

Pilates for Golf

Effortless Power — Pain Relief

By Leonard Finkel

Mention Pilates to golfers, especially men, and you may hear remarks like "Pilates is for Girls" or "I don't want to meditate". These myths abound and nothing could be further from the truth. Tiger, Butch Harmon and Camilo Villegas rave about the positive impact Pilates training has had on their swings. In the Wall Street Journal (Pilates for Putters November, 2006) John Paul Newport notes, "Pilates seems to be catching on among professional golfers. Rich Beem, known more for his Buds than his abs did a lot of Pilates leading up to his win at the 2002 PGA Championship. Rocco Mediate does Pilates to preserve his back."

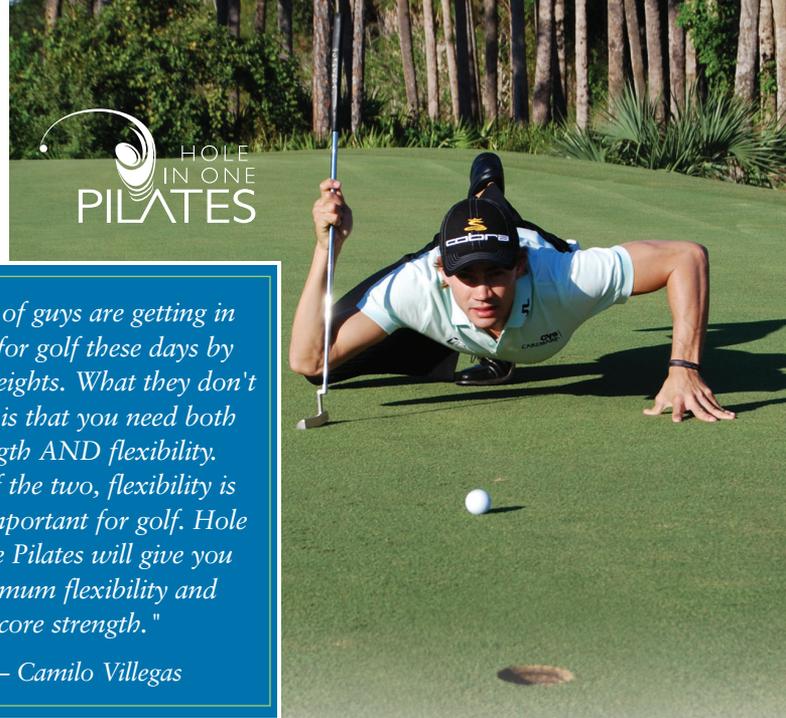
Golf is particularly stressful on the body. Approximately 90% of injuries to professional golfers involve the lower back and the neck. Most experts agree that solid core strength will alleviate potential problems. To address issues specific to golf, Sarah Christensen worked with professional golfers and golf coaches to develop Hole in One Pilates. The program works to build strength and flexibility simultaneously, develop core strength, improve posture and alignment, and create stability; elements needed for a great swing! The core includes abdominals, low back, hips and buttocks. Every Pilates exercise involves engagement of the powerhouse muscles first, strengthening the core of the body to build a solid base. Newport adds, "I was struck, though, when I talked to several prominent golf fitness experts about Pilates, by how enthusiastic they were about the central benefits of Pilates -- and how easily they think everyday players could get major benefits in as little as 10 minutes a day."

"Pilates is a technique for moving in a way that is the most natural, efficient and pain free," Christensen asserts. "It's more than just exercises for the gym or at home, but a precise way we move in everything we do in life." At a recent media event, I had a chance to experience Hole in One Pilates. A series of subtle, as opposed to strenuous, movements integrated stretching with each strengthening exercise; the goal - muscles that are long and lean rather than bulky and stiff. In addition to greater distance, core strength creates the pelvic stability needed for hitting the ball straight. Imagine trying to tee off or putt from a row boat. That's the result when the lower body is rocking and rolling during the full swing or putting stroke.

Pilates routines work on lengthening the spine and proper alignment and posture; reducing or eliminating the golfer's curse, back pain. While some of the exercises and stretches may look familiar, it is an understanding of the underlying Pilates techniques that

"A lot of guys are getting in shape for golf these days by lifting weights. What they don't realize is that you need both strength AND flexibility. And of the two, flexibility is more important for golf. Hole in One Pilates will give you maximum flexibility and core strength."

— Camilo Villegas



make them so powerful. A few of the movements I already incorporated in my own stretching program but found that I was doing them incorrectly. Hole in One Pilates specifically addresses golfers in two ways; by narrowing the Pilates routine to exercises that focus on the most important golf muscles and adapting other exercises to the biomechanics of the golf swing. An example of golf specific Pilates would be an exercise we did with our putters. By working on our abdominals and focusing on breathing, our stances remain solid with no swaying. That exercise put what we learned into an actual golf stroke, with an obviously positive result. More advanced exercises bring Pilates principles to the full swing.



Camilo Villegas
& Sarah Christensen

According to Sarah, "Traditional Pilates would certainly improve your golf game, but it would take longer to realize the gains. Hole in One Pilates takes you there much quicker." Villegas adds, "The great posture you get from Hole in One Pilates is important for increasing the amount of turn. It also makes you look more confident on the course!" Mastering breathing techniques is another focus. Holding your breath during the swing produces muscle tension. Good breathing promotes a fluid swing.

Sarah stages group clinics around the country. For personal training or corporate events contact her at pilatesinfo@holeinonepilates.com. A great introduction to Pilates for Golf is available through Sarah's new DVD. In just a few minutes a day you will reach the destination you've never dreamt possible; lower scores — more fun — no pain!

For clinic schedules or to order the DVD, go to www.holeinonepilates.com or dial 888-430-7220.

