Your Most Burning Questions Answered-Part 1

Announcer: Good day, golfers, and welcome to Fitness for Golf with Susan Hill. Golf fitness continues to grow and expand in popularity within all age groups and abilities, and here to get you in mental and physical shape for your game is host, Susan Hill.

Susan: Welcome to the Fitness for Golf Internet radio show. I’m Susan Hill and today I’m really excited to have the opportunity to focus on some of the most asked questions I get from golfers of all levels. I’ve been collecting and saving some of the most asked questions I get. These have come from Tour players, juniors’ parents, and competitive golfers, literally from around the world.

My goal today is to try and get through as many of these questions as I can and help each of you try and find the answers that you’ve been looking for. I actually am starting with a pretty long list today, and I really tried to focus on those questions that I get repeatedly.

I know for so many people that write me, they’re thinking that maybe this is the only time that they’re asking this kind of a question. I always get a chuckle when it turns out this is probably a question I get several times a day, and certainly monthly or yearly, and from players at all different levels. I’m going to start out today and jump in with a question.

I’m going to tell you a little bit about each golfer, or the information I’ve been able to collect. The first question that I’ve received is actually from a golf instructor. His name is David, and David is a full-time instructor at an elite junior golf academy. I’ve had the privilege of working with him and a lot of his students over the past several years and we’re just going to go ahead and get started with his comment.

First he sent me an email: “Congratulations, Susan. You never stop thinking and working, and you really deserve a lot of credit for creating energy in a stoic industry. Seriously, keep up the creativity. Here’s my question. Many players and trainers talk about the importance of core strength. What would be the best approach to help golfers understand the importance, and what are some good core exercises for intermediate and advanced players? Thank you.”

I may not get a ton of questions from PGA professionals or instructors, although I do work with quite a few. This is a question that is very commonly asked and it doesn’t just apply to juniors. What I thought I
would do is talk a little bit about juniors, but also talk about why the core is so important and help you understand what it means.

I’m actually going to be giving you a couple of activities as well, so if you’re in the position where you may not be at work, you’re at home and you’re relaxed, you can actually work along with as I’m giving you some of these exercises or drills.

The first thing I want to focus on with the core is making sure that the core is the issue with juniors. I have worked at an academy for quite some time and one of the things I see is difficulty with understanding movement patterns. That might sound kind of funny to a lot of people when they hear this, but the juniors that I’m working with today, I believe, are very different from the juniors that we’ve seen in the past.

The difference is that ever since Tiger Woods came out, and now we’re hearing stories about Michelle Wie, I think there’s inherent pressure for a lot of the players to begin playing golf earlier and earlier. With so much competition in the field at these younger ages, I’m not seeing the kids playing other activities.

They’re basically coming out of the womb, being handed a club and they go ahead and start to work on their game. They’re not playing soccer. They’re not playing basketball or doing gymnastics, and those are things in the past that we saw a lot of kids do, which helps them to develop really good movement patterns that were transferred over to golf.

That’s the first thing I want to address is a lot of the core involvement, strength and engagement that I think we’re missing is from juniors who didn’t have basic athletic movement or weren’t taught these principles. When they started with golf, having golf as the only background, hopefully, that makes some sense.

That’s the first thing I wanted to address. The second thing is that when I work with Tour players or players of all levels, I try to explain the core to help people understand there is a soft belly position and a hard belly position. I always get a chuckle from this, because I don’t mean it from a standpoint that your belly is big or small, but understanding that every single person, regardless of age, has a soft belly position and a hard belly position.

I’m not sure as you’re listening to me, if you’re in a position where you’re standing or sitting, but it doesn’t make a difference. If you were to place your hand about mid-level or near your belly button, most people are sitting in a very relaxed position, and their stomach muscles feel very soft or what I call the soft belly position.
If you were then to actually concentrate, think about it and then pull that belly button in towards your spine and create some tension there. Remember, you still want to breathe in that position. You don’t want to have it so tense and tight that it wouldn’t be a normal position. It’s really what we call good posture.

When you actually pull that belly button or navel in towards your spine, keeping that hand there, you can feel the muscles in your stomach become somewhat taught or a little bit tight. That’s what I call the hard belly position. The hard belly position is a level of engagement in your core that you can actually feel.

I like for all of my players to be able to feel that position before they start any exercise movement. We’re going to talk about some of those things as we move along in the show today. I’m going to give you all an exercise because so many people talk about the core. In trying to answer David’s question, they want to know when is it engaged? How is it engaged? How do I know when my core is engaged?

I’m going to give you not necessarily an exercise, but a test. The way the test would work is you would lie down on your back. When you’re lying down on your back, you are going to have your knees in a bent position. They’re actually going to be at a 90 degree angle. You’re going to place one hand underneath your lower back and one hand on your stomach muscles at about the same place we were talking about near your belly button.

As your legs are extended in the air, I want you to really focus on pushing the stomach muscles down, so you actually feel like you’re putting a ton of pressure on your hand, so you feel it nice and tight on your hand. Once you get in that position, into that hard belly position, start to move your legs down slowly towards the ground, and think about what’s happening to your body.

Be very aware of what’s happening. There are three basic things that are going to happen. One is that your lower back is lifting away from your hand and you can’t feel any more pressure on your hand. The second thing that might happen is your lower back is lifting, but you can still feel a little bit of pressure on your hand. In the final scenario, you would have the same, exact pressure on your hand.

If you think through what might be happening there, if you had a really strong core and you kept that hard belly position even as you were moving your legs, you would realize that your hand would stay the same. That
would never change. That’s ultimately what we want in the golf swing, regardless of what’s happening with our body.

Our lower body is stable. We’re rotating our hips. We’re bringing our shoulders back, and as we’re making that golf swing motion, we want to know that we still have that hard belly position. That’s what we’re going to work towards. As you’re doing that test or exercise, if you notice that your lower back did lift, and especially if it was completely away from your hand that was beneath it, then that is really an area that you need to work on.

That’s how you know if you need to work your core. There’s a whole, wide variety of exercises that we can do. If you fail that exercise or test, that would become a great exercise for you to do by just continuing to do that exercise over and over, really focusing on keeping that hard belly position. Thanks for writing that question in, David. Hopefully that answers your questions on the core.

I’m going to move into another question. This is from Noah, and he’s 39 years old. He’s a nine handicap from Seattle. I’m going to read these questions exactly as they came in to me. “I’ve been hitting the gym more regularly recently for a combination tone-up/weight loss/golf strengthening goal. Are there any exercises I shouldn’t do? For instance, are there any that might hurt my swing, and which areas of the body or exercises should I focus on, specifically for golf, for example, with balance?” That’s a great question, Noah. I get that question a lot, and especially in the age group that you’re in. Thank you so much for asking that question.

I have a couple of specific exercises that I do not like for the golf swing and then, I have one general rule that is very important. The most important rule to me is, regardless of the exercise that you choose, anything that’s done with bad posture is a horrible exercise for golf. It may sound really basic, but I’ve seen people do a chest press with really poor posture. I especially see people doing back exercises with really poor posture, and so, anything that you’re doing where you’re slouched forward, your neck is in a forward position, your shoulders are slumped forward and then you’re adding weight to those positions, every single one of those exercises are considered bad for your golf swing. All you’re doing is reinforcing by adding the weight to poor posture.

The most important thing that I really want to stress is good posture, and we talk about it every day in the golf swing. Every time we swing a golf
club, that’s what we’re thinking about is getting your good golf posture. It’s a fundamental thing that we need to work on. Every time we go into the gym, we need to get into our good golf posture, get into our good exercise posture or something along those lines.

Then we would know that we’re doing those exercises correctly. In addition to that, I want to mention a couple of exercises I don’t like. One of my exercises I really do not like golfers to do is a behind-the-neck press. I’ve seen this done a couple of different ways. Unfortunately, in almost every situation, it’s done incorrectly, which puts so much pressure on the neck and shoulders, and ultimately creates an injury in the shoulders.

As you know, for a golfer, this is fatal. One of the things I don’t like to see is a behind-the-neck press and that could be done with dumb bells. I’ve seen people sit down on a bench or in a standing position, take those dumb bells towards the ceiling and then reach back behind their neck as the press it in and towards their shoulders.

Unfortunately, people tend to use both poor form and also excess weight. When you’re rotating your shoulders back into that position, it puts a lot of stress and strain on those shoulders, and I consider that a very poor exercise for golf. The other exercise I see, and it’s very similar, is at every single gym, there is a lat pull down.

A lat pull down is a machine that has you sit down, and I’ve seen people pull this bar behind their neck. That’s something that I’ve never considered to be a good exercise for golf. I can’t believe how much information we’re covering already, and I want to talk about a few more of those items. We’re ready for our first brief commercial break and we’ll return in a few minutes with the Fitness for Golf Show.

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Susan: Thanks for staying with us. This is Susan Hill, and just before our break, we were talking about exercises that I didn’t like for golf, and I just wanted to review those quickly. I don’t like anything that’s done with poor posture, which means that pretty much everything that’s done with great
posture and good body motion is great for golf, as long as you have good variety in your routine.

The only exceptions to that, as I was just mentioning, is the behind-the-neck press down or behind-the-neck pull down that I see so often in the gym. I want to switch over to another couple of questions that I like. This is actually one I feel I get every day. I’m sure that is not true but I love this question, because I think the answer is different than what most people think.

This is from Alex. Alex is 51 years old, and he’s a six handicap. He’s from Kenya. “I normally work out every day in the morning, and some of the days I do lift weights, and play golf in the afternoon. I was wondering whether it was advisable to do so or not to lift weights the day I’m going to play golf.”

I’m not sure how many of you asked that question, but I’ll give you an answer that obviously is going to depend upon the level of player you are and what your level of fitness is. First, I want to answer that by saying I’ve looked at Vijay’s program. I’m familiar with Phil Mickelson, Mike Weir, and Annika. I’ve either worked with their trainers, been involved in some sort of process, or have read about their programs.

Every single one of them work out before their golf game. This rationale has been explained to me by either the trainers, or in my intimate knowledge of the situation. Once a player becomes conditioned and has a program, and a program could be everything about the way they warm up mentally, technically and physically—whatever their process or program is, it’s very important that they’re committed to that program or process.

If it’s the day of the Masters, and this may be extreme, but this is exactly the way it works in real life situations, if they normally work out on a Thursday, then they’re going to work out on a Thursday. It doesn’t matter what the event is. They try and keep that because that’s their normal schedule.

If the Masters would be occurring on a Thursday, they wouldn’t wake up and say, “Oh, my gosh. It’s the Masters. I feel a ton of pressure. I can’t work out today.” In fact, that exactly the kind of scenario that would put a player off of their program and make their head spin a little bit. The idea is to be very relaxed, thoughtful and just continue along the path the same way that they do.

The answer to that is do whatever your normal routine is to try and keep it as consistent as possible, and that does include working out. Now, of course with everything there is an exception. The exception is, and we’re
not going to spell out specific players, but let me give you an example of situations where that wouldn’t apply.

If a player were to call me in the middle of their season, contact me and say for whatever reason they’ve never worked out, they finally decided to get on the bandwagon, or they used to work out and haven’t for the last six months. Can I help them? I am not going to immediately throw them into an aggressive strength training program, because I know that doing that is going to be really disruptive to their process, as well as mentally, and that’s the last thing that I want to do.

I’m going to ease them into a program and I’m really going to be looking for a lot of feedback from them as to how sore they’re getting, how comfortable they’re feeling and how it’s translating to their game. If you’re listening to this show today, you’re going to be one of those two types of people, and that’s a person that has a regular schedule and is going to continue playing and working out, mixing those two together.

The other is one that’s going to want to ease into it so that it’s not too disruptive. Here’s another great question. This is from Gary. He’s 16 years old and a five handicap. “I’ve been playing golf for almost three years, and my handicap is five. I was wondering which muscles I would need to concentrate on by doing weights to improve my distance?”

That’s another great question, especially related to distance. So many people either ask me how to get more distance or which muscles should they be working on. This is a great question because in my time as a trainer, I’ve really seen a big transition and a lot of changes in the way that we train people.

Like in all things, I think the golf swing, our understanding of the golf swing, and our understanding of the knowledge is part of training that we continue to learn. Even myself as a professional, I continue to learn, develop and change my techniques. In the old days, which it seems like yesterday, but it’s getting further and further behind us, we were really compartmentalizing our muscles.

We were thinking, “I’m going to do this for my biceps,” or, “I’m going to do this for my triceps.” Those are the things we’re trying to get away from. The golf swing encompasses so many muscles and they’re working very fast together, and we want it to be a smooth transition, so wouldn’t it make sense if we train our body in the same fashion?

So we think about a transfer of power when we think about distance. I always look at the golfer as a complete individual, a whole person, starting from the ground up. All the studies have shown, when you study
biomechanics, that that’s how power is transferred. We look at what is the base of support?

We literally start with the feet and ankles, and look at what stability you have at the ankles. Then we move up to the knees and hips, and go to your core. Ultimately, it transfers to the upper body. I like movement and I like exercises that incorporate the body in that.

An example is instead of doing your bicep curls or tricep extension, that you’re doing maybe some single-leg squats. I’m a big fan of single-leg squats, that you can do very simply in a gym or at home and you can put a chair behind you. You’re relying on the strength of just one leg to go ahead and sit down behind you.

See how low you can go, and then you’ll feel that force and you’ll feel the importance of that leg strength because you have to really push through that foot, which is firmly planted on the ground, and see if you can move your body up. The answer to your question is really to focus not so much on individual muscles, but on a whole development of your body and instinct.

I think that makes a lot of sense. I got another great question, and this is very specific to a gentleman named Mike. I had worked with an LPGA player and I was talking. One of my favorite things to do is case studies. Case studies are real life things that I see in the golf swing, and in working with players. We eliminate the names because it doesn’t matter.

What I’m trying to do is teach different golfers what I’m seeing, what I’m learning, and if this is happening to you, how it’s going to play and how it’s going to help you. I had just worked with a player who was not getting distance and we were trying to figure out how to make that different. I had talked in my newsletter about the Paula Creamer dip.

Have you all seen the Paula Creamer dip, when she sort of dips down as opposed to rotates through her golf swing? This is from Mike, who’s 48 years old, and a six handicap. “I’m 48 years old, a six handicap, with a goal to reach scratch. I was a better player when I was younger, but children and work took me up to about nine over the course of about 10 years.

“When my son started to take more interest in golf a couple of years ago, I started to work on my game, and set a goal of reaching scratch. In working on my swing over the past year, my instructor has noticed that my poor shots are accompanied by a lack of upper body rotation. He has shown me video where everything looks good in my backswing and the first move down.
“But once my hands reach about the hip level, in the forward swing, my upper body stops rotating while my hands and arms continue. At its worst, it ends up causing sweeping hooks and lots of lost strokes. I have worked hard to focus on upper body rotation this year, but have developed back pain.

“While I do work out and stretch every day, I was wondering if something else is going on that needs attention. I will take the test on your website tonight, but I didn’t want to wait and forget to send this message to you. I’d like your input.” One of the things that I have featured on the website, BodyforGolf.net, is a set of assessments.

There are a lot of different ways of looking at your body, but it’s really important to know where your body restrictions are. In other words, where your strengths are, where your weaknesses are, what you’re good at and what you need to develop. I had Mike go on. What I suspected, because I see this in upper body rotation a lot, when the lower body isn’t following, there are typically two reasons for this.

Actually, let me put it into three reasons. If you’re having difficulty rotating, then it’s usually in the mid back, so it’s right along the spine and towards the middle. The other thing, and this is very typical of men in Mike’s age range, which is the 40s, although it can certainly happen in the 30s and the 50s, is very tight hips.

When that body wants to rotate, either the upper body is catching them, or the lower body just doesn’t want to move. So, I first suspected his hips. I also suspected his upper body or his mid back. The third thing, because of the back pain, I was wondering if he was, as I was reading this, having that soft belly position.

He not only was having trouble in that rotation, but he has that soft belly which is creating the back pain. There are only two things that keep you upright. You have to be able to keep nice, good core strength to be able to keep that pressed in against your spine or else all the absorption from the golf swing is going to go to your back, which makes it break down.

Sure enough, when he took the test, we determined that he had both really tight hips and also a tight mid back. This is something that is very common. I’ve heard people say that 80% to 90% of golfers have this. Whatever the number is, it’s very common. I’m going to give you one of my favorite stretches for the mid back and it’s going to be standing.

I’m going to have you stand in your athletic posture, in your good golf posture. Go ahead and place one hand on your head. If your right hand is
on your head, your left hand would be right at your waist. Actually, I’m going to have to keep you hanging here in this position, because we have to take a very quick commercial break. As soon as we come back, I’m going to take you right through my favorite stretch. Thanks for joining us, and please come back in just a few moments.

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Susan: Thanks again for staying with us. This is Susan Hill and we were just talking before the break. I can’t believe I left you hanging like that. I told you about one of the most common problems we see in the golf swing and it applies to 80% or 90% of you. I put you in a position and left you there. Hopefully, you’re ready to resume because it really is one of my favorite stretches.

In fact, if you go out on the LPGA Tour and see some of the ladies doing this, you can say, “I bet that came from Susan.” We were standing in our nice, athletic posture, in our golf position. Our feet are about shoulder width apart and we have our left hand on our hip. We have our right hand right at the top of our head with our elbow extended.

All we’re going to do is we’re going to be bent forward slightly from the hip. We’re going to tilt that right side all the way back into a full rotation. What you’re going to feel is natural rotation around your spine. It’s a nice, gentle stretch. You’re keeping your hand on that left side. If you’re very, very tight, your body’s going to want to rotate completely to your left side and almost take you off balance.

You’re really going to have to stay nice and tight in that position. Make sure that your weight is evenly distributed on both sides. Go ahead and reach on your right side, back as far as you are comfortable, because everybody’s going to have a different range of motion. You’ll feel a little pulling motion or a tightness in the mid back.

That’s where you want to go, where you start to feel that resistance, and then take it back. There are many stretching methods. I’m a big proponent of what’s called an active isolated stretch, or an AIS stretch, and that’s just holding it one to two seconds which keeps the body in a dynamic position. You’re going back, one, one thousand, two, and coming back to a relaxed
position, then going back into the stretch, one, one thousand, two, and back to a relaxed position.

I’d like to see you do that ten to 12 times, and then repeat. Try it on both sides, and as you do that, again, I’m a big believer in just being aware of what your body’s trying to tell you. When you’re really paying attention and remove the restrictions that are around you, or any distractions, you can really focus on it. You’ll notice maybe one side’s a little bit tighter than the other. That’s my great stretch for the mid-back area.

I want to switch over to another question. I might seem like I’m spending a little bit of time on some of these answers, and I’m definitely going to spend a lot of time on this next question. I get asked all the time about if I’m here, and I want to get all the way over here in terms of my golf game, say I’m a ten or a 15 handicap and I want to get to scratch or win a tournament, how do I do that?

Again, I chuckle because that’s one of the most loaded questions I could ever get asked as a trainer because I literally could do an entire show about periodization. I was trying to think, if people ask that all the time, how come there’s no information on periodization for golf that I believe is mainstream or public?

I think it’s because it’s complicated. It’s involved and a lot of us work our entire career trying to build a program like that. I decided to make that as easily available to you today. I’m going to try to go through as much detail as possible. I think this is really important information. It is information I do use every day in working with Tour players.

In fact, I’m using it exactly right now because we are in the off season for the Tour players. While the rest of you are relaxing at home, this is my busy season. This is the time where I get calls. This is the time where my pressure is high, because the players have just come off the Tour and they’re looking and saying, “What could I have improved? What went right? What went wrong? Maybe you can help me.”

Let me read the question and then you’ll see where I’m headed with this, and we’ll go on to a little bit more elaborate answer. “Hi, Susan. My name’s Matthew. I’m in the last year of training to become a PGA golf professional in England. The reason for the email is I’m wishing to play more next year and have two major competitions.

“I hope to have peak physical and technical performance, and I was wondering if there were any tips you could send me to help me with my planning drills. I’m going to use a periodization plan that includes the
relevant phases that come with them. I was wondering if you could give me some help with this, maybe some guidelines.”

Now you could see why I say that’s a loaded question. Of course, that was condensed down to one small paragraph. That was a huge question. Again, this is what I do as a living is help people achieve that. So, what he’s talking about in periodization is what most high level players have and it’s a system.

The idea is to maintain a high level of performance in golf throughout the season. The purpose of putting a training program like this in place is to actually accelerate each player’s development and helping them to go through a preparation process where they peak at the right time. If you think about it, can you put together a program where a player comes to me and Tiger Woods says, “I want to win the Masters. It’s not that I have to win every tournament”?

For most people that’s unrealistic, but I want to win that tournament. I could have a collegiate golfer that says, “I need to win the individual because I want to turn pro after my college season,” or any number of situations. With recreational golfers, something that’s very inspiring for all of us, including myself, is to be able to win a club championship.

That obviously occurs on a very specific date, and that’s what people want to prepare for. The essence of what periodization is all about is it reflects a very calculated and planned way of developing a golfer’s game. It takes into account where your game is currently and where you are attempting to go. It doesn’t matter if you’re a high handicap golfer, if you’re a scratch or professional.

It’s a purposeful, succinct, and efficient program that’s going to get you there as quickly as possible. I’m going to name five exact phases of how this works. I just want to assure you again, I really feel strongly about giving people accurate information, but this is something that’s a very purposeful plan. This has been a plan that has been developed by a number of people and is used by many current Tour players.

The first phase of development is called the assessment period. I’m going to go through these five phases very quickly. The first is called the assessment. The second is called the technical preparation. The third is called your pre-competition. Then it goes into your competition. Your final phase is an active rest and regeneration.

Again, I’m going to say this. You’re assessing. You do an assessment. You go into a technical phase. You go into a pre-competition phase, a competition phase and then an active rest and regeneration. There are
some specific ways that you do that. I’m going to try and summarize what’s happening, because there’s a lot of really neat stuff that’s happening in each of those phases.

Right now, with all of my players that I’m working with that are in the season, we’re in the “assess your game” and the technical phase of development right now because we’re in the off season. That’s the time to do it. What’s happening in the assessment phase is a total breakdown of your game. It’s stepping back from who you are and what you’ve achieved and saying, “Okay, when I take this down,” it’s like a self-discovery mission.

“What are my strengths and weaknesses from a physical, technical, and mental standpoint?” We’re really breaking the whole thing down. The main question is “What is holding me back from playing my best golf?” That’s ultimately what every player says. What is it? That’s the question that they ask themselves. Nobody can step in and look at you, and say, “Oh, well. Gee, Bob. It’s this. Why can’t you see it?”

It obviously is a very involved answer and one that takes some work to discover for you what those strengths and weaknesses are. In the assessment phase, what we’re doing some physical assessments like we were just talking about with Mike. Is it his hips? Is it his mid back? Is it tight hamstrings? Is it his shoulder? Is it his left or right shoulder?

Is it his strength? What’s the problem? Once we determine what the problem is, then we can find a solution. When we find a solution, oh, my gosh! Can you imagine? You literally unleash an entire new player. We’re looking at the body assessments which I just mentioned and then we’re looking at, from a technical and mental standpoint, how far do you hit every single club in your bag?

We are writing it down and doing a full technical breakdown of your game. Also, mentally, what is your confidence with every single one of those clubs, and if you’re like me, and you play a lot of golf, there are certain clubs that you just could hit all day long. You give me that club, and I can hit anything. Then there are other clubs where I don’t have the confidence. Oh, no, this is going to be a pitch shot and I’m terrible when I pitch.

It’s all those things. It’s developing where your weakness is, technically, mentally and physically. Then, we go into the technical period where we’re going to start fixing all of those issues. That’s when we’re breaking down the swing mechanics. We’re building on our weaknesses. We’re learning about our attitude and how each of our shots are going to affect
the outcome, depending on what our thought process is and whatever self-talk we’re giving ourselves.

Then we go into a pre-competition phase. Now, we’re getting our routine down. We've basically fixed the issues from a body standpoint. We’ve got all the solutions that we’re working on. Pre-competition is a way of finessing all of those. What does our system look like? What is our mental warm up? What is our physical warm up? What is our relaxation procedure and our visualization procedure?

What’s our pre-shot routine? Now, this is all about finesse. We’re really preparing for competition. By the time we get to competition, we are dialed in. We are just really dialed in. All we really want to do is play good golf. We just want to play the golf and the game that we’re capable of playing.

The reason why you get to play such great golf in competition is because of all the previous work that you did in each of those different phases. It’s a building process. In the competition phase, we’re not looking to break all of these barriers in fitness. We’re looking to maintain all of the hard work we just did. From a technical standpoint, we’re not sitting there thinking, “I need to fix this or that.”

We’ve already addressed all of those issues so we just want to reinforce the good swing. We want to reinforce the good mental attitude that we have. We’re just not trying to push ourselves. We’re just trying to be fluid, natural and do everything with ease. The last phase is the rest and regeneration. We call it active rest. Some players will actually take a real break during this period.

In other words, they may put the clubs aside and say, “Forget it. I don’t even want to look at you for a couple of weeks,” or whatever the process is. We’ve seen this a couple times with Tiger Woods and with other players. Other people take an active rest, so instead of practicing a certain number of hours a day, they’ll go ahead and just cut that back.

It’s really just creating a very relaxed state of mind, a certain presence and finding a place where you can really regenerate and get ready to go through the process again. We’re going to go ahead and take a brief break here. Thank you for staying with us, and please stay with us for one more segment. I look forward to having you join us.

Announcer: Have you envisioned standing on the tee and hitting it longer and with greater strength than ever before? Are you completely confident you could play better golf if only you were given access to better resources and a team with experience? BodyforGolf.net allows every level of golfer the
opportunity to learn what’s being taught at the most sophisticated and prestigious golf performance centers worldwide, only in the comfort of their own living space. Prepare your body; prepare your mind to play your best with FitnessForGolf.com.

Susan: This is Susan Hill and I really appreciate you staying with me today. I think we’re covering a lot of really important topics as they relate to golf. I do get asked so many of these questions over and over. It was my goal today to really focus on some solutions so regardless of what your specific issue is today, and regardless of what your level of play is, I wanted to make sure that you left this radio show today with some very concrete and specific steps that you can take to work on your game.

We left off just before break in talking about a subject which is very involved, as you are probably getting a feel for, and that’s on periodization and really becoming the best player that you can be. As I’m talking, I’m thinking I really should do a follow-up segment on this because it is so involved and there is so much great information in here.

I want to finish off where I was when I left, and that is those five different phases of development. This is the system, the periodization system that is in use by many high-level players. The five-step system is, first, to assess your game. Second is to go through the technical preparation. Third is to go through the pre-competition phase, then go into a competitive phase and the last is an active rest and regeneration.

This reminds me of another question that’s related somewhat to this answer, so I wanted to read it. This is from Ken. Ken is 63 years old and he’s a 13 handicap from California. Here is his question. “How often should a person work out? I’m 63 years old and I’m in great shape. I play golf five days a week. I always play very early and work out before I play. Morning is the best time and is the time I can control. Therefore, I want to continue to work out before I play.”

Then he goes on to say he’s usually up at 4:00 a.m., works out at 4:30, and then he always eats a good, well-balanced breakfast, and tees off around 7:00 or 7:30. “The two days a week I don’t golf, I work out for an hour and a half. These days it’s more cardio and weights. The other days I do one of your Fitness for Golf routines.”

My first obvious response is, Ken, that is so fantastic, and I love to hear that you take your fitness so seriously, whether it was golf related or not. I know this will serve you well to have a wonderful, healthy life. That serves as inspiration to me and I hope that serves as an inspiration to many people because that’s something that we should all work towards.
In answering your question, “How often should a person work out?” I always go back to a fundamental answer or a question back to you. “How is that working for you so far?” In other words, given that you’re a 13 handicap, are you all that you’ve ever wanted to be at a 13? Are you all that you want to be physically and mentally? If you are not, then this is where I’m tying it back into the periodization that we were discussing.

In what areas do you think you need or could seek improvement? It’s so difficult for us to get this honest feedback on ourselves, which is why it’s great to have good friends, instructors or other people that you trust as part of your team, so you can really go back and ask them these questions. I trust you to ask this yourself and come up with the answer.

Then, if you’re getting the results that you want, then I’m comfortable with you playing as often as you play and working out as often as you work out. I think the body gets accustomed to it, and it has a response that we either like or we don’t like. It’s when we’re not getting the response or feedback on our golf game that we want, that’s when we seek to change things.

The only thing I would add is make sure that you do remember your recovery period. I might also encourage you, because it sounds like from your level of play and from what you’re getting out of this, you might want to try, just for fun, to try more of a periodized schedule where you’re altering your workouts.

I would encourage you to make sure that you’re getting what you want out of it, and then trying this periodized approach to golf fitness and your whole golf program, and see if that alters or improves your whole scheduling. I think that you might want to try that. Another great question I got is from Joe. Joe is 51 years old and a nine handicap from British Columbia.

“I am a healthy, fit, 51-year-old male with a nine handicap. It used to be lower. I have been having trouble loosening up my shoulders in the past couple of years, and I would like to know, what is the best way to get more strength and mobility in that area?” This is another great question. Tight shoulders, what does that mean other than everything?

When the shoulders are tight, we either see that as a difficulty in making the backswing, or when we get into a backswing, the shoulders are tight. You can’t get the club in the proper position, then it’s off-plane. There is no way to make a proper swing with the club with tight shoulders. I’m going to walk through one of my favorite stretches, and this is one that is very easy to do on the course.
Again, this is a stretch you might see a lot of other instructors use. It’s nothing created brand new here, but it’s still one of my favorites and one I would recommend with my Tour players. What I would have you do is if you’re on the driving range or course, and you want to do a nice, gentle stretch, you want to go ahead and grab a golf club.

Go ahead and stand with your nice, good golf posture as we’ve been talking about throughout this show. The club is going to be behind you, straight up and straight down. What I want you to do is take your right hand and reach first towards the ceiling and then back over the top of your shoulder. Grab the top of the club. It doesn’t matter if the head of the club is pointed up or down, because the motion you’re going to be doing as part of the stretch is the same.

Let’s take your right hand. We’ve reached up towards the ceiling and then gone behind our back and grabbed hold of the top of the club. Then you’re going to take your opposite hand, it might be your left hand, and reach back behind your back, but at your belt level where your belt loops are, and grab the club from that opposite.

You’ve got both hands on the club, one in the low position and one in the high position. All I would have you do is go ahead and let that right hand or the top hand overpower, and bring that club straight up towards the ceiling. You’ll feel a nice stretch in that lower shoulder, right at the shoulder blade or right at the rotator cuff.

When you start to feel the tension, again hold it one to two seconds as we discussed with some of the other stretches, and then slowly let that lower hand overpower and take over the motion. Now it’s pulling that golf club straight down and you’re going to feel that tension on the upper part in those rotator cuffs on the right side, on the top of those muscles.

Again, you bring that into a place of slight tension, and you’re holding it one to two seconds. So you’re going up, and then you’re going back down. It’s one of my favorite stretches for the rotator cuff muscles and something that I like to see all the golfers do. Another great stretch for you is to place your hands on the club, and stay in that great golf posture that you’ve already established.

Place one hand on the club and the club is going straight up and down. Rotate your hand all the way to the right, as far right as it will go. You’ve got your elbow nice and straight, so your arm is completely straight. Rotate it all the way to the left, so you’re rotating it all the way to the right and then all the way to the left, keeping it in a nice, dynamic motion. You don’t want to have a lot of movement in the arm, just that nice, easy to the
right and that nice, easy to the left. I think you’ll also like that as a great stretch for your shoulders.

I cannot believe how quickly this hour has gone. I have this long list of questions, and I was thinking we would get through all of them with these nice, easy, short answers, and as you can tell from listening to Susan Hill here, there is no such thing as a short answer. Nothing concise on this radio show, but I hope that I’ve been able to provide you with some information that you can take to your game, that it can be immediate, and you can see exactly the kind of results that you’re looking for.

I will be here next week. Please feel free to call in. You can always reach me at info@bodyforgolf.net. Send me your questions, and I look forward to seeing more questions. We’ll put together another list and do another show just like this. Thank you so much for joining us, and we look forward to seeing you again at the Fitness For Golf Internet Radio Show.
Announcer: Good day, golfers, and welcome to Fitness for Golf with Susan Hill. Golf fitness continues to grow and expand in popularity within all age groups and abilities, and here to get you in mental and physical shape for your game is host, Susan Hill.

Susan: Welcome to the Fitness for Golf Internet radio show. I’m your host, Susan Hill, and today I’m really excited to have the opportunity to present part two of the most asked questions I get from golfers around the globe. I’ve been collecting and saving some of the most asked questions I get from tour players to juniors, to parents, to competitive golfers, really golfers of all levels and from all kinds of different countries.

One of my goals today, as it was in part one, is to try and get through as many of these questions as I can, and then hopefully help each of you find the answers that you’re looking for. Some of you might remember when I first started part one. I got so many follow up questions and feedback. Apparently you golfers all have a lot of questions.

I thought we’d get back to part two and see what we’re able to cover. Since I’m all by myself at the radio show today, I’d love to have you join me. If anyone is listening today and has some questions, feel free to call in. The telephone number to call in is 1-866-472-5788. Let’s get started with a question I get all of the time.

One of my favorite questions is, “Exactly what is it that you do for a living, and how is it that you work with professional players?” For some time, I’ve called myself a professional golf fitness trainer. What that really means to me is that I work with professional golfers and I actually get paid for it.

This is a great way to make a living and something I’ve enjoyed for many years now. I think it’s funny that there’s a certain mystique surrounding what exactly it is that people like me are doing with professional golfers, like there’s some hidden top secret.

I thought I would start with what those top secrets are, if there are secrets, and tell you exactly how I work as a professional golf fitness trainer with tour players. Ironically, it’s not a lot different than how I work with everyday golfers. Regardless of their level of play, I treat everybody as
though I was training Tiger Woods, Annika Sorenstam, or any number of players.

It’s always been my philosophy that if I provide you with the best information that I believe is out there based on my knowledge and experience, then it’s really up to you to determine how much of that information you want to use and apply it, depending on your level, or what your energy and interest is in keeping it going.

There are two basic ways that players find me. One is that there is a chain of events like there is in business, where you get a lucky break, and you start working with a player. The player sees great results and once they see results, as is natural, they tell all their friends. You can build a business that way.

I’ve probably worked with more clients and worked with more players based on recommendations from either sports psychologists or swing instructors who were already in the business. Every player that I know has a swing instructor. They’re looking at the golf swing and determine if there are ways to improve.

In almost every situation, there is something that they’re working on. When the instructor has been working with a player, and they determine that there’s something that either through drills or action steps, they haven’t been able to help the player break through, a lot of times it comes down to a physical issue.

I guess I’m sort of that person that gets called in to say, “I’ve taken this player as far as I can in their instruction, and now I need some input from you.” That’s when I get called in. A lot of times, I’ll be able to meet with a player. Sometimes I fly to their location. It depends on where they’re at in their season, and how desperate the situation is, or how they’re feeling about the situation, the seriousness and how quickly they need to correct it.

A lot of times, we don’t have the luxury of getting together in person. We need to handle it all on the phone because who knows where they’re traveling and how the schedules are looking. There is a sequence of things that I go through, which I think is interesting, and I’m hoping that you find it interesting, as well.

The first meeting that we have is always an interview, whether it’s on the telephone or in person. Let’s assume it’s in person. What I do is I gather as much information as I can about their game. I don’t start asking them questions about their fitness, like how strong are you or how fit are you? I try to really focus on their game, which is why they’re hiring me.
A lot of times, they’re not tying in the fitness part and the golf part. That’s my job to bring that in. The kind of questions I’m asking are, “What exactly are you working on in your golf swing?” “What are your goals?” They start telling me, and then of course, I also look at what sort of body issues they have.

Do they have excess body fat or things that they need to change? Do they have any questions on nutrition? Are they feeling that their energy is the same throughout? We start putting together a picture of this player and where their strengths and weaknesses are.

A lot of times, we start to see a very natural fit between what the swing instructor or the player is telling me in terms of what’s happening in the swing and what they’re working on, and the physical issues, limitations, or restrictions that I find as a fitness instructor.

Obviously, that’s ideal because when we create that breakthrough, that’s the most important reason why we’re together. A lot of times, I’ll go out and watch them swing. I’ve collected a lot of information. I will go back. If they have a team of people, if they have a golf instructor, I will call the golf instructor and say, “What are you working on? What are you noticing? What are you seeing? What do you think needs to be corrected?”

I just collect information without coming to any conclusions. Then, what I’ll do is I’ll actually go out with the player and watch them swing, again, trying not to come to any conclusions, just taking notes. What I’m looking for when I’m standing there on the driving range is how fluid is their motion? What does their body pattern look like? How are they utilizing their body in the golf swing?

I’m not a swing expert. I’m not a swing instructor, so I leave that to the swing instructor to work with that and take that vital information. I do know different positions and I understand the biomechanics of how we want the body to move. I look at how fluid the motion is. Are they sliding, or are they rotating their hips? You can actually watch a player and see if their core is engaged.

You can see what their posture looks like. Those are all the things on which I’m collecting information. From that, we sit down, sometimes with the swing instructor and sometimes just with the player, and say, “These are the things that I’ve identified that I think are important that will correct some of the swing flaws that we’re seeing.”

Regardless of the player I’m working with, I take them through a battery of tests. Those tests are just physical things that we want to look at that all
can have an impact on the golf swing or how the player is playing. I’m actually going to go through a few of these with you. I’m going to go through my list. I’m really reviewing all the information that I do with the player.

The first thing I look at is their spinal rotation. The second thing I look at is their shoulder rotation. I’ve found that a lot of times, those two items alone between how their low back is able to rotate, and how flexible their shoulders are, that the majority of golfers that I work with do have issues with spinal rotation.

Once we get those settled, a whole new golf swing is unleashed. I’m looking at the flexibility and the mobility of their body, to be able to get into the positions we’re going to be asking them to do as they’re out on Tour playing. We’ll look at spinal rotation, which is their mid-back rotation.

We’re looking at shoulder rotation to see if their arms are able to get in their backswing position and carry it all the way through their forward swing into their finish. We’re looking at their hamstring flexibility. I look at their hip rotation. We talked about sliding, and we also looked at whether they’re sliding or rotating.

I’m looking at the flexibility in their hip flexors. I look at their neck rotation and a lot of times we find issues with the neck and the shoulder. Those two are related, so we try and isolate problems. I look at their stability or their ability to stay balanced over the ball. Once the swing starts, what is their dynamic flexibility?

I look at their core engagement. Do they understand what that means? If you’re listening to this segment and you like some of the answers and questions, I’d also refer back to part one, because I talked a lot about core engagement. I think it’s so important, how you know when your body is engaged, how to check and what exercises you can do.

This is one of these things that are hit and miss, where a lot of people have been using the term for a very long time. “Yes, I engaged the core.” “Yes, I do a lot of core exercises,” but when we actually test them, we find that they’re not, or they haven’t quite made the connection. When that light bulb goes on, that’s a really big deal, when golfers can make that connection.

They know what to look for in their body. They know what to feel in their swing when their core is engaged. I think that’s a big moment. I look at their upper body strength, and then I test them for their lower body
strength. We test for abdominal strength, and overall conditioning. The last thing I look at is swing speed.

I make a notation on all of these items, all of which affect somebody’s flexibility, somebody’s ability to have good movement patterns or good mobility through the golf swing. I look at strength, overall conditioning and swing speed. I know if we put together a plan based on the weaknesses of each individual player, then as we improve those movement patterns, strength, flexibility and their ability to move through the golf swing, the greatest output of that is improved swing speed.

That’s something everybody is looking for, not to swing faster, but to swing in a more efficient way. If they can swing in a more improved way, then we know they can hit the ball further. That’s one of the goals that we look at. When we put that all together into a plan, we start working on those things which are most important.

You will find that there are some players, and these are the more high-profile players, that will actually have their fitness trainers travel with them. I know Phil Mickelson has his trainer, Sean Cochran, travel with him pretty much full time. Other players use fitness trainers as a resource. I’ve found the majority time for myself, I’m usually brought in as a consultant.

As a consultant, I look at last-minute videos. This is one of my favorite stories. This is the kind of stuff that really gets me excited and makes me feel like I’m putting my knowledge and experience to use. There was a player on the LPGA tour who was at the Evian Masters in Paris, and I got an email from the instructor that said, “We really need some help. This is immediate.” Obviously, with time zones and such, and they were going from one round to the other, there was a lot of pressure.

They were able to send me the video of the swing and how it looked, and asked what I could do. I was able to identify some things very quickly through the video, send some stretches and other things to be addressed right away. It’s very exciting to see a quick turn around on that. I can’t believe we’ve already finished our first segment here. Stay with me because I have some great questions, and we will be back after a brief commercial break.

Announcer: Have you envisioned standing on the tee and hitting it longer and with greater strength than ever before? Are you completely confident you could play better golf if only you were given access to better resources and a team with experience? BodyforGolf.net allows every level of golfer the opportunity to learn what’s being taught at the most sophisticated and prestigious golf performance centers worldwide, only in the comfort of
their own living space. Prepare your body; prepare your mind to play your best with FitnessForGolf.Com.

Susan: Hi, this is Susan Hill. Thanks for staying with us. We’re back from a brief break. One of the things I was talking about was I was trying to get rid of this crazy mystique of what we as professional golf fitness trainers do on tour. I think there are a large number of people who are doing this now, although relative to the population, it’s probably pretty small.

Our numbers are growing, and there are a lot of us who are working really heard to understand the golf swing, not because we want to teach it. One of my goals, and I know the goals of a lot of people who do what I do is to bridge the gap between the swing instructors who are out in the field and the trainers who are in the gym.

I think when golfers can go to a swing instructor, take a lesson, and that swing instructor can say, “Gosh, this is another area I think we can work on, bring in a fitness instructor, and have them meet you out on the tee,” that was a big turning point for me and my career as opposed to being in the gym.

For some reason, I felt like when golfers would come into the gym, that they did not understand what they were doing in the gym and how it was going to affect their golf swing. I found that when I left the gym and went out onto the course, so many of the basic things that we do, we can do with our golf club, and do standing out on the practice range.

That really is something that I’m working on from an industry perspective and I think the good news for the golfers is there are some great organizations out there that are certifying more and more trainers, and giving them the background they need to understand the golf swing and be able to communicate better.

Moving right along from what I do, which is pretty darn exciting every day, and I really enjoy it. I get some great questions. Here’s a question that I got through email. It said, “Susan, I’m working out strength and flexibility every other day. At the age of 58, I’m sore after a workout, a good kind of sore, but how do I minimize the soreness so I can play the best possible golf the day after I work out?”

This is from a gentleman named Terry. I know Terry is a great golfer. I’ve had the opportunity to train him in person and through emails. Obviously, this is a very common complaint among golfers, and there are a couple different ways of addressing this. The first thing I want to say is that everybody’s soreness is different.
Some people get very sore. Some people don’t get that sore at all. There are lots of conflicting information on what is the best way to work around that. For a long time, people would say that the research was indicating that if you stretched afterwards and took your time to make sure you worked through that soreness, you would not be as sore.

I’ve also seen more recent research that now goes against that. Of course, that’s frustrating, because when I read the research, and you read the research as well, you wonder, “Should I be stretching after or should I not be stretching after, and will that help my soreness?” With some of the things that are conflicting information, I wanted to give you three basic principals.

I think that if you follow these, based on research and on my experience, that these can be very helpful to you. One of the first things that I would do is I would always make sure you were doing a warm up. You’ve probably heard this a lot of times, but I have to turn it around to you and ask how many of you really do any kind of a warm up at all as opposed to walking into the gym and starting your routine?

A warm up can be so many different things. It can be a light jog on a treadmill or a jog outside. It can be using the bike or the rower. It’s something that gets the heart rate up and gets the body prepared. That has shown through time to have an impact on your ability to get sore. We’ve talked a lot about golf, and maybe you’ve heard this in different articles about a dynamic mobility.

Dynamic mobility has a couple different components to it. Where you’ve probably seen it is in addition to some small warm up is that there was this new movement in sports conditioning where instead of just walking in and doing the light treadmill, they were actually doing movement patterns which got their body ready.

For example, they would use the foam roller. When they would first come into the gym, they would lay down against the foam roller. You’ve probably seen those long, white foam rolls in the gym or on TV. I’ve seen them on the Golf Channel. They’ve been around for a while. You literally lay your body across and apply a slight amount of pressure on those areas of your body which get tight.

This is actually all part of gaining mobility, using a foam roll, and then really using very basic exercises like arm swings or arm circles, or doing things like lunges and squats. I’m not talking about with weight or really exerting yourself, and then maybe doing some light stretching before you start your routine. The warm up and how you warm up seems to have a good impact.
The first thing was doing a warm up at all. Five to ten minutes is usually good. Performing one step above that is to perform dynamic mobility exercises, which I just defined as using foam rolls, arm swings, lunges, squats or things that get the body moving without placing a lot of stress prior to your workout.

The third thing is to make sure as you’re progressing it is slow, gradual and progressive. I’m a huge proponent of using good intensity with your workouts. I strongly believe that if we’re going to make the effort to work out, let’s really make an effort. I mean, let’s not show up, go through the motions, come home and at the end of the day, put a check in the box that says, “Well, I did it and nobody can say I didn’t.”

I really like the idea that you’re exerting. However, as is normally the case, a lot of us will not work out for some period of time, or go through highs and lows where today we’re just going to push it, and then we don’t push it at all. Without knowing how your pushing yourself or how you’re defining intensity, I think it’s really important that it’s a slow, gradual intensity.

I also wanted to read something that I thought was really interesting. I did an interview a couple of years ago now with Kai Fusser, Annika Sorenstam’s trainer. One of the questions I was asking him was this exact question. Here is his quote, and I’m going to read it to you so I can cover it. This is in response to me asking, “She has been known for her wonderful physical conditioning. When you are pushing her, are you or is she worried about soreness?”

His response is, “Well, we started in the off season. It was in October or November when I met her so the season was pretty much over for her so getting sore wasn’t an issue at that point, but even now, during the season, we will get into some tough workouts when she is off for a week, and where she will get sore, and she simply just works through that. Getting sore is just part of the process sometimes.

“I’m not saying you have to get sore in order to get a good workout, but getting sore is sometimes just a part of it. Everybody is different, and I’ve learned that in working with other players. With Annika, she is just one in a million or one in ten million. She is just very tough and she doesn’t mind it. She can handle it and sometimes I think it takes the edge off of her.

“Sometimes, you need to watch the chain of emotions. Sometimes it is simply finding what works for different players, and for her, everything is long term.” I think that is a fair way of answering that. In addition to the
three things I said to look at, make sure that the soreness is an appropriate level of soreness, something that you can manage.

Usually, in working with players, there is the time in the off season where we are pushing them a bit because we’re really trying to increase their conditioning in a very short time. Even though it’s gradual like I just suggested, it’s interesting that at no point are we trying to overdo it. When we get into season, we start backing off immediately.

What I would make sure you’re also looking at, Terry, is to make sure that you’re backing off appropriately as well. Make sure that there are maintenance workouts as then there are pushing workouts, and that those are really fitting in with everything else that you have going one, especially will all the play that I know you’re doing.

Another great question is, “What is the most efficient conditioning program to follow for an off season? I finished the season in October and do not pick up a club until April.” Obviously, that’s another great question. I love the use of the word efficient. Most people want to know what workout they should do, and in this, she’s asking for the most efficient.

That fits right into the lines of how I train people. Nobody wants to spend more time in the gym than is necessary, at least for the most part. In my experience, all the workouts that I recommended usually fit into right around an hour. I don’t like to see people spend a lot more time unless there is a lot of additional stretching or something special that is happening. I know a lot of other trainers feel the same way.

It’s not like if you were a tour player, you would work out twice as long, twice as hard or any of that other silly stuff. We all have a plan. It’s a very specific play based on where we’re at and where we’re trying to go. We go to the gym, we do the plan, we come home and that’s it. Let’s get back to her question.

Obviously, this is the perfect time for her, even as we’re doing this interview, where she’s down and out, and she wants to know what she should be working on. Because this is offseason, I always go back to body fat goals. There are golfers of all levels. How fit are you and how fit do you need to be? What is your personal goal? This is the time I really try to encourage golfers to set very specific goals.

A lot of people are freezing cold if you live where I do. I’m in Bend, Oregon, and we’ve got tons of snow, so golf isn’t an option for me right now, unless I leave town. I can’t even imagine that others of you might be out there enjoying some golf right now. I’m so jealous. This is the time to
focus on whether or not you need to lose some body fat. Do you need to gain some muscle? This is a great time, also, to get your nutrition dialed in.

We’ve just come off the holidays. Some people are a little more energized and inspired to work this time of year. The third thing is if you know what issues you have, just like I was explaining what I do in working with players, I would say the same thing for you, Terry. If you know that you have very tight shoulders, for example, to really place a lot of emphasis, take a lot of time and make sure you’re taking care of that.

If you have issues in your spinal rotation, if you know you have very weak legs, if you know what those issues are, make those a priority. If you don’t know what your issues are and you haven’t had any kind of testing, I would recommend a general conditioning program.

I would consider a general conditioning program those things such as all the stretches that are going to increase your flexibility, all of the stretches for your mobility, and then really focusing on increasing your strength. We’re going to take a really quick commercial break. Please stay with us, and we’ll summarize for Terry exactly what he should be doing in his offseason.

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Susan: This is Susan Hill, and thanks very much for staying with us. We’re covering all of the questions and answers that I get. I guess I can’t say all of them, because I’ll probably be doing this for a long time. I hope I’ll be doing this for a long time, and I know the questions are never ending, but some of them are asked all the time, the same ones over and over.

I hope that we’re covering some of the questions that you have, and you’re also getting some concrete, specific answers to how you can move on. That was the goal today. One of the things that we were just talking about was Terry had written in, talking about the offseason program. I was going through some of the things that you should be looking at in your offseason program.
We were talking about what a lot of people term a general golf conditioning program, if you don’t know specifically what you should be working on, based on your strengths and weaknesses. I always go back to some of the basics which you have heard before, things like pushups, pull ups, squats, lunges, crunches or chest presses.

I like things that go back, with the exception of the chest press, the pull ups, pushups, squats, lunges, etc., that teach your body how to move, how to make contractions, how to engage and how to get more than one muscle group working together. What I find is a lot of people go to the gym and crank out some of these older, traditional exercises. They might be helpful, but at the same time, it’s really great to use some of these combination exercises, ones that might even focus on body weight, and just getting strong all over again.

Obviously, you’re going to be addressing strength. One of the things that I don’t believe I mentioned when I was talking earlier was when I look at assessments and work with players, I’m looking at not only their flexibility and strength, but what is their strength in their upper body relative to their lower body, or what is their left side versus their right side?

For example, a player might have a very tight right side of their shoulders. They might even be tight all the way down their right side, their hips, their shoulders, their spine, and maybe the other side is perfectly mobile. This is how we know to target specific exercises. I got a really interesting email from a golf professional, a teaching professional. He had sent me a short video clip, and said, “Would you take a look at my swing and give me some feedback?” It was the most beautiful swing, and he looked super fit. I didn’t have a lot of information, but you could see right at impact, or as he was coming through to his downswing and the impact, that there was some loss of motion, and there was some sliding and other movements that were taking place that shouldn’t have been there.

I had him take the test on FitnessForGolf.com. It showed that his hips were very restricted and his right side flexibility on his spine was very tight. I pointed this out to him. We talked about where he was seeing that, or where I was seeing that in the video, and how that was matching the test results. He said, “I want to put together a program for myself based on what I’ve learned on your website. I’ve also learned a lot of things from a lot of other trainers and their input.”

He was a very informed golf professional and I was really impressed, especially that he wanted to embrace this for him. He sent me over an
entire plan, a 24-week plan, of what he was going to do every single day. It was perfectly laid out. He had the plan. Everything was great, except the one thing that was so glaring to me was that there was nothing in there that addressed the two very specific issues that we found.

We were going back and forth through emails, and again, it was like there was something that was getting lost in translation. It’s not that the other exercises aren’t important. It’s not that the exercises don’t have value, but if we’re not taking care of the one or two things that are impacting his or anyone’s ability to get into the position that they’re trying to get in, then what’s the point?

To sort of take that another step, we’re just finishing off the season or the offseason for the LPGA tour. On the PGA tour, as you know from watching the Buick Open, Tiger is back in rare form. He had a fabulous finish over this last weekend, and the LPGA tour is getting ready to kick off in the next week or two.

I’ve been working very hard with a handful of players on tour, but there is one player with one specific issue that we still have not corrected. We’re working on correcting it. The reason I’m bringing this up is it feels like the same types of conversations where it’s so important that we’re getting this player in this position. Their swing instructor is working with them, and they’re working with me.

They’ve put the player in the position, and the player says, “But that feels awkward.” The question is, does it feel awkward because you’ve been doing a different movement pattern, or you’ve been doing the swing this way? Well, certainly, that would feel a little awkward. Or, is it totally uncomfortable because your body doesn’t want to do that?

That becomes those stretches and those exercises which reinforce that position, which makes it more natural, and makes these other things go away. I can’t stress enough their importance. I had another email that I wanted to read to you which I think really fits along the lines of what we’re talking about here.

This is from a player that I worked with. He was a junior player who had gotten recruited to go to college. I have worked with several hundred juniors through an academy that I have worked with, and I have done the personal assessments. I was there for several years working with every single junior.

I’ve got a lot of comparative data, and I’ve worked at an academy, which is all of the aspiring, and the up-and-coming juniors from around the world. It’s very exciting to see the differences between how juniors look
physically, and I’m not talking about how tall or lanky, or that part of the physical, but it’s interesting to see patterns which I’ve observed in young boys or girls of certain ages.

There are certain movement patterns or restrictions that you see as part of their normal growth process. This particular player, this young man, I took him through my assessments, and I have to say he performed almost 100%, or 110% on absolutely everything. His strength was impressive. His physique was impressive. His swing was impressive, and on and on.

However, in working with him, his swing instructor came back and said that this particular player is one of the most promising students at this academy. He had this beautiful backswing and downswing, but right at impact, he would open up his left toe, and then his swing would have this unnatural interruption right at impact.

The swing instructor, as is normal, gave him a handful of drills and they did them over and over to correct this. At some point, you realize it’s not happening. Again, what we identified was on his left side and directly at his hip, and this was isolated to his left hip, was very tight. We found that we spent a lot of time working on just that angle and working on loosening that up, in addition to what he was doing.

This was a while back. I don’t remember exactly the program he was on, but when he did his testing, to me it mattered less because he was getting the results in his golf swing, and the result in his body that he and I were looking for. Whatever it was, it was good with the exception of his hip. It was interesting. I gave him the hip stretches, and then he sent me this email.

“Thank you very much for writing. I’ve been hiding for a couple of months. I have been playing really good, improving over the college tournaments. I did the all-conference team, and I was freshman of the year at my conference, and last year, I finished second at regionals. I had really good tournaments. I won two times, and I’m really happy with my game. Fitness is going great, and when I do stretch my left hip, it’s amazing the difference that I’ve seen. Thanks for writing.”

The point that I really want to make with this player and what I really want to communicate to the golfers who are listening to this, in many cases, as much as I want to say, “We should have this wonderful, perfect plan that we’ve laid out, that takes care of every need and has been perfectly scripted,” sometimes it’s one thing.

It’s a tight right hip that’s making you slide, a tight left hip that’s making you open up your toe, a tight right shoulder, or a spine that’s not rotating
and forces the body to move in one rotation together, and a lot of golfers
are losing distance. It sometimes feels like people in our position are
miracle workers. We’re not so indulgent that we actually believe that, but
what I have seen is that sometimes it’s just one critical thing that’s holding
you back.

When you can address that and fix that, everything comes together and is
very exciting. Another great question that I’ve gotten is, “How do I find a
good golf instructor?” We’ve been talking a lot about swing instruction,
and how do you go about finding one. I live in a very small town, as I’ve
mentioned, and we’re covered in snow although we really like our golf
here. We have quite a few golf courses and great instructors.

The best thing is to ask your friends, if you’re an avid golfer, who they
use, and you can ask other people around various clubs. The important
thing that I would want to convey to you in finding an instructor is
instructors are as different as we all are as people. Even though they’re
given this wonderful knowledge, their ability to communicate it, make that
connection with you and you make that connection with them, far exceeds
what you want to do.

What I would always encourage you to do is once you get a
recommendation or referral in your area, or even if you have seen
someone and don’t know if they’re good or not, take that time to interview
them and find out if they have an area of specialty. Tell them a little bit
about your swing or what you think are the types of problems you might
be having.

Find out about their program. Do they have a system? Are there
fundamentals? Do they recommend playing lessons or putting lessons?
What type of feedback are they going to give you and how can they
progress you as opposed to making a lesson? We’ll talk about this in a
minute. We’re going to take a brief commercial break and be back with
the Fitness for Golf Show with Susan Hill.

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Susan: Hi, this is Susan Hill and thanks very much for staying with us. This is our
last segment here. I don’t know how these radio shows go so quickly. I
feel like sometimes we’re making a lot of progress, and sometimes we still have so many questions that need to get answered. One of the ones I was just working on was about finding a good golf instructor.

In cases where you’re a Tour player and you have the luxuries that might allow you to be in California and hire a swing instructor in Florida, because they’re what you’re looking for, or vice versa, is wonderful. I think for the majority of golfers, that’s not practical. So, it’s important to find somebody that understands enough about you that they have your vested interest, that you trust them, their knowledge and their ability to get you to the next level.

I think it’s important that you’re not afraid to ask them to progress you. My feeling with golf is that when I first started, I did take a couple of lessons, but my mental process is that in order to get better, I would wait for something to break down or something to be glaring or obvious, and then I would go back and have another lesson.

Since being in the business and working with so many wonderful instructors, and then being an instructor, even though just a physical instructor myself, my feelings about that have really changed. I’ve found that you need to invest in the process, and in improvements, which are actually a process.

In the past couple of years, my object now is to find an instructor that I like and trust, that knows where I’m at, knows where I want to go, and helps me get there, making recommendations along the way, and then set up a system where you go back once at some interval so you can see the progress. It’s the same thing with me as a trainer.

It’s very difficult to have somebody come in and say, “Tell me everything that you know and I’m going to hire you for an hour. Give me a program so I can go home and do it, and I’ll be better forever.” In my business, it doesn’t work like that. I wanted to try and make it work like that for you, and I know you want it to work like that for you. It doesn’t have to be this huge investment of time or money, and you don’t have to go back forever.

All of us as instructors are trying to get each of our players to be more independent, but I think there has to be a willingness to invest in that process for a short time period. When you find a good golf instructor, somebody that you’re really connected to, that you really trust, have them take you through each of the components of your golf game, instead of just standing on the tee and taking a lesson.

Be sure to ask them for a playing lesson so they can watch what you are doing from one hole to the next. You don’t have to play 18 holes, or pay
for the time that it takes to do that. A lot of golf instructors are more than happy to do that. Play three or four holes in whatever time that takes, and they might say, “I’ve noticed this or that. This is the area we need to focus on.” Then you can go back with a lesson and work on your short game, putting, or direction. Anything that you want to work on is much more targeted.

In moving on to another question, I have another through email that says, “I’m an 11 handicap and would love to get into single digits. My problem is I play great on the front, but when I make the turn, something happens. I usually shoot four to six strokes worse on the back than I did on the front. I can’t figure it out, but I am consistent. What can I do?” This is from Tom.

I started to laugh. I’m not laughing at you, Tom. I’m laughing with you, and I think the golfers listening to this are all asking, “What’s the answer?” because so many people face this. When someone asks me this question like Tom just did, I have three questions that I want to ask him. One is, is this a mental block that you’ve done this now so many times, or it’s happened enough, that now it’s like you’re expecting it.

I’m not a mental game expert, and I won’t even try to address that, but that is one of the issues, and that’s something that you need to work through. On the physical side, there are two reasons why that might be happening. Those are the two issues I’m going to focus on because those are the two things I understand. I’ve found in the majority of cases, the reason is one of these two reasons.

The one is a nutritional issue. I want to talk about nutrition, because I think a lot of people say, “That doesn’t make any sense,” or, “You’re going off on a tangent.” I have not found that to be true. I’ve found that, in understanding more and more about food, sports performance and golf, is that there is a concept called the glycemic index.

There has been so much written about it, I feel like many of you have heard this before. You may or may not understand it. It’s being used in a lot of different areas, but basically there are tests performed on various carbohydrates, to determine the rate at which they release in your body. In some cases, they release very quickly, giving you a huge surge in energy, and then bringing you back down to where you were and taking you lower.

I’ve seen some fascinating studies on different foods, but I think it’s awfully coincidental that some of these foods, if you’re taking them in the beginning of the round, that we’re seeing that they hit a peak somewhere
around 30 to 45 minutes, and then come back down so that in an hour and a half or two hours, your energy is actually lower than when you started.

That would be about the time that you’re making the turn, and that would be about the time that this is happening, so I’ve found this to have a big impact. Like I said, as soon as I finish answering this question, I do want to take a few minutes and address nutrition because I think it’s really important.

The third thing is a basic conditioning issue. Is it a mental issue, is it a nutrition issue, or is it a conditioning issue. In the conditioning issue, I think you obviously need to answer that. I have no idea what your conditioning level is, if it’s something you work on or don’t work on. Is it that your body is just hitting a wall because you just don’t have the conditioning to continue?

If you feel like you work out all the time and have great conditioning, then that is not an issue for you and I would go back to the nutritional issue. Let’s jump into nutrition just a little bit, talking about what are some good principles and things to use. We were talking about the high glycemic and low glycemic.

Most players are in the know on this. Some are still a little behind the times, and we do a lot of work with sports nutrition. Which foods are going to create an even keel for me? In other words, you want your body to feel a basic level of nutrition, and keep that energy level constant. You don’t want to feel any peaks, and you don’t want to feel any valleys.

The idea behind that is that you can just have the energy to play your game. If nothing physically or nutritionally enters your mind, and you can just stay mentally focused on your game, that is the goal. Here are some great slow-release carbohydrates. The other thing I want to mention as I go through this list, is the best way to keep this constant is every time that you have a carbohydrate, is to put some sort of a protein in there.

That will bring the effect down. Here are some great slow-release things you can have before or during a game. One is oatmeal with some nuts and fresh fruit. Some slow-release fruits are apples, oranges and pears. Other foods are multi-grain bread, cashew nuts, apple juice, all bran cereal, yogurt and carrots.

In contrast, on the high side, we’re seeing cream of wheat, watermelon, pineapple, bagels, raisins, cranberry juice, Grape Nuts cereal, fruit bars, potatoes, and corn flakes. These are all things which are considered high-release. These are not things that I would recommend having. As much as
I wanted to go into nutrition, I’m going to save this for an entire show dedicated to nutrition because I think it’s really important.

As we get ready to close here, I’m going to leave you with a couple of resources that I think are fabulous for you as golfers. If you have a pen, please write these down. One is GolfersMD.com. I have Power-Systems.com and I have FWOnline.com. Thanks for joining us. We’ll review more resources and I look forward to having you join us on another show.