

Women, Golf and the Athletes of the LPGA

By: Patricia Tremblay, BS, NSCA-CPT
Original Publish Date: February 2008



Golf, its one of the most popular sports in the state of Florida and here in our small corner of Florida it is also home base for the Ladies Professional Golf Association, known commonly as the LPGA. The LPGA resides here in Daytona Beach and recently I had the opportunity to talk to the Commissioner of the LPGA, Carolyn Bivens. My interest in golf actually began last year when I attended the World Golf Fitness Summit in Orlando. I would love to tell a big fat lie and comment on my vast experience with the game of golf, but I have a healthy fear of karma. Alas, my golf expertise ranks right up there with my cooking skills. I can do it, but it does not look very good and it's painful for me to admit my lack of skill! However, one of my passions that closely resemble the game of golf is fitness and my intense interest in empowering women to be strong physically, spiritually and mentally. Women's golf encompasses all of those things, plus it also has the added benefit of some really cute outfits.

Carolyn Bivens is the first female commissioner in the LPGA's 55 year history and her previous experiences as a business executive in sales, media, and television are equally impressive. But beyond all of her great successes is still a woman just like the rest of us trying to stay healthy in the midst of a crazy schedule. Carolyn also had some unique insights on how fitness and diet play a huge part in the lives of the women on tour with the LPGA. Our conversation began by me asking her...where did you get those shoes? Okay, I am kidding but I wanted to learn more about what her insights were for women who play the game of golf and discover what it takes for these golf professionals to stay in the game. Carolyn believes that one of the great designs of golf is that anyone can play. It does not matter how old you are or how athletically gifted you are, golf is a sport that simply requires a willing spirit. Golf can be a gateway to fitness and a self esteem starter program for many women. The game of golf can be intensely frustrating, however this is actually a benefit! Imagine how great you would feel after releasing your stress by whacking a ball repeatedly and then gently easing it into a small hole. SCORE! Carolyn

did advise women to take golf lessons and to play the game with other women instead of their spouse. That makes good sense and in an effort to remain politically correct, I simply state that having tried to play this game in years past with a certain person of the male persuasion she is dead on right!

The women on the LPGA tour consider themselves serious athletes. These women train for several hours a day for a variety of reasons. One of the main benefits of exercise is that it can be a positive release system for both physical stress as well as mental stress. Exercise can take the focus away from the game and ultimately provide a break in the day from all the other responsibilities. Whether you are an LPGA tour golfer or just a working mom, these same benefits apply. The game may be different but the demands are so similar that I find it hard to distinguish between the two, except that the tour players travel to exotic locations and we travel to Wal-Mart. The players on the tour struggle with their diets just like we do, they are faced with poor food choices, lots of “free” comfort foods and crazy work schedules that don’t always lead to the healthiest food choices. Most of these LPGA players realize that they must have a game plan not just for their golf game but also for their life plan. Most of us realize that if we leave eating and exercise to chance we will end up losing our health in the slot machine of life. You can only pull the handle so many times and hope that you get lucky, eventually your luck or your health runs out and there you are sad, lonely and wearing an outdated floral outfit from K-Mart...ohhh I just got the chills! Golf is a game of strategy and so is life, if you want to play the game successfully you must practice good habits and understand that sometimes you will be on top and sometimes you might be at the bottom. This is not a reason to quit, it’s just the way of life, how we manage our losses is far more important than the number of wins we achieve.

Okay, ladies here’s the deal exercise to many women is like a four letter word and I don’t mean golf. Why not rethink how you view exercise? Fitness does not have to take place in a gym it can take place just about anywhere. A great place to start might just be with the game of golf, you don’t have to wear spandex and you can talk to your girlfriends while you exercise! Sometimes all you need is a place to begin, why not make golf your starting point?

The golf swing itself is considered a total body athletic action, utilizing every muscle, ligament and joint in the body to execute the swing. As a result, you will find functional training which integrates the entire neuromuscular system into cross-specific exercises the most beneficial for playing golf. Here are 2 easy functional golf exercises you can do at home:

Hip Twister: Stand facing the mirror. Cross your hands over your shoulders. Rotate your hips right and left without moving your upper body. Reach maximum rotation but don’t force a stretch.

Cats and Dogs: Start in the quadruped (on all fours) position with your thighs and arms perpendicular to the floor. Without bending your elbows, try to lower (swayback) your spine creating the dog position and then lift or arch your spine up creating the cat

position. Repeat this back and forth and finish by finding a neutral (middle) position. Hold this neutral position by bracing your abdominals for two breathes. Repeat.

For more information on the LPGA go to LPGA.com. Special thanks to the Commissioner of the LPGA, Carolyn Bivens for her generosity of time and her insights into the female athlete.

*Carolyn is no longer the Commissioner as of 2011, but continues to spread her good will through her community involvement and philanthropy.

Patricia Tremblay ,B.S. and is a NSCA certified personal trainer and owns Physiques By PT, a personal training and consulting company specializing in on site fitness programs.