



6 Steps to a Better Round

Many of the world's top tour players not only shoot great scores, they also have a regular routine on competition days. This is in stark contrast to the average golfer who has high expectations on competitions but is often poorly or inadequately prepared.

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Photography by Peter Turrell

Think back to your last few competition rounds. Did you do the same thing before, during and after the round? Or did you jump out of bed, into the car and off the course one week but mowed the lawn, drove to the course and stood around chatting the next week? Or do you rush to the first tee from the office, have a practice swing and slap it out of bounds?

Generally time management among club golfers is very poor. If your routine is scattered you'll be undercooked by the time it's your turn on the first tee and chances are your score will suffer. Managing your time will mean there is no rush to the golf course, reducing tension and anxiety levels and a more fluent and effective routine which will maximise your ability once on the course.

Following is a six-step strategy to enhance your performance on your golf day. This strategy may take time to organise, but if you stick at it for four weeks, you will maximise your potential to save shots on your golf day.

STEP 1 - LEAVING HOME

STEP 2 - GETTING THERE

1. Check the Weather

This is the first strategic part of preparation, especially if you are unfamiliar with the course and the variable weather elements. The easiest way is to check the local papers, look on the internet, check local media or call up your local golf professional. While you're on the phone find out if there are any delays for your scheduled tee-off time and they may also be able to give you strategic tips for that day: speed of the greens, direction of wind, tough pin placement etc. This allows you to be more mentally prepared prior to your arrival.

Crucifix Stretch
(Chest and back)



For Warm Weather Think:

- Water bottle—fluids
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- Umbrella—shade
- Extra glove
- Adhesive to ensure grips stay tacky when your hands are sweaty
- Dress shorts instead of slacks
- Change of socks

For Cold Weather Think:

- Warm clothes
- Beanie and long johns—keeps core body temperature warm, relieving muscle tightness
- Change of socks
- Check spikes in case of slipping
- Dried fruit/nuts/sandwiches/small flask

2. Check your Equipment

- Clean your clubs—your weapons are now ready for battle.
- Check golf balls. Familiarise what type of ball you will select—distance, spin etc.

3. Stretches and Exercises

In the morning you can make a choice of some basic exercises (demonstrated left) that cover you from head to toe. As long as you select the drills that you feel are most effective, you can mix and match as you see fit. For more golf-specific exercises contact www.golfmed.net



Angel Wings
(Lower trunk rotation and hip)



Hip and Trunk Extension



Glute Stretch



Hamstrings/Calf Stretch



Many golfers travel as a group or individually by car. However most do not plan a strategy to minimise the physical discomforts of car travel.

Problems

- Poor seats and prolonged sitting either as a passenger or as a driver will cause bad posture resulting in stiffness of spine, shoulders and neck
- Long periods driving may result in tightness in the hamstrings and the muscles of the forearms and the hands
- Intense brightness or sun glare can affect vision
- Mental fatigue is common with long periods of concentration behind the wheel and likely to affect performance
- On long journeys golfers can't exercise so energy requirements are lower
- You may be tempted to over eat because of boredom
- You may under eat because of lack of appetite stimulation
- You may arrive at destination for tournament with depleted glycogen stores
- You'll probably feel fatigued, stiff and sore from sitting down for hours

Solution

- Organise a roster so that each person can share a part of the driving if travelling a long distance
- If travelling a long distance take time to stretch at driver change overs—this will break up the fixed sitting position
- Stop at a park if possible to go for a walk and a stretch. This is much more pleasant than roadhouses
- Try to maintain good sitting posture while travelling. Use a lumbar roll to support your back and try to keep your knees at 90 degrees to your hips
- Wear good quality sunglasses to reduce the intensity and glare of the Australian sun
- Play relaxing music or music that you enjoy to promote a calming effect
- Plan the best route and arrive ahead of time to prepare your pre-tournament regimes
- If you're talking on a mobile phone use a handset—this will reduce neck tension. Even better, turn the phone to message bank to get your mind away from work on the way or at the course
- Take an esky, fill it with healthy food eg. sandwiches, fruit, yogurt etc



- Take a thermos of nourishing soup or hot water to make your own drinks
- Take low fat, high carbohydrate snacks to maintain glycogen stores
- Try to stick to normal meal times and don't over or under eat. Suck on lollies or chew gum in preference to chips or other high fat snacks (a few won't hurt)
- Stop and stretch every two hours so you don't become fatigued and use food to compensate

Thanks to Sally Girvan—AIS golf dietician for her assistance with this page

STEP 3 - ARRIVING

STEP 4 - WARMING-UP



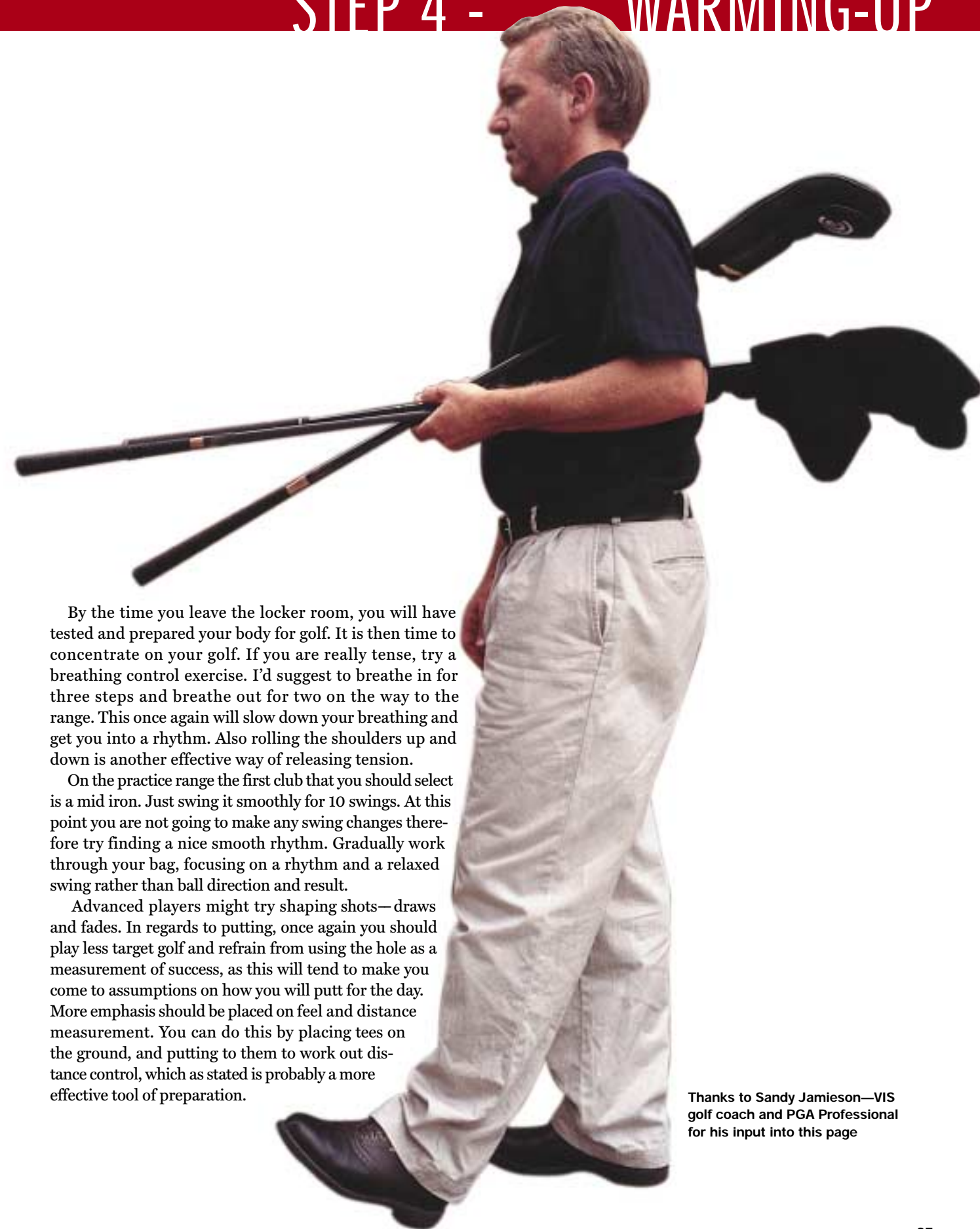
Most golfers incur their first golf injury before they even leave the car park. This is caused by:

Problem

- Not being aware of the change in body temperature when exiting the car, for example air conditioning in summer, heater on in the winter. Heat and cold will cause changes in the muscle tissue and may lead to injury as a result of the temperature difference
- Trying to pull or drag golf equipment from the backseat into the passenger and driver seats
- Poorly lifting and handling equipment as you removed it from the boot of the car

Solution

- Always stretch and check your range of movement slowly when getting out of the car
- Use your legs when lifting or dragging your equipment out of the car



By the time you leave the locker room, you will have tested and prepared your body for golf. It is then time to concentrate on your golf. If you are really tense, try a breathing control exercise. I'd suggest to breathe in for three steps and breathe out for two on the way to the range. This once again will slow down your breathing and get you into a rhythm. Also rolling the shoulders up and down is another effective way of releasing tension.

On the practice range the first club that you should select is a mid iron. Just swing it smoothly for 10 swings. At this point you are not going to make any swing changes therefore try finding a nice smooth rhythm. Gradually work through your bag, focusing on a rhythm and a relaxed swing rather than ball direction and result.

Advanced players might try shaping shots—draws and fades. In regards to putting, once again you should play less target golf and refrain from using the hole as a measurement of success, as this will tend to make you come to assumptions on how you will putt for the day. More emphasis should be placed on feel and distance measurement. You can do this by placing tees on the ground, and putting to them to work out distance control, which as stated is probably a more effective tool of preparation.

Thanks to Sandy Jamieson—VIS golf coach and PGA Professional for his input into this page

STEP 5 - DURING THE ROUND

Be aware of taking in plenty of fluids at all times, but especially during the warmer months.

Eating dried fruit or bananas will keep you fuelled but not bloated. Junk food during the round or at the half-way house will tend to leave you feeling lethargic.

Be aware of your posture over the last few holes as the postural muscles will be the first to fatigue. If the group ahead is slow, keep actively moving and stretching, especially in cold weather and when there is a wind chill factor. If you are doing well and getting excited, once again move towards a strategy of breathing control as you walk.



STEP 6 - POST ROUND

- Always have a recovery session and do a 5-to-10 minute warm down in the locker room.
- Ensure that you have checked that you have all of your golf equipment.
- Place your equipment in the car before you go to the bar, as many people cool down and stiffen up, then try lifting awkward equipment such as buggies and heavy golf bags.
- A shower and change of clothes is always a good option. Hot and cold contrast showers are always invigorating for the circulation and provide a positive mental attitude of feeling refreshed.
- Drink a pint of water before drinking alcohol to quench your thirst and prevent becoming dehydrated when you get to the bar.
- Go through a debrief of your statistics—how many putts, how many drives on the fairway etc. Outline the shots you should improve on and discuss it with your coach during the week. Keep in mind the good shots you played—they will maintain and promote a positive frame of mind.

Ramsay McMaster has treated over 4000 club golfers and touring professionals. For more information on the treatment and golf-specific fitness contact Melbourne Golf Injury Clinic on 03 9569 9448