

M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS

Our Geriatric Issue

Better Vision Through Better Technology, Robert N. Brems of Brems Eye Center

The M Files



Scott Tropper, M.D. of Arizona Cancer Institute

New Frontiers in Cancer Treatment Technology Helps Fuel Valleywide Expansion for State-of-the Art Cancer Center

Golf Health 101

Lecture 1 of 3

By Dr. Michael Branson

Driving distance on the PGA tour in 2006 was around 287 yards (USGA, 2007), while the average amateur golfer's driving distance is around 205 yards (*Golf Digest*, 2003). Though everyone you talk to who plays golf wants to increase their

good life



If you increase flexibility, you'll add power to your swing.

— Tiger Woods, *Golf Digest*, Feb. 2004

length from tee to green, it is not apparently obvious how to do that for the average golfer, when time is so scarce during the average workweek.

The secret to increased length from tee to green might be easier than you think, and better for you, too! It's called "stretching." That's right, stretching — the one thing most people stopped doing once high school P.E. was over. Even those who work out at the gym three or more times a week



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Stretching helps me prevent injury.

— Tiger Woods, *How I Play Golf*

do not necessarily stretch. Most people feel that stretching is not needed, but it is if you want the most out of your body.

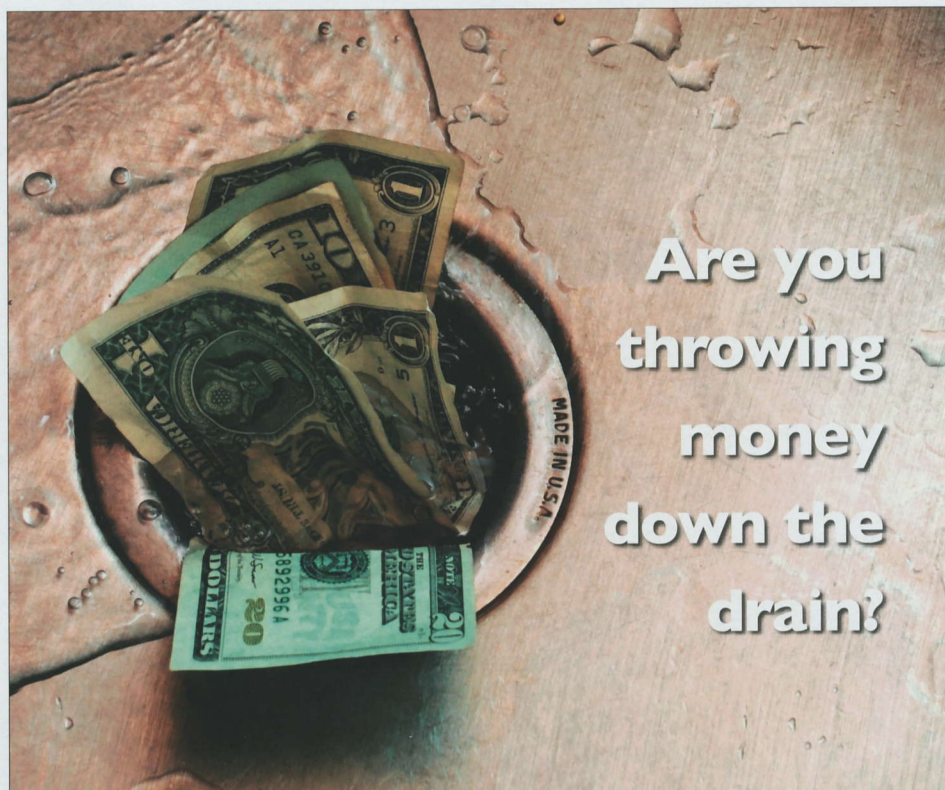
The increased length of a muscle means there is greater opportunity of more strength or force throughout the available range of motion of that given muscle, which is known as the length-tension relationship of the muscle. This promotes increased energy transfer through the muscles and, therefore, more power to hit the ball farther.

Besides giving you the potential to hit the ball farther, which we all want, stretching also reduces the risk of injury. Injuries to the back are the most common golf-related injuries there are, and probably the most serious. Scientific studies and common sense tell us that a sound golf swing and club head position at impact will reduce the chances of a back-related injury, but without proper flexibility of the body, you will have a hard time attaining this athletic move to the ball. In fact, the less flexible you are, the less elastic your muscles are and therefore, the more impaired your muscles are at absorbing energy! So, when the average golfer goes out to play and makes that big turn so that the “big dog can eat,” they are taking their muscles and imparting large forces on the musculoskeletal system. If those muscles are not elastic, well, let’s just say there is great opportunity for any given muscle working to make that turn to fail structurally, which could cause a muscle strain, and/or energy to be absorbed by the next available structure, which, in golf, would more than likely be the joints and nerves of your back and pelvis. Ouch; that sounds like it would hurt — and in most cases, it does. Patients who injure their backs in golf can be severely disabled for many months without treatment. Correctable injuries of the lower back

and pelvis, depending on the severity, can take between six and 12 weeks to resolve with proper physical therapy. In severe cases where physical therapy cannot help the patient, an invasive procedure such as surgery may be the last-chance effort to solve the injury, and no one wants that to happen.

It is recommended that stretching of

the lower legs, pelvis, back and arms be performed at least five to 10 minutes a day, three days per week. This will allow you to increase muscle length and improve muscle tension and muscle power. So, after all that is said here, be smart and do as the pros do, and stretch your body to improve your game and prevent injury! ■



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