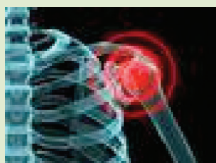


The Smoldering Shoulder



By Betsy Voyles, MSPT

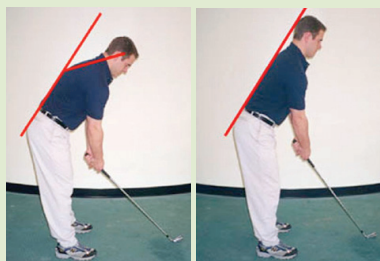
There are many shoulder injuries which could impact your golf game. They generally come from overuse, improper use, and/or poor movement patterns of the middle spine and shoulder complex. If the middle (or thoracic) spine becomes less mobile, excessive mobility of the shoulder blade (or scapula) can occur. The shoulder joint's response to this is to create stability for the arm rather than allowing it's normal mobility. The result seems to be the roll reversal of the



thoracic spine, scapula, and shoulder that is the root of many shoulder problems.

The most acute injury that can sideline you for the season is tendinitis of the rotator cuff muscles. The cuff is composed of four separate muscles, any of which can become inflamed, irritated or impinged. Unchecked impingement can lead to tearing or shredding of these tendons. OK, now that we've scared you a bit...these injuries are preventable! The immediate best fix is improving your posture.

Rounded, or slouched, posture over time can lead to an immobile thoracic spine. There is a rule in the body when it comes to muscles: a muscle cannot be a stabilizer and a mover at the same time. When the shoulder blade becomes unstable on the ribcage, due to thoracic spine rigidity, the muscles of the rotator cuff become over active. They try to create stability in the shoulder so that the arm can move. When a muscle that is a mover tries to act as a stabilizer, it generally becomes irritated and inflamed. If you want to prevent this type of shoulder injury you must have a mobile thoracic spine, stable shoulder blade, and mobile shoulder.



Bad Posture

Good Posture

Trying to swing from a rounded thoracic spine posture at address asks the shoulders to work from a weakened position. Having a straighter posture at address allows the proper sequencing: the thoracic spine to be mobile, the shoulder blade to be stable and the shoulder joint to be mobile. It will also help to cure some common swing faults like flying elbow, limited backswing length, coming over the top, and flipping the club through impact.

The bottom line is that self-diagnosis rarely works. If you have shoulder pain you should get it evaluated for imbalances in the muscles of the shoulder girdle, thoracic spine and shoulder joint. Remedying these imbalances in most cases will reduce the strain on the structures of the shoulder complex and lead to less pain and happier, healthier golf.

If you have any questions about the shoulder or any other golf health and fitness concerns, please contact us at **Body Balance for Performance** at 312-214-9079, www.bodybalancegolf.com, or bvoyles@sprynet.com.