

PRODUCTS AT WORK

In the Swing

ATM2 technology enhances player performance on pro golf tour.

BY JEFF BANASZAK, PT, CSCS

Many touring golf pros have turned to medical professionals to enhance their games, gain a competitive edge, and prevent and manage acute and chronic injuries. With over 40 regular tour events each year, golf pros must be able to respond to the demands of playing some of the most difficult courses in the world, and they must play at a consistently high level. The stress of traveling and living on the road adds to the physical demands of the game. In fact, pro golfers, on average, sustain two injuries per year that directly affect their participation and performance.

For the past three years, I've been traveling full-time on the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) tour as a physical therapist and conditioning coach representing the company I developed, Inspired Golf Conditioning Inc. (IGC). IGC has provided conditioning programs for PGA tour members since 1999 and currently staffs each event site with a strength and conditioning coach who's responsible for pre- and post-round training regimes of many players. My focus is to provide a program for each pro golfer that addresses their respective rehabilitative needs, including injury management and prevention.

What's amazing is the way a new technology—active therapeutic movement (ATM)—has helped treat many of my professional clients. The ATM2 from BackProject Corp. in San Jose, Calif., is a unique piece of medical and performance-based equipment. It's designed to manage acute pain by using stabilization belts in a weight-bearing posture. These belts can reposition the involved body segment to eliminate previously painful movements. These movements immediately become painless. With the combination of this repositioning and segmental compression, you can achieve maximum results.

From the original design of the ATM2 professional model, which I use at my facilities in Florida, the developers have designed a smaller, lighter, portable model. I can use this new

model while traveling. The new ATM2-MD (mini-door model) weighs 32 pounds and can hang on a door or you can bolt it to an existing wall. And it essentially accomplishes the same things as the larger Pro model, but in a portable version.

When I introduced the ATM2-MD at the Bell Canadian Open in Vancouver, Canada, tour members Brian Gay, Pat Perez, D.A. Points and Greg Owen tried it. Since then, Owen has made it a regular component of his performance program.

The premise behind the active therapeutic movement is that you can enhance or improve any motion by initially stabilizing and repositioning the particular body area that you're retraining. Then, once the area is stabilized, you can implement resisted exercises for the movement you're trying to perfect or change. The outcomes are immediate and self-sustaining. In my business, athletes expect immediate changes in motion that can be directly related to the golf swing motion. This may include greater joint mobility to key areas, such as the spine and hips.

It all has to do with changing or resetting muscle movement patterns at the central nervous system level (CNS). The same methodologies or concepts can be attributed to similar work by clinicians and researchers such as Mulligan, McKenzie and Paris. Essentially, the CNS will reset impaired activation strategies (muscle movement patterns) if previous movements that cause pain become pain-free.

In my work, this same concept and the immediate results it provides hold true. Using the holding of the stabilization belts temporarily sustains the functional limits of each movement. But during this same movement sequence, resisted exercises reset that same muscle activation to become more enhanced. The results are immediate and the carryover is long lasting.

In addition to these therapeutic applications, I've developed sequences of active and active-assisted stretching that employ the ATM2. In fact, I teach these same techniques through an educational course I developed.

This technology can change and improve movements if you're a professional golfer or weekend warrior, or if you have chronic back pain.

For the golfers I treat, the results show. The combination of using the ATM2-MD with these specific stretching sequences has allowed my pro athletes to distinguish themselves from the rest of the playing field. ■



Jeff Banaszak puts pro golfer Greg Owen through an exercise routine using the ATM2-MD system.

Courtesy/BackProject

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