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# WANT TO TAKE STROKES OFF YOUR GAME?

By Miriam Richter



### Try Pilates

Athletes from a variety of professional sports are beginning to incorporate Pilates into their fitness regimes but golfers have embraced it eagerly. Butch Harmon has stated that Pilates has added twenty yards to his drives. Rich Beem trained with Pilates prior to winning the 2002 PGA Championship. Even Tiger takes private Pilates lessons. Why? Let's take a look...

Pilates believed that the mind controls the body. The mind can visualize an exercise; through concentration and repetition (practice) neural patterns are established. That is muscle memory so valued by golfers. One of the most common complaints from golfers is lower back pain, just ask my golfer husband! Low back pain caused by muscle imbalances. Golf by definition creates muscle imbalances; after all you are repeatedly bending over the ball and stressing your body in one direction. A good golf swing requires that the spine and pelvis be in alignment; this alignment is both static and fluid. Static as when the golfer addresses the ball and fluid during the swing. This alignment is key to keeping muscles in balance. Pilates exercises focus on alignment of the spine and pelvis which provides the most advantageous relationship of muscle and joints.

Pilates believed that breathing united the mind and body, the breath focuses the mind, oxygenates the body and allows for flowing movements. Pilates stresses deep breathing which helps to release tension and get the body ready for movement. The breath is tied to core stability. Pilates taught that the core (trunk) needed to be stable in order for extremities to move efficiently, "central stability before distal mobility". Core muscles are all of the breathing muscles of the back and abdomen including "the often neglected deep skeletal abdominal muscles and the pelvic floor muscles. The core muscles are drawn in during exhalation thus creating a stable trunk. Dave Phillips co-founder of the Titlelist Performance Institute in California has noted that "the best golfers have strong, stable lower bodies and flexible, mobile upper bodies. Their swings progress from the lower body to the trunk, the shoulders and lastly the arms", an example of working from the core outward.

Golfers are now looking to widen their swing arc for more power and consistency. Pilates exercises teach lengthening arms and legs away from the trunk thus creating a wider swing.

So, if you want to be in the company of Butch, Rich, and Tiger check out Pilates classes.

Miriam Richter is owner of Pilates Bodyworks of Coral Springs. She is a registered nurse, certified Personal Trainer and certified Pilates Instructor. E-mail her at [richter@theparklender.com](mailto:richter@theparklender.com).



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- Joseph Pilates

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