forward to the ground. Also, do not let the hip lean too far forward. After 30 seconds, move your feet to the same position as you would in your normal, and repeat the upper body motion.

Now the spine is rotating to the left quicker than the hips, the hips should rotate to the left quicker than your left leg. This motion switches on your left buttock and muscles running down the inside of your right leg to help slow down this massive torque being through the body. When this does not happen, the body struggles to transfer its

weight and you end up sliding into the shot or losing your balance, anything to get the clubface back to the ball as near square as you can, with no consideration for a loss of power or control.

This exercise starts by keeping left leg slightly bent and always facing forward. Now the rest of your body including right leg should rotate 90 degrees to the left. Use your arms to help spin the body round. The right foot should end up in a 'T' shape position in front of the left foot, with your arms as far round to the right as possible at waist height. Head should stay facing forward.

So this now leaves us with the feet. As I'm sure you have guessed by now, for the left

foot to work properly, your left leg has to rotate to the left quicker than your foot. The foot slipping out slightly is tolerable; there is a lot of energy passing through it after all. But if it turns almost as much as your upper body, then it's a clear sign the left foot is not flexible enough to help slow the body down and ends up spinning out before it gets injured, therefore losing as much as 25% power every time you hit the ball.

This exercise is a combination of both of the above exercises. Your right leg is once again going to rotate to the left, but keeping both knees bent this time. Your right arm is reaching as far to the left as possible at the same time, keeping right shoulder lower

than the left. Once again head not moving, just keep head facing forward and looking at the ground

The body is an incredible machine no matter what age you are, and it does not like to get injured. If you get even mild twinges from muscular stiffness when you swing, your body is telling you it is too inflexible in certain areas and will only get worse if not addressed. The positive side of this is as soon as your body can cope comfortably with these stresses - ie minimises them - then you will play better golf.

■ Luke Perrin is an expert in sports performance and injury rehabilitation. To learn more visit www.reforminmotion.com