

Debunking Strength Training Myths By David Chettle

The time has come to dispel some of the myths that are commonly associated with strength training and the effect training has on the golfer.

If we were to wind the clock back 20 years, the majority of the world's golfers would have scoffed at the idea of exercising to improve their game, let alone the thought of hitting the gym and lifting weights!. Interestingly, the leading professional tours in the world now have fully equipped fitness vans that go from event to event including two for the PGA tour, and one for the LPGA tour. Why? Because the players demand it.

Fitness, flexibility and strength training have become a major part of today's game, just take a look at all of the world's best golfers - they look (and are) athletes. Let's not be mistaken, golf is a power game - and to become more powerful, you need to become more flexible and stronger.

Myth #1 - Lifting weights will make me lose my rhythm

Hypertrophy (or muscle growth) is what many gym goers train for - that "cut, muscular look". To be brutally honest, it takes a many years and training geared specifically to bodybuilding to achieve the levels of muscularity that would hamper your golf swing. In fact, it is far easier to eat excessively and never exercise to expand rapidly at the waist and hips - now that will alter your swing mechanics and rhythm. If your training program has been geared specifically to address body's needs (read...weaknesses), strength training can only help your game.

Myth #2 - Lifting weights will make me lose flexibility

Now in some cases this can be true, but again this comes back to the correct design of your program and the quality of technical instruction that you have received with your program. If you are completing numerous exercises on pin-weighted machines in your local gym that do not allow for complete and correct range of motion of the muscles and joints you are training, you may lose flexibility.

The answer - have your program designed around free weight exercises (barbells, dumbbells, cables, Swiss balls etc), not only can you manipulate the exercise to match your individual needs, you will increase the use of stabilising muscles that help prevent injury. A final point on this myth - most golfers initiate a strength training program without first having their body properly assessed for range of motion issues, in other words, you may have been quite tight to start with. Proper assessment, program design and technical instruction are paramount.

Myth #3 - The last time I lifted weights I hurt my back

This comes back to points made in myth #2 - proper instruction following complete assessment and individualised programming will prevent injuries occurring. If you go to your local gym and start training without assistance or advice, you are asking for trouble. As an additional warning, please ask your local gym instructor their qualification. You would never go and pay money to someone for golf lessons who was not a recognised and qualified teaching professional - so be as critical with those people you are putting your physical training in charge of. Your instructor should hold a qualification in Exercise Science or Human Movement from a recognised University.

So there you have it - the three most common "concerns" that people come to me with regarding strength training and golf. Hopefully this article has cleared a few things up for you - so hop to it and get fit for golf!

About the Author

David Chettle is a Director of The Golf Athlete and Under Construction Personal Training. He is a consultant to Women's Golf Australia, Queensland State Men's & Women's Teams, QLD Academy of Sport, Schools of Excellence in Golf (Kelvin Grove & Hills International School) and the PGA of Australia