Comprehensive Golf Assessment - Part II

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Last week we discussed the critical need of a comprehensive assessment for an athlete before beginning an exercise and treatment plan. This is equally important for rehabilitation and injury prevention as it is for improving performance. This holds true for both the recreational and the professional athlete. This article will dig deeper into what a comprehensive assessment should achieve and the basic components it should include.

In recent years there seems to be a growing number of "Golf Assessments" that have undoubtedly emerged to meet the demand of this growing sport. Assessment tools ranging from simple flexibility testing to high-tech video analysis continue to flood the market. Every exercise modality from resistance training, Plyo-Metric training to Yoga and Pilates now also offer what they are calling "Golf Specific" training programs. Many of which are based upon the fitness instructor's or trainer's own analysis of the "Golf Swing." Most of these programs are products of "marketing", as the assessment itself is often ineffective. As previously stated, actual analysis and instruction of the "Golf Swing" should be left to the Professional Golf Instructors and Swing Coaches who are experienced to do so. Whereas, therapists and trainers should focus on identifying the specific muscular imbalances and joint limitations that compromise overall function and impede individual performance.

A comprehensive assessment therefore should assess much more than the sports specific movement itself and include several critical components. The first component is a detailed analysis of the individual's posture. Posture analysis is typically oversimplified or completely excluded in most assessment systems. It seems only logical to assess the body for observable postural deviations while standing prior to analyzing the body once it is in motion. Although we should never make conclusions based on the postural assessment alone, postural deviations can however be correlated to specific joint dysfunctions, muscular imbalances and also movement pattern compensation. For example, a properly trained therapist or trainer can identify patterns of pelvic and spinal torque that literally affect every joint of the body and can decrease movement potential.

The 2nd component in a comprehensive assessment is a complete head to toe evaluation of total joint mobility and stability with the understanding that both components are of equal importance. This is probably the most difficult and valuable component of a comprehensive assessment. There is no magic tool or video analysis that can perform this evaluation. Only a highly skilled trainer, therapist, or possibly a Chiropractor or Doctor trained in manual joint analysis technique can effectively execute this component. A total joint function evaluation is extremely important as altered biomechanics of any one joint will negatively affect all others. For example a foot's ability to properly pronate as well as supinate will influence knee, hip and spinal movement and drastically

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decrease overall movement efficiency. This type of comprehensive joint analysis can also be combined with specific muscle testing methods that will help not only determine the joint limitations but also transitions seamlessly into treatment and corrective exercise programming.

The 3rd component of evaluating core strength and function is essential for any effective assessment process and has been at the forefront of fitness industry now for the last decade. However core function is extremely complex and is still widely misunderstood and often misrepresented in attempts to sell equipment, videos and books. The fact is that the core and trunk muscles are rarely ever required to flex the trunk in real life situation. This makes sit-ups, crunches, leg lifts, and trunk rotation tests or exercises while laying on the back or on a ball, questionable for their value. Optimal assessment of the core must include muscle testing of the deep Para spinal muscles that dictate actual spinal movement ability far more that the larger abdominal and oblique muscles. As many of the "Core" muscles such as the Diaphragm and Traverse Abdominus are also highly involved in respiration, their function in these roles should also be evaluated. Ultimately the Core muscles must learn to function and assist with movement while on our feet rather than on our back so should be assessed and trained with this in mind.

Although improvement of a sports specific movement such as the golf swing may be important to us, they are not considered "essential" for our ability to function in our daily environments. Therefore the analysis of General Movement Patterns (GMP) should also be a key part of a comprehensive assessment. Integrated spinal movements, squatting, lunging as well as pushing and pulling patterns in all three planes of motion are more important for the trainer or therapist to assess than a sports specific movement itself. Deviations and compensations in GMPs can cause pain, contribute to joint deterioration and are always associated with and can be correlated to similar compensations in the sports specific movement. One of the most important GMP to study is Gait, and has more research associated with it than all other GMP's combined. However, much like the golf swing, visual analysis of Gait alone, is extremely difficult make conclusions upon for even the most experienced professional. High-tech video analysis can be extremely helpful with this component. However, elements such as camera quality, quantity, and placement as well as computer software capabilities and sensor placement are critical components that determine the actual value of such tools so should be considered prior to assuming their value.

In summary, we can see in this brief overview that there is a clear need for completing a "comprehensive" assessment. We can also conclude that not all assessment processes are of equal value and most will fall short of producing accurate information towards designing effective exercise and treatment programs. We should also remember that any assessment system is only as effective as the person conducting it. Although you may have tried other types of assessment systems, we invite you to experience the TELOS A.I.M. (Advance Integrated Movement) Assessment that has been nationally recognized as the industries most innovative and comprehensive assessment to date. The TELOS A.I.M. Assessment is conducted only by an elite group of Ortho-Kinetic trainers/therapists who are well versed and experienced with our proprietary assessment and training systems. You may contact TELOS at 972-386-2555 to answer your questions about the A.I.M. Assessment or gather information on how to get started.

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