

SPORTS MEDICINE

Dr. Troy Van Biezen

48 HOURS

How Ryan Palmer's shoulder recovered just in time to play the Mercedes Championship

It was 7 a.m. on a Tuesday in early January when I received a phone call from PGA Tour player Ryan Palmer. Based on his tone of voice, I knew something was wrong.

He stated, "We have a problem!" I asked what was wrong, and he said, "I can't move my arm. I pulled my arm out from my covers last night, when I felt a 'pop' in my shoulder, and now it has seized up."

Palmer five weeks prior had undergone shoulder surgery, which included partial rotator-cuff repair. Our game plan was to have Ryan play the Mercedes Championship on Jan. 8-11, which was five weeks from the date of his shoulder surgery. Ryan started his rehab in my office two days post-surgery under the guidance of orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Jim Walter.

Ryan met every deadline I set for him in the rehab process. We were on schedule; Ryan was practicing with his swing coach, Randy Smith, and played a couple rounds before we made the trip to Maui.

Well, this morning's phone call spelled a major setback. It was two days before the tournament, and Ryan couldn't move his arm without a sharp pain in the back of his shoulder. A call was made to Dr. Walter, who felt there was no re-tearing of the rotator cuff and told me he had full confidence in me that I would have Ryan playing in two days.

Ryan and I went for breakfast, and the mood was very solemn. We worked so hard to get ready for the Mercedes Championship, and now we had to deal with this unexpected situation. We were actually looking at flights back home to Dallas. We set up a game plan for the next two days. If he was able to play on Thursday it would be a bonus. If not, we were going home.

The following 48 hours were very structured; treatment was performed every two hours. Initially, treatment consisted of Active Release Therapy, Laser Therapy and hot/cold contrast therapy to reduce the inflammatory process and regain his range of motion. By the end of the day, I had Ryan in the pool doing resistant range of motion exercises.

The next morning, I was hesitant about how he would feel. He showed up at my room, with 80 percent range of motion, with less



pain. That was encouraging! But would he be able to play four rounds in a row against the best players in the world?

We continued with the treatment plan. As the day progressed, he continued to improve. By Wednesday afternoon, he wanted to try hitting balls, so before we headed to the range, Kinesio Tape was applied to his shoulder to help stabilize it and to aid in retraining muscle function.

We arrived at the driving range to the amazement of players and media. Word had gotten around about his shoulder. Ryan started with wedges and progressively worked up to long irons. He kept saying, "It feels good." That made two of us.

Well, about an hour into testing the shoulder, he pulled out his driver. Yikes, I thought. He started with a 70-percent swing and progressed to 90 percent for a few balls. After that, I shut him down and started a cool-down process on his shoulder.

How would he feel tomorrow morning, for the first round of the tournament?

He felt better and was ready to play. We still weren't sure if he could play four days in a row. Our goal was to play nine holes at a time.

Ryan finished his first round without any setbacks. He shot a 78, which obviously upset him. I mentioned to him, "You couldn't move your shoulder two days ago." He smiled and said, "Yeah, you're right." He's such a competitor!

Each day he improved physically and on the course as well. He fired a final-round 66, the second-lowest score of the day. He finished 31st overall and pocketed \$56,000. Ryan also was 18th in the field for driving distance—not bad considering what took place that week. Looking back, it was amazing how quickly he responded to treatment. To this day, we still talk about it in disbelief.

Ryan has fully recovered. He continues to train under my guidance and is working diligently to improve his game. He will play in the Byron Nelson and Colonial.

This story is one of many that happen every week inside the PGA Tour. **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 resides in Dallas with his wife and two beautiful daughters.

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