

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING ON THE PGA TOUR

Scott Riehl Talks with The Bounce about Working with Golf's Elite Athletes

*Scott Riehl has been the Head Strength & Conditioning Coach for the PGA Tour over the past 6 years and is responsible for developing individualized training programs for tour players. Scott, who began using nuBound during last season's PGA Tour, sat down recently with **The Bounce** to discuss his strength and conditioning programs for athletes on the PGA Tour.*



nuBound **What do you do in your role as the Head Strength & Conditioning Coach for the PGA Tour? You're not like a team trainer--the PGA Tour golfers are all individual competitors traveling to different locations each week.**

Scott Riehl That's true. Each golfer who qualifies for the tour is an individual competing against the others for prize money in a series of 48 tournaments over a 45 week season.

My company, Stryker Physiotherapy Associates, are contracted by the PGA Tour to provide services to any of the tour players who'd like our help. There are over two hundred players on the tour, and any given tournament usually attracts about 150 players. We have ongoing programs with more than half the players on the Tour.

Each golfer's program begins with a 2 hour diagnostic session where I look at range of motion, speed, agility, strength etc. Once I understand a player's strengths and weaknesses I can develop a personalized program for them. There is no such thing as a one size fits all exercise program—it builds from a thorough understanding of where a player is and what they want to achieve.

nb **What does a typical week look like on the tour?**

sr There's a lot that happens before the Sunday finals. Monday is a travel day for everyone on the tour. Our

mobile gym facility, which is a 48 ft trailer that opens out on both sides (see photo), arrives and is set up. The players then have Tuesday to play a practice round, followed by a pro-am tournament on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday are the qualifying rounds and those who make the cut go on to play for money on Saturday and Sunday.

Our training programs will go through a weekly phases with some heavier resistance training on Tuesday and Wednesday, which allows time for recovery before the competitive rounds. On the competitive days I'll see my athletes for stretching and warm up about 1-1/2 hours prior to their tee time. After warm up with me, they'll then head to the driving range and the practice greens. As well, we'll do warm down sessions with the guys who've finished their round for the day.

nb **How has the level of athleticism changed in the game of golf?**

sr There've been major changes in golf at the professional level with the almost everyone now participating in a conditioning program, either with us or privately. Of course, there have always been golfers who stayed in great shape and played better golf because of it. For example, Gary Player has worked out for the last 50 years and is still in great shape. The difference now is that everyone does it and it has raised the level of play.

Retaining flexibility, motion and endurance make a big difference to a player on the tour. With the top players earning several million dollars per year, adding even a single year onto their career is significant.

The big divide now in the sport is between amateurs and the pros. We need to raise awareness among the vast public that golf is a sport and not just a game. Too many amateurs arrive at the course, swing a club once or twice and head to the tee box. The pros appreciate the difference proper conditioning and warm up can have on their results.

nb **What's the work load like on a tour player? What kind of stress are they under?**

sr There's a lot more than most people realize. The season starts in mid-January and runs through the first week of November. Players will be out there for five, six or seven rounds of golf each week. For the players who don't make the cut (and thus, have Saturday and Sunday off), there is every incentive to get out on another course for more practice, so they can make the cut the next week.

On top of the stress from playing, just staying healthy adds another dimension of stress. Players are in and out of airplanes and airports and they move to a new hotel every week. They are continually exposed to germs, which leads to many colds and infections.

Additionally, they are constantly eating at restaurants on the road and can't control their own diet, which adds another layer of complication.

The net result is a serious ongoing challenge. Players are constantly in recovery from their physical exertions and similarly they are constantly fighting off infections, all on a suspect nutritional base.

nb What does your personal physical activity look like? What sports do you play?

sr Well, golf of course. I don't get many chances to play while I'm working, but I love to play when I have some free time. However, my personal preference is endurance sports. I love running, swimming and biking. I race 5Ks, 10Ks and some half marathons and I participated in several biathlons last year. I'm looking forward to getting in a triathlon this next year.

nb You've been taking nuBound since the 2006 PGA Tour season. What are your reactions?

sr I can absolutely say that it's provided real benefits for me. I worked 31 events last year and didn't get sick even once. In contrast, over the past five years I came down with something bad once or twice each season.

When I'm working, that means six day weeks where I arrive at the facility before sunup. I'm busy more or less the entire day until dusk. And being busy means being face to face with a continuous stream of clients. Staying healthy in the face of this schedule is a great result!

I'm very into nuBound! It's worked well for me personally and I've gotten the word out to my clients as well. As I said, any thing they can do to maintain even a small edge makes a very big difference for them. nuBound provides that kind of edge!