

## SPORTS MEDICINE

Dr. Troy Van Biezen

## Five steps to playing better golf this season

**G**olf season is upon us. Are you excited? Many of you are anxious to dust off the golf clubs and get to the golf course for your first round of golf.

You might be wondering, "How to do I get ready?" I'd have to answer with a question of my own. What have you done in the offseason to improve your game in 2009?

I don't mean the new clubs, balls or a putter you bought. I'm concerned about your body. Physical limitations and weaknesses in the body can create swing faults, which can lead to potential injury.

PGA Tour players utilize the offseason to rest and recover, but they also use this time for "Detection and Correction" of body dysfunctions that have affected their swing or have caused injury. You can—and should—try to do the same.

The golf swing is an extremely high-ballistic, repetitive, one-sided movement that will create imbalances in the body. These imbalances can turn into dysfunctional movements and injury.

I work with several PGA Tour players, and I'd like to share with you some of what we worked on in my office during the offseason. Here are the five steps we used to get ready for the new season. You can use them to improve your game, too. By applying these steps, I guarantee you will hit the ball farther and play better golf. The smarter you work off the course, the better you will play on the course.

### Step 1: Golf Assessment

Before you can correct errors, you have to find the error. It's critical to get assessed before you start training. Once you know what your limitations or weaknesses are, you and your golf pro can set corrective exercises to address these dysfunctions. Get reassessed about every two or three months. See if you have obtained the set goals and make any necessary changes. I would recommend setting up an assessment with a professional who is certified in golf assessment and training.

### Step 2: Flexibility/Mobility Program

Our flexibility program is centered on the mobility/stability pattern of human movements. This principle describes the efficient



Harrison Frazar is one of many athletes who works with Van Biezen.

movement of each joint of the body in an alternating pattern of mobile joints and stable segments. If the pattern is altered, dysfunction occurs. It happens most in the hips, mid-back (thoracic spine) and ankle. Most of my programs entail a lot of Active Release Therapy, Chiropractic Manipulative Therapy, and active/passive stretching and mobility exercises to increase mobility in the hips, mid-back and ankle. My recommendation is to work with a professional to help design a flexibility program that will improve your swing and prevent injury.

### Step 3: Stability Program

There may be no more important muscle in the golf swing than the glutes. This muscle group is critical in aiding the golfer to maintain lower body stability during the swing. Your training program should incorporate both the gluteus maximus and gluteus medius, as both are vital to maintaining lower core stability and helps blend the lower body movement into the upper body movement.

### Step 4: Cardiovascular Program

Do you score better on the front nine than the back? Fatigue can be a factor. I want my pros have plenty of wind on the back nine, especially on Sunday. I'm not a proponent of running, however. I prefer golfers save their joints for longevity, so they can compete well into their 50s. Instead, I recommend elliptical, stair machine or bike. Sprint interval training (no longer than 20 minutes) can be useful, but avoid long, drawn-out distance running.

### Step 5: Posture Program

Proper posture is essential for injury prevention. Without proper posture, a golfer can't keep the club on its proper swing path, either. A solid, golf-specific training program should incorporate posture corrections. This will help protect the spine and maximize flexibility. Get into an address posture in front of a mirror and look at your posture. If you have excessive rounding of the upper back, that's the dreaded "C-Posture." No good. It's the most common posture fault golfers have. This posture will severely limit spinal rotation, which will in turn limit your ability to create a good backswing turn. Tour pros work on their posture consistently in the gym and on the course. **TL**

#### DR. TROY VAN BIEZEN

Dr. Troy Van Biezen is one of the most recognized medical golf professionals in the country. He's the PGA Tour Sports Medicine Team's chiropractor and a Level 2 Titleist Performance Institute Medical Professional. He travels with the PGA Tour regularly, and regularly treats and trains local Tour pros such as Corey Pavin, Ryan Palmer, Colt Knost, Ben Crane, Matt Weibring, D.A. Weibring, Brian Watts, Paul Stankowski, Tommy

Armour III and Harrison Frazar. He also works with well-respected golf instructors Randy Smith, Cameron Doan and Rod Cook. Dr. Van Biezen has been profiled in numerous articles including *Golf World*, *Golfweek* and *pgatour.com*. He continues to speak at seminars and clinics around the country on golf health and fitness. He resides in Dallas with his wife and two beautiful daughters.