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Pilates for Golfers - Injury Prevention

by: Kerrie Lee Brown, Merrithew Health & Fitness™

Golf is a game of skill and poise. Players compete against gravity in a three-dimensional, unstable environment while weathering the elements on the course. In order to prevent injuries and improve swings, avid golfers benefit from exercise regimens during the off-season that focus specifically on their physical needs for the sport.

"Pilates helps golfers with their ability to move more effectively by improving their overall body awareness. It [Pilates] also increases hip stability and strengthens your core and upper mid-

back," explains Moira Merrithew, Executive Director of Education for STOTT PILATES®, Merrithew Health & Fitness' premier brand. "Pilates promotes efficient breath patterns allowing you to be more focused while increasing your range of movement for a more powerful drive."

For the most part, golf and Pilates share the same basic principles, requiring flexibility, rotation and core and gluteal strength. Because Pilates works on a controlled lengthening of the muscles, it can be beneficial in assisting overall flexibility in tighter regions (lower back, ham-

strings, shoulders) and this can aid in creating a stronger game and a greater level of stamina on the course.

Feedback from golf pros has been positive. When a client combines Pilates with lessons, they find that their progress happens faster. By examining a client's strengths, weaknesses and flexibility, a Pilates instructor can work on increasing their client's range of motion with stability making it easier to get the results the golf

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pro is trying to achieve. The emphasis on breath as one of the STOTT PILATES® Five Basic Principles also helps a golfer maintain focus, relax through their swing and control precise movements that are involved in the game.

“Pilates teaches athletes to be mindful in their movements – integrating their pelvis, trunk and shoulder girdle in a safe, challenging and progressive system,” adds Moira. “This form of exercise can also be a very effective supplement to an injury rehabilitation program as it provides athletes with a challenging workout without impact or excessive weight bearing.”

Renee Meloche, STOTT PILATES® Certified Instructor Trainer, who has worked with Assistant Golf Pro Brian Bondy at Fox Glenn Golf Club in Windsor, Ontario agrees: “Pilates helps improve overall co-ordination of biomechanics, flexibility and core strength, therefore decreasing the chances of injury.”

Pilates is three-dimensional. Exercises can be performed using all movement planes – the spring resistance on some pieces of equipment more closely resembles muscular contraction. Weight training and the STOTT PILATES method, in combination, form a well-balanced fitness program as they are a great complement to each other. STOTT PILATES exercise leads to an improvement in posture and body awareness. Emphasis is placed on rebalancing muscles around the joints and therefore corrects over-training and muscle imbalance that leads to injury.

Michael Hunt, Lead Instructor at the Jim McLean Golf School, appears with Moira Merrithew in the STOTT PILATES® golf DVDs. “Most golfers I deal with are inflexible,” explains Michael. “Pilates emphasizes balancing strength with flexibility. Moira and I designed a specific program and set up golf-specific stretches, breathing and exercises for any level golfer. Hand-eye coordination and talent is great to have in golf, but the stronger and more flexible your body is – the better. That’s where Pilates comes into play, literally.”

Michael tries to get his students involved in some type of exercise and stretching before hitting the green. “Golfers will see a huge improvement in their game through Pilates.”

President and CEO of Merrithew Health & Fitness™, Lindsay G. Merrithew, is the Executive Producer of the largest collection of Pilates instructional DVDs worldwide. Popular golf titles include specific exercises and warm-ups for golfers to use at home or on the road. “Golf demands a delicate balance of mental and physical skill,” explains Mr. Merrithew. “Pilates enables you to focus on both through mind-body awareness which provides insight into the connection between the physical and psychological components of athletic performance.”

Pilates on the Green, Level 1 and Pilates on the Green, Level 2 feature Golf Pro Michael Hunt and Executive Director of Education for STOTT PILATES®, Merrithew’s premier brand, Moira Merrithew



If you’re interested in taking a Pilates class or learning more about mind-body exercise, here are a few tips:

- 1. Look for a well-trained Certified Instructor from a reputable Pilates organization.**
- 2. Seek out an instructor who has experience with golf programming and is qualified to talk to your needs.**
- 3. Check out a DVD that’s been produced by a reputable Pilates training organization.**

Stay tuned next issue when we showcase specific Pilates warm-up techniques to improve your golf game...



Merrithew Health & Fitness™ is world-renowned in the health and fitness industry, most notably for its premier brand STOTT PILATES®. For more information visit, www.merrithew.com. Also, for high-caliber Pilates classes in the city, check out the STOTT PILATES® Corporate Training Center and Studio located at Yonge and Eglinton, Canada Square. www.stottpilatesstudio.com