

## Golf for Fitness

I've been thinking about the benefits of playing golf in terms of fitness and health. A bit of analysis reveals some interesting facts.

Playing 18 hole requires a walk of at least 5+ kilometres (in many cases, such as myself, wandering from one side of the fairway to another, much more than 5). During that walk, if practice swings are considered, the average golfer will do some 200 hip twists (counting right and left) and the same number of shoulder swings and knee flexes while hanging onto something weighing in at as much as 500 grams travelling at up to 160 kilometres an hour! In addition, they will make at least 36 "toe touching" bends to place the ball on the tee and recover it from the hole. Not to mention of course the bends required to replace/fill divots or repair plug marks (only for those who can hit the greens from some distance).

And then there's the putting! Not much of an exercise you say. Well if you count all the little wiggles—arms, shoulders, hips, backsides, knees and feet—it could add up to a couple of hundred per round. Not an inconsiderable number of body movements that help with flexibility. Oh, and I almost forgot the squats! Those golfers who check out Newton's 2nd Law each time they putt and see how long they can hold their club with two fingers on the end of an outstretched arm, could do as many as 50 or 60 squats during the game.

Adding to all this is the effort required to pull or push one's buggy. And, if you are lucky enough to have one of those powered types, the effort required to stop it getting away from you could be considerable. We must not underrate the mental exercise in all this—the many, many thoughts that go through one's brain before and when making a shot. How far is it, have I got the correct club, is the ball teed up properly, is my grip correct, are my feet, direction, swing, right? I must keep my eyes on the ball, my head still and not force the swing. What about the wind? Out of bounds on the right, trees on the left?

And for some, vocal exercise needs to be considered. Loud expletives after every muffed shot can contribute to the aerobic benefits! And, apart from when one of our pyro inclined neighbours is burning wet rubbish (fairly often), all this exercise is done in fresh country air.

But there is the other side of the ledger. Golf is not without risks to one's health and safety. There is of course the likely exposure to the gusts of bull dust that waft across the course from time to time and the possibility of body contact with an errant ball, or even a club! Not to forget the falling branches or a poke in the eye when looking for one's ball under a bush. Or being mowed down by a runaway golf buggy or ATV. Then there are the ferocious snakes laying in wait for the golfer who dares try to retrieve their ball from the creek!

Finally, there is the risk of sunstroke in summer or hypothermia in winter. Wow, think I will take up bowls! At least you must try to keep your balls on the ground in that game!

Altogether exhausting!

Is it any wonder we need lots of sustenance when we reach the 19th? Ed