



Fit to be tried, TOUR trailer helps shape careers



When not on the driving range, inside the TOUR's fitness trailer is where several players spend time shaping their games .

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When 59-year-old Tom Watson nearly won the British Open in July, some argued it wasn't necessarily good for the game. If some old fogey with his AARP card could nearly win one of the game's biggest tournaments, what did that say about golf as a sport? What it said, they maintained, was that golf wasn't a sport at all. It was a skill. A pastime. That it was right up there with bowling and ping pong.

Blame Ernie Els, or Fred Couples or even Watson. They make golf look about as athletic as pouring a glass of water. What most don't see is what goes into building those backswings, especially for a growing number of players on the PGA TOUR, whose time in the fitness trailer or gym equals their time on the driving range or practice green.

"What the fans don't understand is the specificity of the training, the stress that a golfer goes through," says Chris Noss, an expert in biomechanics and trainer to a number of players, including Sean O'Hair, Zach Johnson, Stewart Cink and Brian Gay, among others.

That stress usually begins and ends in a pair of 18-wheelers — one for strength and conditioning, one for physical therapy — at every TOUR stop from January through November. They're loaded with CYBEX machines, treadmills, stationary bikes, free weights, physio balls and various other apparatuses. There are also at least two physical therapists, a chiropractor and strength & conditioning coach on hand at all times.

"Nine years ago, when I started, very few utilized the trailer every day," says Scott Riehl, Strength & Conditioning Coordinator, DePuy Mitek, PGA TOUR, and lord of the two trailers. "Now, 85 percent work out daily."

Though space is tight, you'll often find as many as 10-12 players in the trailer at a time during tournament week, all working out, stretching or receiving treatment for any number of nagging injuries.

Even those who don't use the TOUR's trailers will spend countless hours fine-tuning their bodies to the rigors of pounding thousands of golf balls. Call it the Tiger Woods effect. His workouts with Keith Kleven, although fairly secretive, are equal parts legendary.

"Players started saying, 'I have to work out to catch Tiger,'" said Noss. "Then when they didn't (catch him), we had a drop off. It's leveled out now."

"Tiger made my job a lot easier," continued Noss, who added that it's taken many of his 10-plus years on TOUR to gain the sort of trust and respect he and a handful of others have with the players.

PGA TOUR workout: How to train like a pro

During the AT&T National, trainers and biomechanics experts Joey Diovisalvi and Chris Noss, who work with some of the best players on the PGA TOUR, put PGA-TOUR.COM's Brian Wacker through a typical workout for a TOUR player. He survived well enough to tell you about it below:

- 1. Start with a 5-minute warm-up** on the stationary bike, pedaling between a moderate and fast rate, to get the blood pumping.
This is easy enough and it gets the juices flowing.
- 2. Set the treadmill speed** to 3.5 miles per hour and start walking... then turn sideways, shuffling your feet side to side for 15 seconds. Then turn and face the other side and repeat. Do this for 2 minutes, switching every 15 seconds. Having played basketball most of my life, this was a common drill, but not on, uh, moving ground. I'd suggest holding on at first since it challenges your balance.
- 3. Lay back on a physio ball** with the ball positioned under the middle of your back and your legs at a 90-degree angle, holding a weight plate out in front of you opposite your chest. Rotate your midsection side to side, making sure not to let your hips sag or to lose your balance on the ball. Do this for 15 repetitions on each side.
After starting with a 25-pound weight that made me fall off the ball on the first rep, I switched to a 15-pound weight and still struggled, moving slowly from side to side. Joey D hops on to show me, thoroughly embarrassing my snail's pace.
- 4. Using a resistance band**, set up in your normal golf stance, holding the band as if it were a club and making sure the band is taut. From there, it's a quick 1-2 motion, taking the band back just past your hips on the right (if you're right-handed), then back to start, then all the way back in a rapid-fire motion, making sure to keep your posture and your balance. Then switch sides. Do this for 15 repetitions per side.
I almost fall over the first time I return the band to the start position because there's a lot of resistance there and the momentum really challenges your balance... not to mention the strength in your core. It will also help with the load and release of your swing.



"But Tiger's always been an athlete — if you're Secretariat's trainer, all you want to do is not screw him up."

That can be tougher than it sounds. Take Jason Dufner, who works with Joey Diovisalvi (known mostly as Joey D around TOUR circles). Having been befriended by Vijay Singh, Dufner recently spent time with Singh's trainer, Gabe Lopez.

Comparing Singh to Dufner in the gym is like comparing the Mona Lisa to a finger painting. No one works out harder than Singh, and Dufner found out the hard way. "[Dufner] was sore for weeks," Diovisalvi said. "It killed his confidence."

Fortunately for Dufner, that confidence returned and the fruits of his labor paid off in the form of a half-dozen top-10s, including a tie for third at the RBC Canadian Open and a tie for second at the Deutsche Bank Championship.

Anthony Kim had a similar experience with confidence — or lack of it — early in the season. Following a rash of injuries and poor practice habits, Kim, twice a winner in the previous year, admitted his confidence was now "in the toilet."

That prompted Kim to hire Darby Rich, whom he had worked with while at the University of Oklahoma. Rich was the strength and conditioning coach for the Sooners' men's basketball team and helped train Blake Griffin, who was picked No. 1 in the NBA Draft.

The wins haven't exactly piled up for Kim, but since hiring Rich, Kim does have four finishes in the top 16, including a pair of third places. He's also slimmer, eating better, practicing more and avoiding injury due to a previous lack of said practice.

"I was miserable. I wasn't having any fun," Kim said. "I just know that if I'm working on the right thing, it's going to pay off."

That right thing has paid off for others — Pat Perez, John Rollins, Ryuji Imada and O'Hair, to name a few — and it's fair to say that success comes from what goes on in practice sessions as much as training sessions, whether they're in the TOUR's two fitness trailers, or in a glitzy new gym like the one at Congressional Country Club, site of the AT&T National.

On a mid-week afternoon at the AT&T National, a number of players made their way into the gym at Congressional — on weeks the TOUR travels to tournament sites with their own fitness facility, it usually employs just the physical therapy trailer.

Perez, Mike Weir, Jim Furyk, Imada and O'Hair all populated the place during one particular hour and while none of them looks like Lance Armstrong, never mind LeBron James, they twisted and contorted their bodies into all sorts of pretzel-like positions, mostly through resistance training that's intense enough to bring out the puke buckets on occasion.

Pushing them are a team of trainers, therapists and biomechanics experts that walk a very fine line of keeping a player fit or injury-free and trying not to screw up their golf swing.

"If [Jason Gore's coach] Mike Abbott wants his arm in one position..." Diovisalvi says. "...well, sooner or later, you better marry us, or else you're going to have a lot of unhappy players."

Brian Gay has always been a hard worker, on and off the course, and he can credit his two wins this year to that. "We've had battles over training, but he sees why he has to do certain things," Noss said.

Ditto similar successes for Geoff Ogilvy, Paul Casey and Camilo Villegas. All are workout freaks, and all have had success, at least in part, because of it. Even Cink, who isn't in their league from a physical standpoint, wants to know that he's done everything possible to succeed and that includes his workouts.

Perhaps no one's career — except Woods' — sums up the golf-is-a-sport argument, however, better than Singh's. Sitting on an airplane in 2000, Singh told a member of his team, "I can be the best player in the world." Four years later, he was. No one north of 40 years old has won more than Singh, either. Is there any question why?

5. Lay flat on a mat with a small physio ball positioned between your feet and your arms outstretched over your head. Squeezing the ball with the sides of your feet, raise your legs straight up, along with your arms, passing it from your feet to your hands and down. Do this for 15 repetitions.

This will make your abs burn and you'll also feel it in your hips — both of which are crucial to flexibility in the golf swing.

6. Back to the stationary bike, ride at a medium resistance for 1 minute.

This feels like a break, but it still keeps your heart and lungs pumping. No pain, no gain, or pain and more pain in this case.

7. With an ankle resistance band taut around your ankles, get in an athletic stance, knees slightly bent and feet a little more than shoulder width apart. Shuffle to one side, much the way you did on the treadmill earlier, then shuffle back, making sure to keep the band as taut as possible as you do. You'll need an area about 20-30 feet long for this. Do three times in each direction.

This is the drill I'm used to from years of basketball, only it's tougher with the resistance band. You feel it not only in your legs, but your hips as well, which I'm quickly learning are not very flexible on me.

8. Back to the resistance band machine; get in an athletic stance with your knees slightly bent and your hands holding the band from your right. In another quick 1-2 explosion, rotate your mid-section to the left so your hands reach the middle of your chest, then back, then all the way through with your hands passing just beyond your left hip. Do 15 repetitions then switch sides.

This really works your core (again) and your back. I'm starting to realize what crappy shape I'm in and that working out four times a week, playing golf and managing my fantasy baseball team doesn't exactly count as being in shape, at least compared to these guys.

9. Staying with the resistance machine, assume an athletic position holding one band in each hand out in front of you at chest height, making sure it's taught. In a simultaneous motion, leap up and outward, with your arms going out and over your head and your hips thrusting outward before returning to the start position. Do 15 repetitions. I'll admit it, I almost fell flat on my face the first time I did this. The momentum is so great coming back down from the jump, it pulls you forward. You've been warned.

10. Next, do the same thing, only using a light dumbbell in each hand instead of a resistance band and without the jump. Do 15 repetitions.

At least I didn't nearly fall on my face this time.

From there, it's on to some plyometrics with Chris Noss. He has me jump over a box that's about 18 inches high; front to back at first, then side to side, for about 30 seconds each of three sets. Next, standing on the floor, I jump forward at a 45-degree angle, landing on my left foot and without letting my right one touch the ground once I land, then back, landing on my right leg. I proceed to do this at 45-degree angles to the left and right, frontwards and backwards for three sets and a total of 12 repetitions on each leg. Last, but certainly not least, holding a medicine ball between my hands in front of me, Noss has me jump up, kicking my heels to my butt and raising the medicine ball over my head simultaneously for about 30 seconds.

I'm exhausted, though there were no puke buckets like Noss and Diovisalvi predicted. Only near blood, a lot of sweat and tears of joy that the workout is over. As I'm walking back to the locker room, I see Jim Furyk on the treadmill, side-stepping — and holding onto the rail, just like I did. Suddenly, I don't feel so bad. Then Diovisalvi brings me back to reality, saying, "You're lucky [Pat] Perez left, or he'd be laughing at you."