

The Eye *of the Swing*



The Power of the Spine
in the Game of Golf

BY COACH JOEY D

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, golf has taken me to the four corners of the Earth. I've been to Fiji with Vijay Singh and Japan with Dustin Johnson. I've seen golf played in what was a former desert in Dubai and at 10,000 feet altitude in Mexico City. And whether I'm in Scotland or Scottsdale or anywhere in between, people are always coming up to me and asking me the same thing: what's the secret to playing golf at the highest level.

Generally, they look at me skeptically when I tell them the key is to optimize their own particular body for the golf swing, practice consistently and intelligently, and make sure that they're eating and sleeping properly. They give me a disappointed, raised eyebrow look as if I'm holding out on them. Sure, I'd love to just tell them that the true secret is to keep an acorn in their front right pocket. They'd give a profound nod of gratitude and head off to win their club championship.

But that's not how it works.

You need to optimize your body for the golf swing, because -- and it's as simple as this -- you're only going to be able to swing the club as well as your body will allow.



EYE OF THE SWING



Sure, it's easy to go out and buy the newest and most high-tech driver or wedges – or stick an acorn or two in your pocket – and tell yourself that your problems out on the course are over. But you'd only be fooling yourself. As I wrote in my book, "Fix Your Body, Fix Your Swing," if your body is too weak in places, too tight in places, or you don't have the body awareness to control all of the moving parts of the golf swing, you just aren't going to be playing at your best.

There's no secret to becoming a great golfer, just as there's no secret to becoming a great chef, boxer, or accountant. Every discipline has its own path to greatness.

Greatness in golf is about optimizing your body for the golf swing. Keep in mind that the things you need to do to optimize your body for the golf swing aren't the same things you'd need to do to optimize your body for tennis or basketball. Heck, the things you need to do to optimize your body for golf might not even be the same things your buddies need to do to optimize THEIR bodies for golf.

Everyone is different. Everyone has a different body. Let's optimize yours!

The Science of the Spine

Here in Florida, we spend a lot of time watching the weather. We follow the tracking of tropical storms the way folks in other parts of the country follow the stock market or their favorite baseball or basketball team. After watching umpteen hours of The Weather Channel over the years, it dawned on me that a storm system is a lot like the golf swing.

There's a very quiet "eye" and surrounding it is where the actual storms circle. In the golf swing, the "eye of the storm" is the spine. Its job is to be a stable structure around which rotation occurs. As you move out from the eye -- the center of your swing -- the movement is more noticeable; the hips turn and the shoulders turn. Slightly farther away from the eye, the movement is even greater. The seemingly quiet "eye of the swing" -- the simple rotation of the spine -- causes your club head speed to reach speeds over 100 mph.

On the golf course, that "eye of the swing" idea can be seen by keeping a careful check on someone's posture and spine angle throughout the swing.



If you can maintain your spine angle and proper posture from address to your takeaway and through your downswing and into impact, the chances of hitting the ball with optimal accuracy improve dramatically. And if you're able to rotate powerfully with proper acceleration, deceleration, and control – both in your takeaway and downswing – you'll be able to maximize your power.

The problem for a lot of golfers is that their “eye of the swing” isn't all that quiet...and it's not generating a lot of power. If the “eye” isn't quiet, it means that you may be shifting your hips – and your spine – too far backwards on your takeaway or too far forward during your downswing. It can also mean that you're straightening up too soon and aren't able to maintain proper posture through impact. Any of these will cost you control and accuracy. If you're unable to rotate sufficiently, your clubhead speed at impact and your distance will be a fraction of what they could be.

How do you know how calm your “eye of the swing” is and if you're maximizing your rotation?

Easy. Check out this simple-to-follow assessment and then add my prescription exercise to your workout a couple of times a week. It's a quick and effective way to increase both accuracy and power.



Assessment

If you worked with me or any of the other coaches at our Joey D Golf training facility in Jupiter, Florida, you'd know that the first thing we do with anyone that's trying to improve their game is assess their body. And this goes for everyone -- whether you're just picking up the game or whether you've already notched a few victories on the PGA Tour.

Again, you can only swing a club as well as your body will allow. Assessments give us a clear picture of where your body may not be optimally "tuned" for the golf swing.

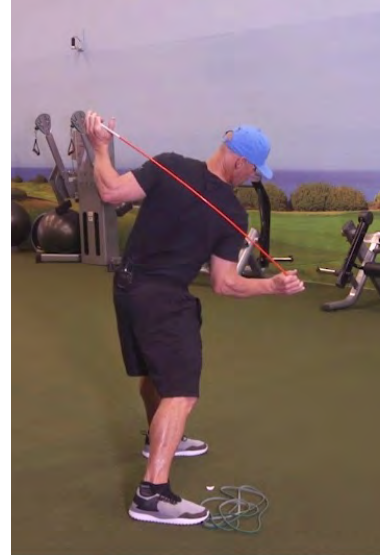
This is a simple test you can do to see how well you can maintain spine angle and posture while rotating around the spine.

And be aware that perception is very different from reality in golf. You may think you're doing one thing movement-wise or posture-wise, but you may be doing something completely different. To make this assessment as valuable as possible, I want you to not only be very aware of how your body feels during the movement, but I also want you record it from a couple of different angles with your phone. This way, in addition to the subjective feedback you'll get from how you feel when you do the assessment, you'll also get objective feedback from the videos on your phone.



Assessment

Ideally, you can do this with a slightly flexible alignment stick, but any stick or pole that's long enough for you to grip comfortably across your back will do.



Set up as you would at address with the alignment stick behind you and across your shoulder blades. (Make sure that it's not up around your neck.) Slowly, while trying to keep your lower body as still as possible, rotate as if you were going into your takeaway. Without losing your golf posture, keep rotating until you feel tension.

Hold that position for a beat and then slowly rotate back - as if through impact - and into your follow-through. Again, you want to keep your lower body quiet and maintain proper spine angle and posture. Hold that follow-through position for a beat and then return to the original starting position.

You might have noticed that you have more rotation to one side than the other. That's normal. No one is perfectly symmetrical. More importantly, though, you now know how far you can rotate in a controlled manner. If your range-of-motion - or lack of range-of-motion - surprised you, you're not alone. This assessment can be a really eye-opener.

What's great, though, is that I want you to repeat this assessment every two weeks after incorporating my prescription exercise into your workout routine a few times a week. You'll be amazed how much more control and movement you'll develop in just a short time. (You'll hardly recognize that guy in your initial assessment video!)

Prescription Exercise

Now that you have a sense of your ability to rotate the spine while maintaining good posture, let's get to work on increasing rotation and control and optimizing your body for the golf swing. And this is just one of many golf-specific training protocols we might use in an individualized program.

Grab a resistance band or a length of resistance tubing. Extend your arms in front of you with your hands a little wider than shoulder-width apart. There should be a little bit of tension in the band and I want you to feel this tension in the muscles of your upper back. Assume your address position and then step back with your left foot. Try to maintain strong golf posture with your upper body.



As in the assessment, slowly rotate as if into your backswing. Go as comfortably as you can while maintaining good spine angle. When the movement gets restricted, hold that position for a beat and feel the tension across your upper back.

Slowly return to the starting position, hold your address position for a beat, and then rotate in the opposite direction into your follow-through. Again, when the movement becomes restricted, hold for a beat and then return to the starting position.

Not only do I want you to do six complete repetitions as a right-handed swing, I also want you to do six as if you were a left-handed player. (And if you're a left-handed player, I want you to do six reps right-handed.)

Balance it Out

I've said this a million times before, so here goes one-million-and-one: even though you may never have to swing a club left-handed, any exercise that you do on one side also needs to be done on the other side. By solely strengthening your ability to control acceleration and deceleration in a right-handed swing, you may be throwing your musculature out-of-whack. Performing this exercise from both sides will help decrease imbalances both muscularly and neurologically between your right and left sides. Golf may be a one-sided sport, but life isn't. Your back needs to be strong and happy not only when you're out on the course, but also for the far greater number of hours that you're NOT out on the course.

By adding this simple exercise into your workout routine two to three times a week (and repeating the assessment every couple of weeks to track your progress), you'll quickly see -- and feel -- how easy it is to optimize your body for the golf swing.

Let's Get To Work

If you'd like to put the power of golf-specific training to work for your game, here are some great options to get to work today!

For in-depth self-assessments and exercise protocols, check out my book, "[Fix Your Body, Fix Your Swing](#)." Available at amazon.com in paperback and Kindle versions.



HIT IT GREAT™

Follow along with my fitness videos at Hit It Great ON DEMAND, a streaming online platform dedicated entirely to golf-specific fitness training. Available at hititgreat.com



LIVE COACHING FROM JUPITER, FL

To schedule a physical assessment with our team via FaceTime or Skype, and get your own personalized golf-fitness training plan to fit your game, check out our Private Online Coaching programs available at joeydgolf.com