

senior GOLF

WITH GREG FLORES

getting the most out of your game...

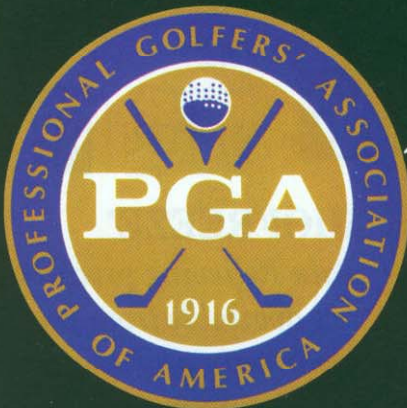
year after year!



The most important part of your game won't be found in your golf bag. It's not your driver, your favorite wedge or even that trusty putter. The single most important thing that can impact your game is your own body.

We take care of our clubs by cleaning them, checking the lofts and lies and re-gripping them when necessary. These things all maximize our chances of playing well. Do our bodies get this same careful examination?

The common axiom about senior golfers is that lack of distance is a natural by product of aging. I want to dispel that notion. It is only inevitable if you are not actively involved in a regular routine of keeping your joints and muscles flexible. Several of the winners on the PGA Champions Tour are driving the ball further today than ever before. They would be the first to tell you that



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they are in better physical condition because they spend more time training than ever before.

Driving a cart, while necessary for some, does play into our sedentary lifestyle. A good, brisk walk on a daily basis can increase stamina greatly. An excellent investment in your health would be the purchase of a mini-trampoline. Only three-to-five minutes of rebounding equals one mile of jogging and the joints are greatly exercised. It is also a perfect way to reduce tension, relax the muscles and strengthen the legs.

Let me share some of my favorite stretching exercises. I have done these daily for more than 10 years and have noticed a definite advantage over some of the other routines I am familiar with.

ARM CIRCLES

Arms straight out to the sides, palms up and arms turning counter-clockwise. Follow by doing the same thing with the palms down and turning clockwise.

SHOULDER STRETCHES

Johnny Miller calls this the best stretch you can do if you don't have time to go to the practice range and warm up. This is accomplished by putting your left arm across your chest as you would in your backswing. Aid the stretch by grabbing your left elbow with your right hand and hold for five seconds. Repeat this with your right arm.

DEAD HAND

This one works wonders on the back of your legs. Assume a very wide athletic stance. Bend at your waist and let your arms hang freely between your feet with your fingers touching the ground. From this position, slowly straighten and relax the knees. Do this 10 times or until you get fatigued. Each time you do this exercise you will find yourself getting stronger and stronger.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Technology is certainly a key element to enjoying the fruits of increased distance. Recently, we had a couple of senior students gain in upwards of 30 yards merely by evaluating their equipment and getting the right tools in their hands.

We had a 68-year-old man who was carrying his

drives an average of 179 yards and they were rolling out to 196. After establishing a solid foundation for his swing through a variety of tests, we determined the best club and ball combination for him. Yes, the ball does matter. His performance using a 12 degree driver with a lower center of gravity was dramatically different than using a 9.5 degree driver. His club length went from 45 to 44 inches, the shaft flex and gram weight of the shaft remained the same. We changed his ball from a low spin to a mid-spin ball. This combination made it possible for him to carry his drives an average of 198 yards and rolling out to 223 yards for a gain of 27 yards. He was flying the ball past the distance that his old drives were stopping.

We had a second player who wanted to test his driver for optimum distance. After determining the shaft load characteristics and amount of force he was putting into the shaft, we arrived at the proper shaft flex. Not only did he begin launching the ball much higher, but he also increased his distance by a total of 31 yards. He was taking advantage of what we in the club-fitting business refer to as "Optimum Launch Conditions," which seeks to match spin rate and launch angle with ball speed. The secret of driving the ball further is to combine a high launch angle with a low spin rate.

As we get older, our hands can get a little unsteady with the putting stroke. There are a few things we can do to combat the issue, starting with back-weighting the putter. Larger grips can also make a big difference for players who have larger

hands or suffer from arthritis. The larger grips make it easier to hold the club.

As we get older, retaining all that we had in our youth can become quite a challenge. Keep your body fit by exercising and stretching in order to stay in good working order. Also, keep your equipment tuned-in to your needs. Work with a golf professional to determine if you are using the optimum match of equipment to get the most out of your game. Optimizing your body and your equipment will allow you to enjoy this game for many years to come. **W&F**

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