



'Belt-up' for better posture

A new training aid is available to counterbalance poor inflexion-like posture.

Most of the golfers I work with around the world (amateur, junior, senior and professional) have started to use a 'posture belt' as part of their training program. The posture-belt is unique because it activates the deep core and postural muscles that we need for golf and to attack the postural breakdowns associated with a sedentary lifestyle. With regard to golf, the main purpose is to counterbalance the bad posture that top golfers develop while working on their games and the excessive travel they experience.

Using the belt is very safe because it doesn't involve lifting heavy weights. I liken it to a new-age Swiss ball because you can use it anytime, anywhere. Rather than going down to the gym, you can grab the posture-belt and work out for half an hour with golf-specific benefits. By 'firing' your postural and anti-gravity muscles, the belt assists in preventing the scourge of 21st Century living – bad posture-muscle imbalances and associated injuries.

Each set of my posture-belt drills is designed specifically for an individual's particular needs. Firstly, however, I would undertake a musculoskeletal 'screening' to assess strengths and weaknesses in the player's body.

Posture-belt drills are unique to golfers because they actually help to counterbalance inflexion-like posture. Hardened touring professionals tend to get 'stuck' in fixed positions from hours of practising their short games. Kyphosis or rounded shoulders is a typical complaint caused from hunching over chip shots or short putts, trying to build repetition. Players need to counterbalance this 'inflexion' and get the body back into 'extension'.

Posture belts can be used in various ways to assist with dynamic rotation, separation and correct sequencing in the golf swing. Many golfers tend to rotate poorly, which leads to swing compensations. The posture belt promotes extension in the body, helping with separation and proper sequencing during the golf swing. Overcompensations such as swaying can be eliminated if there is good stability and dynamic rotation in the body.

Most club golfers would benefit considerably from using a posture belt, particularly if they spend their working hours hunched over a phone or travelling in a car/plane. You're also likely to develop 'inflexion' if you sit on a couch watching TV for long periods.

On the following page, tour professional James McLean



THE 7 PRIMARY BODY FAULTS AND LIMITATION IN GOLFERS ARE:

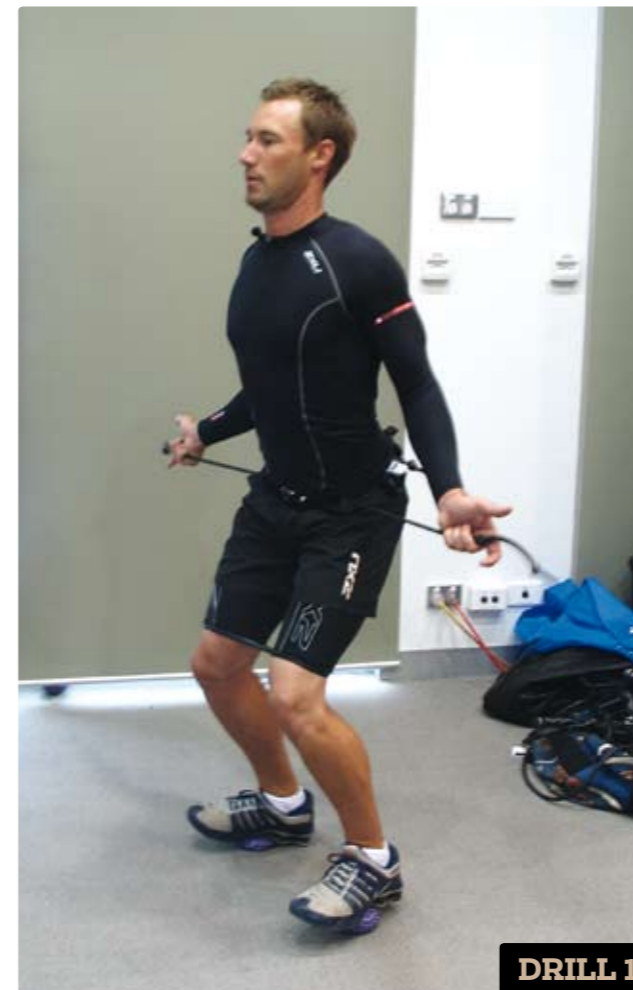
1. Insufficient movement range
2. Lack of postural endurance
3. Lack of rotation
4. Poor sequencing (between the upper body, trunk and legs)
5. Reduced back and neck strength
6. Lack of body awareness and proprioception
7. Uneven body planes and levels

demonstrates two basic drills that will help your golf. They are staged exercises, designed to 'load up' the body and gradually get it set for dynamic rotation. You're trying to 'work' the seven primary muscles groups, which I refer to as the Golf 'Christmas Tree' – neck, shoulder-blade muscles, triceps, lower abs, outside gluts, inside thighs and pelvic floor.

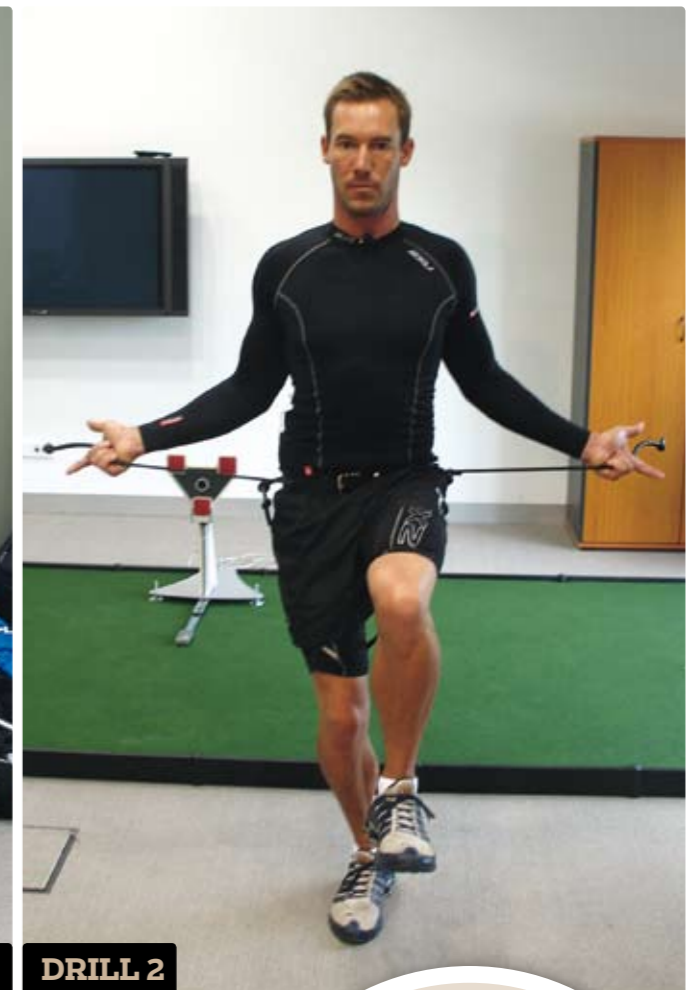
"The posture belt is probably the thing I use the most at the moment," says McLean, who has one with him on the range as a 'circuit breaker' between hitting balls.

"I've been using it for a bit over a year. Basically, I use it to realign everything. You want all the opposing muscles firing, like your triceps, lats, gluteals and deep abdominals. After you've done it for a while you feel like you've got that nice solid posture and endurance in key areas."

COURTESY OF RAMSAY McMASTER



DRILL 1



DRILL 2

DRILL 1: GOLF CHRISTMAS TREE BOUNCE

Keeping correct upright posture (with the Golf Christmas Tree muscles firing through the chain), slowly bounce your feet 'through' the ground. Push against the band as if riding on a horse. Feel your neck, shoulder blades, triceps, trunk, pelvis, inner thighs and arches of the feet. Maintain good bouncing rhythm within the whole body as if it's in 'dance mode' to prevent any rigidity. When set-up with a golf club you will feel more upright and connected.

DRILL 2: GOLF CHRISTMAS TREE IN SLOW MILITARY MARCH

Same as above, but slowly lift one leg up in a 'slow march on the spot'

position. There should be no swaying from side to side and the body segments should be compact. Aim for good breathing technique and the diaphragm should be in use at all times. Use 'pistol grips' in both drills and feel the same connection and compression of the body segments.

Everything is done slowly and intentionally with complete body control. Imagine you're creeping out of the forest – without rustling the leaves and waking up the bear!

As with all these drills, I like to recommend doing them at three different speed levels (33/66/99), making an association with the speed of swinging a golf club with a wedge, long iron and driver. It makes the exercise more intentional and specific to golf by doing the drill with three variable controls. Feel it in your body, then stop

IMPORTANT:

Before you do these exercises, talk through them with your local trainer or physiotherapist. If you have any existing injuries, I strongly recommend that you do these exercises under supervision. And if you experience sharp pain or soreness, stop immediately.

and blend it into your swing with drills your PGA coach has prescribed.

Contact Ramsay McMaster on 0407 432 282 for advice about golf-specific training. Call the Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on (03) 9569 9448 to purchase a 'Fitness Survival Kit'.