

**Nick Bayly** meets leading specialist sports osteopath **Paul Morrissey**, whose Surrey-based practice is pioneering techniques to keep golfers of all ages and skill levels swinging without pain

# ALL GAIN NO PAIN



**> Touching all the wood I can find near my desk, I've been lucky enough to avoid serious injury during my 45 years on this planet. Aside from a broken collarbone playing rugby in my teens, I've never had cause to visit a doctor or hospital for anything more than hayfever injections and the birth of my two children.**

I put my lack of serious injury down to my unwillingness to over exert myself, and, from a golfing standpoint, the complete lack of tension in my golf swing. My arms-led movement creates close to zero torque, and although I have felt the odd twinge when leaning over to pick my ball out of the hole, I am fortunate enough to have never been laid up with a bad back, or been unable to play for any medical reasons (unless you count temporary insanity).

But in my blissful pain-free state, I realise I am a member of small and very fortunate minority. As a nation of largely desk-bound workers, who throw themselves into their weekly games of golf without so much as a practice swing or a token stretch, the likelihood of causing serious and lasting damage to our backs, knees, arms and wrists has never been greater. Even top touring pros, with their fluid swings and armies of physios and strength coaches, are susceptible to injuries, while for the rest of us duffers – with our abnormal twisting, awkward balance and terrible spine angles – the prospect of a pain-free back and a regular golf habit is practically impossible.

Many a golfing career has been cut cruelly short by injury, with over 80% of all professionals reporting having suffered from physical pain as a direct consequence of golf at some point in their lives. And with the swings of pros becoming ever more explosive, the likelihood of keeping 26 vertebrae in perfect alignment seems increasingly challenging, never mind the pressures exerted on other parts of the body.

More than anything, it is the repetitive nature of the movement, and some golfers' willingness to pound balls for hours and hours on the driving range, that leads to wear and tear on muscles, tendons, discs and bones. And while pro golfers do their best to create a repeatable, healthy swing they can perform hundreds of times a day, the untrained amateur stands to encounter even more problems, even if they're not bashing quite so many balls.

"It's a simple fact that the human body just isn't made to hit a golf ball," says Paul Morrissey, a passionate golfer and founder of the Surrey-based Osteopathy Clinic of Physical Medicine (OCPM), a private practice with offices based in Warlingham and Addiscombe. "Whenever you put a force on a

disk or a joint that combines two or more motions, it may cause damage."

It's a crushing thought, but Paul knows a thing or two about golf injuries. His clinical training as an osteopath and his lasting love of golf has led him to spend the best part of 20 years working with some of the game's leading players and coaches. He is personal osteopath to renowned swing guru David Leadbetter, and jets back and forth across the Atlantic several times a year to work with David, along with many other top coaches and tour players, including 2008 Masters' champion Trevor Immelman and Ryder Cup player David Howell,



Kate Leadbetter and Paul Morrissey



The pilates studio at the Warlingham-based clinic

both of whom have battled through injuries to reach the top of the game.

Recognised for his extensive expertise in clinical pilates and sports medicine, Paul set up OCPM in 2006, and has earned a reputation for working at the cutting edge of treatment for sports-related injuries. He also treats dancers and other athletes, as well as people with non-sporting injuries, and is now launching a golf-specific service, which will treat golfers of all ages and skill levels. "We are seeing an increasing number of people who play golf, from juniors through to seniors, men and women, and I wanted to create a facility that

catered for everyone, regardless of standard," says Paul. "Golfers are no longer guys with big waists. The game has changed over the years, and has become more powerful, and that brings with it a new dimension, including stress on our bodies, which can increase risk of injury. At the top of the sport, most pros have a team of physiologists, conditioning coaches and biomechanics experts, who all contribute to improving the golfer's performance. Amateurs are left to fend for themselves, and that is where we come in. Whatever their level, we can offer help, expertise and advice to repair an injury or take preventative measures to keep them on the right course."

Paul has enlisted the assistance of experienced physiotherapist Kate Leadbetter – who is David's niece – and together they offer a comprehensive programme of therapies and treatments to help golfers get the most out of their bodies, as well as putting them on the road to recovery following injuries or operations. "There are five common sites of injuries in golf," says Kate. "Almost two-thirds are lower back pain, due to the flexion and rotation of the spine needed within a golf swing. The other four areas include the wrist, shoulder, elbow and hip. A lot of these injuries are a chain reaction from other parts of the body, so we always assess patients as a whole, rather than focusing on one particular area."

She adds: "Our clinics are not just aimed at treating already apparent injuries. Our screening programmes also pinpoint where potential mobility and flexibility issues may be causing golfers not to play to their full potential."

In addition to mobility and flexibility assessments, the clinic is able to carry out movement analysis to identify impairments; conduct orthopaedic examinations to clearly identify joint and muscular problems; and offer a co-ordinated corrective programme, including treatments such as osteopathy, pilates, and golf-specific physiotherapy.

The clinic in Warlingham is kitted out with a wide variety of state-of-the-art medical equipment, including ultrasound, laser, and shockwave therapy machines, while a separate pilates studio features the very latest exercise and conditioning machines. And while they may look like props from a medieval torture chamber, I've been assured that they provide the answers to improving flexibility and increasing core strength, balance and mobility – all of which will help to enhance your game.

So whether you're a tour pro, an elite amateur or weekend hacker, the Osteopathy Clinic of Physical Medicine can not only help you recover from injuries and operations, but it can unlock your true physical potential, whatever your general health.

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