

Straight talk on posture

By James Achenbach

Carlsbad, Calif.

Roger Fredericks, director of instruction at La Costa Resort, is passionate about posture.

Since 1986, Fredericks has been combining swing instruction with fitness and flexibility training. For 25 years, posture has remained at the center of his teaching philosophy.

"Most golfers are intimidated to work out," Fredericks said. "You don't have to work out like an NFL football player to get in golf shape. It's not that hard."

"But you can't play consistent golf with bad posture. . . . With today's modern lifestyle, we spend too much time sitting, whether it's behind a desk or in a car or in front of a television."

"The way we live affects the way we play golf, so we have more golfers with bad posture than ever before. I believe the most neglected aspect of physical training and golf instruction is analyzing an individual's posture."

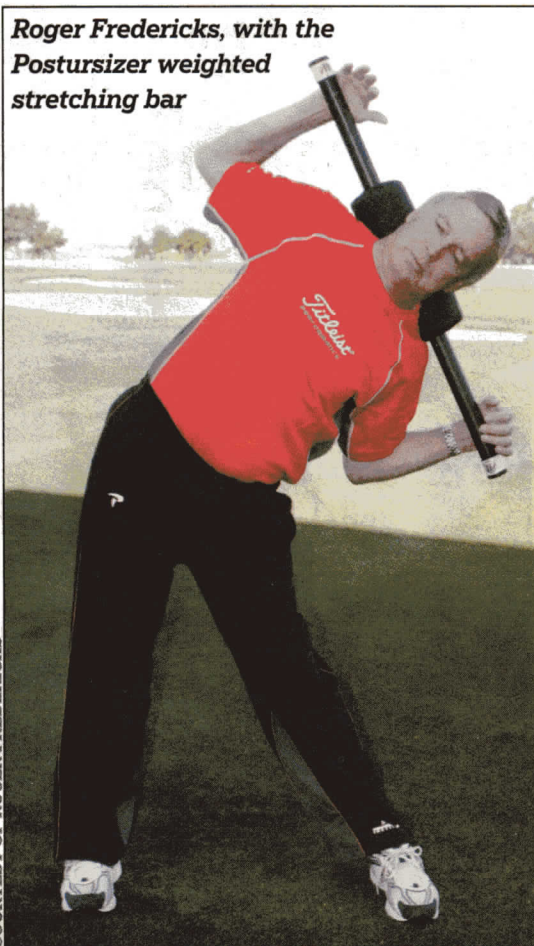
Tommy Jacobs, 76, was runner-up at the 1964 U.S. Open and 1966 Masters. He won four PGA Tour events and played on the 1965 U.S. Ryder Cup team.

"I became a sloucher," Jacobs said. "Roger showed me a picture of a guy with really bad posture and said, 'That's what you're going to look like.' I've been following Roger's advice ever since."

Doug McIntosh, 66, is a publisher of printed golf-course guides in California. He said Fredericks turned his life around.

"My posture was bad," McIntosh said. "Even though I got my handicap down to a 3 at one point, I never felt comfortable with my setup. It was

Roger Fredericks, with the Postursizer weighted stretching bar



COURTESY OF ROGER FREDERICKS

because of my posture. Now, for the first time, I can stand up comfortably over the ball. My posture problems are gone."

How does Fredericks change poor posture?

It is important to train the body so that it can relax, stretch and re-establish the natural alignment that goes along with good posture, Fredericks said. The joints of the body line up – the shoulder joints over the hips, the hips over the knees, the knees over the ankles.

Flexibility and posture go hand in hand.

"So many people, when they think of good posture, they think of standing tall," he said. "It's not that simple. You have to relax the front muscles before you do the strengthening of the back."

Too often, Fredericks observes, golfers today want to get stronger, so they head directly to the gym and weights.

"Administering a strengthening program initially, without the necessary flexibility, can be a huge mistake," he said. "It can make the situation worse."

Posture and flexibility come first; strength second.

Toward that goal, Jacobs and

Posture tips

Here are two suggestions from Roger Fredericks to help golfers achieve better posture and avoid tightening on the course:

>> First thing in the morning, stand tall against a wall for two to three minutes. Place a rolled-up towel behind your lower back. This will start the process of training your body to find its proper posture. Repeat for two to three minutes before bed. Follow this routine daily.

>> When you feel your body tightening on the course, stand on the edge of a motorized golf cart. Place your weight on the balls of your feet and allow your heels to sink down over the edge of the cart. This will stretch your calves, hamstrings, glutes and upper-shoulder muscles. This exercise also can be done on a stair step.

McIntosh are using a training device called the Postursizer in their training programs. It is a variable-weight bar with a thick, specifically constructed foam section in the middle.

The Postursizer (\$99 at www.fredericksgolf.com) is held behind the neck and shoulders. It is designed to trigger – or exercise – the muscles around the neck, shoulders and upper back. As these muscles are stimulated and strengthened, the head ultimately should move back to its natural position and the chest should expand and open.

Fredericks preaches that golfers simply cannot make certain moves or turns without correct posture. He said golfers with a head-forward, rounded-shoulder posture are handicapping themselves more than they realize.

"When a golfer's head juts forward 4 or 5 inches, he has added 40 to 50 pounds of stress on the upper and lower back muscles – not to mention the hips, knees and feet," he said. "Imagine carrying around a 50-pound bowling ball on the back of your neck while you're swinging a golf club. When you see a forward head position accompanied with rounded shoulders, that person invariably has muscle tightness and restrictions in the chest and back muscles."

To Fredericks, there is truth to the old adage: Your body is your swing. ○