

## Instruction Fore You

# Keeping Your Game in Shape During the Winter Months



By Cody Barden  
PGA Director  
of Instruction  
White Columns  
Country Club

In Georgia, the off season for golf typically runs from the middle of November to the middle of March. Once the Masters arrives that second week of April, we have been in full swing for at least one month. For the golf enthusiast there are a number of great things you can do for your game during this 16-week stretch of time. For the Tour player based in the Southeast, this time is very critical to the success they will enjoy later during the tournament season. Following are three ideas you might consider.

Fitness training is a common theme for all golfers during the off season. Many of us shift the focus of our golf practice during these months to a well-rounded stretching, weight training, and cardio program. Perhaps we're too busy with tournaments and instruction, or we simply prefer to spend the sunny days outside playing the game, but for whatever reason the colder months give us the opportunity to establish a baseline physical fitness level that can help our bodies hold up during the busy golf season.

When I was the golf coach at Pepperdine University in Malibu, we typically had to deal with a rainy season December-February each year. I was fortunate to have a team that went on to win a national championship and was captained by current PGA Tour star Jason Gore. During the "Malibu winters" I had the guys participating in a weight training and aerobics program to try and help them stay in shape. Believe it

or not, we had a couple guys who were larger than Jason, so the regular workouts were critical.

It seems everyone has a great program to try, but as long as you do something to improve your flexibility and endurance, you will reap the rewards come spring and summer. And if you aren't sure how to get started, here's the name of an Atlanta group that many Tour players and local golfers use, [www.coregolffitness.com](http://www.coregolffitness.com).



Most experienced players, and especially tournament players, elect to make swing changes and improvements to both technique and equipment during their off season. The idea is that the player isn't rushing to apply something new in their technique; they have time to practice and build a sense of trust that will allow them to take it to the course during the season. Additionally, this is the time of year we encourage players to visit the launch monitor and practice tee to try out a new driver or set of irons. At the very least all grips should be changed and loft and lies should be checked on the irons.

Often times equipment changes in the middle of the golf season can prove difficult to deal with. For example, I currently work with a Tour player who asked me to help him improve his distance control on his wedges during the off season. We discussed the issue on the practice tee at a tournament site in June and after we visited the Tour van to have his loft and lies standardized, decided it would be best to improve his technique once the season was concluded. He needs a few months to get comfortable with the new strategy and doesn't want to be worried about it potentially costing him a shot during a

tournament. If you can connect with a respected teaching professional during the off season, it is the ideal time to work on improving your swing fundamentals and scoring ability.

An indoor training program is critical during the inclement weather months. This is much different than the fitness program already discussed. Many of the top college golf teams and professional players have an indoor area where they work on their golf swing. Interestingly it doesn't have to be a place where they actually hit balls, however, it certainly does help to have a hitting area if you have the space. A large full-length mirror and enough space to make full swings while working with a few teaching aids is all you really need.

Most teaching professionals can prescribe a short list of drills and exercises to help players improve both the full swing and short game. Personally, I'm a big fan of taping lines on a large mirror and working on the posture and pivot of my students. I also like to use an impact bag to help them work on impact position and a ball between their legs to help them with improving the role of their lower body throughout the motion.

When you really think about it, 16 weeks isn't a long span of time. In Georgia we don't get too much more time than this to proactively improve our golf games during the off season. Therefore, many golfers, especially the tournament players, move with a strong sense of urgency during this time. A good fitness program, regular golf instruction and a customized indoor training routine can all lead to a much improved golf season when the weather turns sunny and warm again. As always, contact your local PGA professional if you're interested in getting on the bus. Good Luck! ●