

FITNESS

For the greatest impact, strengthen your core

JEFF GOTHARD

For Florida Fairways

You practice, take lessons, practice some more, watch videos, and practice. You do this all for that moment of impact when the club face contacts the ball, hoping all is well with your swing.

During the swing, energy is transferred from your body to the ball via a club that acts as an extension of your movements. The winding and unwinding create a wonderful torque that (hopefully) places the shot just where you visualized it.

With all of your body being involved, it is important to note that this energy transfer must occur through your mid section, commonly called your core. Your core is simply the muscles, large and small, of your abdomen, sides, and lower/mid back. Keeping these muscles strong is vital to a great game and good health.

This month we will show you some simple exercises to keep that core in top playing shape.

Straight Arm Swings — Hold a light dumbbell or medicine ball in front of you at arms length. Stand with your knees slightly bent, and keep your back straight (figure 1). Keeping your abdominal muscles taught, swing the weight from side to side, feeling a slight stretch before swinging back. Keep the swings controlled unforced. Start with two sets of 10 repetitions, working up to three sets of 20.

Figure Eight — This exercise is similar to the previous one, but is a little more challenging; working the muscles of your shoulders and trapezius a bit more.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Photos by JEFF GOTHARD



Figure 4

Stand as with the straight arm swings, again holding a dumbbell or light medicine ball (figure 2). Now make an imaginary No. 8 in front of you and from side to side, as if the number was lying on its side. Remember to keep the motion controlled and unforced. Begin with one or two sets of 10, working up to three sets of 20.

vanced version of the seated twist. The exercise is exactly the same, but you will hold your feet off the floor while performing the twisting motion. Do 12 repetitions, working up to three sets of 20.

Back Raise — This exercise is great for the lower, mid and upper back muscles that often are neglected in strength training. In figure 4, gymnastics coach Jill Gothard uses a stability ball, but cushions can serve just as well.

Lie on the ball on your abdomen, keeping your feet spread wider than your shoulders for balance. Your toes should be on the floor. Let your upper body droop over the ball, keeping your arms extended to the sides. Now lift your upper body and your arms, holding at the top for a count of five. Lower and repeat for 10 to 12 repetitions, adding sets as you become comfortable.

There you have it, a nice group of core exercises to help develop a strong and healthy swing. Remember to breathe naturally on all exercises and to warm up previous to performing them. With a strong midsection, your energy transfer will be more efficient. This will give you “moment of impact” a new energy, and positively impact your game as well.

Jeff Gothard, CSCS, MBA, has been a personal trainer and fitness consultant for more than 16 years. The former NCAA strength and conditioning coach has written numerous articles for fitness and strength journals, and has been a clinician at the U.S. Olympic Training Center. He is an instructor at Christi's Family Fitness in Vero Beach.

Seated Twist — Have a seat and draw your knees up, keeping your heels on the floor. Hold a medicine ball or light dumbbell in front of you with arms slightly bent (figure 3). Twist your body from side to side, keeping your abdomen tight. Begin with 12 repetitions and work up to two or three sets of 20.

Floating Twist — This is a more ad-