



Off-Season For HS Golfers = Time To TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN!

Written by Mindi Boysen, TPI Junior Golf Coach

All of the weekly matches, regional, and state tournaments are over for high school players and teams which means it is a perfect opportunity to take a break from swinging the club. It is also a time for the team as a whole to reflect on accomplishments as well as weaknesses during the season. Though golf is a team sport in high school and everyone must work together, once the season is over it is up to the individual player to prepare themselves to be a greater asset to the team for the next year. But where do they start?

Once the high school coach's job is over, the junior golfer should enlist the help of two specialists to improve their performance post-season: the ***golf instructor*** who improves the technical fundamentals of the swing and the ***golf fitness coach*** who helps to physically enhance and improve the body in preparation for an efficient swing. Both specialists should be familiar with the LTAD (visit www.mytpi.com for a listing of qualified professionals in your area).

The Long Term Athletic Development (LTAD) model is being used around the world and is becoming more prominent in U.S. programs. The high school years (ages 13-17) are during one of the most critical phases of development where golf and sport skills are ingrained for life. This phase also involves college preparation, tournament play, and physical development.

Train To Play & Learn To Compete Phase:

- Should be physically literate (locomotor skills, object control, body awareness)
- Growth spurt in this phase which leads to poor coordination & skill regression
- Limit other sport participation down to 2 sport maximum
- Second speed window of trainability: speed, power, strength focus
- Physical fitness (activation, mobility, stability) should be 40% of golf program
- Nutrition and recovery techniques should be stressed
- Golf practice should be 70% block practice and 30% random (hit 1,000 balls per week)
- Play >18 holes per week and own a full set of custom fit clubs

From a physical standpoint alone, the much over-looked and de-emphasized aspect of a junior golfer is their ability and need to be a well-rounded athlete. During puberty, bones grow at different rates which cause more tension on muscles, tendons and ligaments. The association between the hips, hamstrings, and spine is imbalanced and at risk for injury. Growth plates decrease which can lead to pathologies and trauma in wrists and ankles. Inconsistent hormone levels affect motivation, craving, stress management, appearance, and risk/reward behaviors.

This is a perfect time to train EVERYTHING! The junior's body is in a state of pubertal/hormonal shock and is ripe for a periodized schedule of speed, suppleness, strength, power, and stamina! Researchers call this the "window of trainability". Juniors can be trained as a group for team building acquisition, but an advanced and individual screening is key for the functionality of personal and physical changes.

In my experience working with many juniors, I have found the following to be lacking either due to developmental issues or the failure of information transfer from adult (parent/coach/teachers) to junior.

1. **Nutrition & Sleep:** Regeneration for teenage athletes is of the utmost importance. Recovery and repair happens when the body is nurtured through proper fuel and adequate rest. Timing of meals every 2-3 hours with balanced carbohydrate and protein ratios, consistent hydration (minimum oz. = ½ of body wt), and 7-8 hours of sleep per night greatly improves restoration and promotes positive growth.

2. **Physical balance/stability:** There is a synergy between passive joints (ligaments) and active stiffness (muscles) which the junior must constantly strive to achieve. Proprioception (awareness of where the body is in space) while at address or during the movement of the swing can be trained with stability and balance work.

a. **ONE-LEGGED BALANCE w/ EYES CLOSED:** Stand on one foot and close your eyes for more than 30 seconds without bobbing or moving your arms from your sides.

b. **ONE-LEGGED SQUAT:** While keeping a straight spine angle, squat down on one leg keeping weight firmly on the heel. Hips should be able to come down to knee height while keeping knee aligned over foot. Hold for 10 seconds.



3. **Warm-Up & Preparation Routine (physically & mentally):** Junior golfers like to play golf. It is imperative they are taught the importance of a minimum of 30 minutes of stretching, warm-up exercises pre-practice and pre-round to prepare the body for movement. Also, being able to utilize a variety of stress management techniques (deep breathing, visualization, imagery) can be lifelong tools.

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