

The third article in a new series aimed at curing and preventing back trouble

So are you properly balanced?

Like the great Jack Nicklaus once said, "lively feet" are critical to a successful golf game. How often do we choose a golf shoe on the merit of aesthetics rather than support and performance enhancement? That's right, performance *enhancement*. A scientific study was published in March 2000 on the effects of orthotic intervention and clubhead velocity in experienced golfers. The results were surprising. There was an increase in Club Head Velocity (CHV) of five mph, or approximately five yards, after the golfers tested were fitted with custom-made, weight-bearing, flexible orthotics. These orthotics are custom-made moulds of the correct position that your foot should be in, rather than what they may be in. They then replace the inner sole of your golf shoe and assist the golfer/ athlete to attain optimal comfort, support and balance.

How often do we hear Butch Harmon and Ewen Murray on Sky, extolling the virtues of correct balance and weight shift. If the foundation of our structure is not balanced, we haven't a hope of producing that desired golf shot.

Shoe technology in golf is evolving, and manufacturers are beginning to realise the importance of stability and shock absorption. However, they can only go so far. It is important to understand what foot type you are, so that an appropriate shoe can be purchased.

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Feet can be divided into three types – high arch feet, flat feet, and neutral feet. High arch feet especially require shock absorption due to the high arch. Flat feet require a modified arch support and stability, and neutral feet, which are feet in the correct biomechanical position, may be able to use a lighter, more responsive/flexible shoe.

Abnormal foot function as well as a poor swing and lack of fitness can cause back pain, knee pain and shin pain. Abnormally functioning feet cannot absorb shock and therefore increase the stress on the lower limbs and back. An unstable foot is often associated with a restricted big toe joint. This can limit the movement of the pelvis and will alter the functioning of the spine.

As a result of the different foot types, feet may sometimes require a more sophisticated correction using orthotics. This is because a shoe can only resist some of the abnormal forces placed upon it and only a custom-made orthotic can truly change the foot's position. The foot orthoses should only be prescribed after an in-depth computerised gait analysis, as at the Gonstead Clinic, and they are made using a laser scan and computerised mill technology

BUYING TIPS

- 1 Buy your golf shoes at the end of the day when your feet may be slightly swollen.
- 2 Wear the socks that you are likely to wear on the course when purchasing your shoes
- 3 Ensure that your shoes have a breathable upper using one of the more advanced breathable membranes, such as Gortex. This is particularly important if your feet sweat.
- 4 If possible, buy two pairs of shoes to be used alternatively if your feet sweat.
- 5 Visit an experienced podiatrist for a foot assessment to identify any biomechanical irregularities which may seriously affect your balance.

rather than other less precise methods. These highly specialised shoe supports can also prevent many types of common golf injuries affecting the foot, leg and back.

Golfers such as Retief Goosen, Nick Faldo and Thomas Bjorn to name a few have undergone testing at the Gonstead Clinic. The results speak for themselves.

Shoes to look out for: Footjoy DryJoys and DryJoy P.R.O, Addidas Traxion Tour 3 stripe, and the new Nike TW Six. ●



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