

Developing Powerful and Consistent Junior Golfers

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Junior golfers are a fun population to work with. They are very motivated, teachable and generally much more flexible than the rest of us. We see quite a few beginning to elite junior golfers in our Body Balance for Performance offices throughout the Chicagoland area and try to give them our best to help improve their performance and take their games to the next level.

We've found a lot of our junior players have several common denominators in their swings. Most of these swing characteristics occur because of some basic physical similarities related to flexibility, strength and balance. In general terms, many juniors tend to have a lot of trunk and upper body flexibility and not quite enough swing strength and balance to fully control it.

Many juniors we see set up to the ball with a rounded, or slouched, posture with forward shoulders. This posture is not only a weak position from which to play consistently, but it is also a position that can easily lead to injuries. Many



1. Balance beam exercise: Step on the 2x4 board one foot in front of the other in a tandem position, place a golf club across your chest and then begin rotating slowly in each direction without any loss of balance maintaining the upper trunk very stable. Try turns for up to two minutes, then switch feet positions and then perform again for two minutes.

swing faults can be dramatically improved with a solid, well-balanced set-up. Unfortunately, many of our adult clients come to us to help them fix a lifetime of poor habits they began when they were a junior golfer.

Once many juniors begin to swing

the club into the back swing, they will often have a "John Daly" type swing. The arms become disconnected from the body and the club ends up too far behind them. Then, to start the down swing, many juniors will tend to throw their hips wide open placing a tremendous amount of pressure on the lower spine region.

At impact, juniors will usually tuck the

pelvis under and round the back. This move causes standing up, or straightening out of the initial spine posture. The follow-through is usually characterized by excessive rotation of the hips, spine and shoulders to the left, which over time can also increase stress in the spine.

This type of swing can produce good results, but it will be difficult for many juniors to achieve a high level of accuracy and consistency because of all the extra moving parts involved. There are specific limitations in flexibility, strength and balance that will lead directly to this type of golf swing.

Even some of our most talented junior players fit this basic swing mold. One of the main reasons



2. Sitting shoulder blade retraction: Sitting on a gym ball or on a chair, hold resistance tubing with arms directly out in front of you as shown, then squeeze your shoulder blades back without bending your elbows. Next, pull your hands all the way in to your chest, then while still holding your shoulder blades pinched back, begin to slowly let out your hands to the starting position, and then finally let the shoulder blade contraction relax. So each repetition of this exercise would go through each of these sequential steps to achieve the desired stability and strength in the shoulder blade muscles.

3. Sitting trunk rotation stretch: Sitting on a gym ball or on a chair, hold resistance tubing with arms directly out in front of you as shown, then squeeze your shoulder blades back without bending your elbows, maintain the arm extension as you begin turning a few times each direction slowly. Remember to maintain a good breathing pattern.

why some juniors excel more quickly than others is because they are able to coordinate and time this kind of swing more efficiently than others. A major problem with this type of swing is that it

becomes quite difficult to rely on accurate timing when the pressure is on in a match or tournament. For many, the bigger the event, the more difficult the timing becomes.

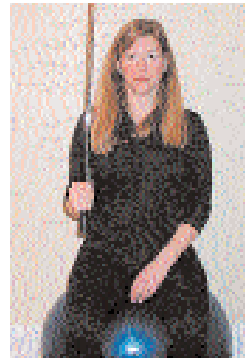
The goal that we have for our juniors is to improve their body's overall sense of control. Once these players really begin to improve their strength, balance and stability in the proper areas, the golf swing becomes much more compact, powerful and repeatable without the increased risk of injury. Sounds like a great deal, right?

The areas that usually need to undergo dedicated strengthening include the core region -all of the lower stomach muscles, the hip muscles and the muscles of the shoulder blade. These are not the big "glamour" muscles of the chest and thighs that so many kids like to focus on. In addition, the upper arm and forearm muscles must also be strong to maintain the desired impact position in order to take a proper divot with the irons. Increasing the strength of the forearms also helps to improve club head speed and to decrease the chance of developing elbow or wrist problems.

We are including some good strength and balance exercises in this article. For the balance exercise you just need a 2x4 board from the garage and some resistance tubing for a couple of the strengthening



4. On back, ball under heels, hip extension: Place the gym ball under your heels, flex your feet and slowly raise your hips off the floor without allowing the ball to move. Hold your hips in this position for 2 seconds, and then return to the start position.



5. Holding club forearm rotation: From a sitting position, hold a golf club as shown, maintain the elbow bent at 90 degrees, slowly rotate the club from one side to the other using only your forearm muscles.

exercises. The focus for these exercises is to enhance strength, stability and balance throughout the body so that the junior golfer will be able to swing the golf club in a more solid, repeatable manner.

Call Body Balance at 312-455-9691 or 847-441-8799 if you have any questions about these exercises or about getting your body fully customized for your golf game.





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