



Fire!play

Scotland's King James II once banned golf because it was proving a distraction for his archers, who were supposed to be honing their skills to fight the English. But more than 500 years later, golf is as addictive as ever...and in WA, one of the most accessible sports going. **text** norman burns

It's a 60-million strong "army" worldwide. Impervious to blistering heat, freezing cold, pelting rain, or pretty much anything nature can throw at 'em (well, lightning excepted perhaps).

But these aren't soldiers slavishly following orders – these are golfers, the most determined (mad?), focused group of sports men and women on the planet, who *voluntarily* will head off on the hottest, coldest, wettest or windiest day in a battle of wits, and stamina, against – themselves.

For this is one sport where, even in a tournament, you are really only ever competing with yourself. And that's the appeal of modern golf, invented by the Scots some 800 years ago (one theory is it dates back to shepherds knocking stones into rabbit holes on what is now the site of St Andrews) and capable, to this day of driving its exponents – good, bad, "hacker" or professional – to the depths of despair or giddy heights of sheer delight, often within the same round or even the same hole.

In Australia, more than 1.7 million people are

hooked on the game; Western Australia alone has 120,000 registered players. But many, many more are happy to head out to the public courses and have a "whack around".

Make no mistake though – golf is a difficult game at the best of times, which is why anyone thinking of taking it up, or improving their game, needs professional help.



DID YOU KNOW?

There is a strict line between amateur and professional golf. Prizes in amateur events (club championships and the like) are limited to \$1200 in value; if you accept something over the value of this, you lose your amateur status.

The object of the game is – or should be – simple; try to get a non-moving ball into each of the nine or 18 holes on a course in as few shots possible. A golf course has a par rating, normally 72, but taking just 72 shots to complete a round is usually the domain of the very, very select few, professionals and the like.

However, golf's handicap system, in theory gives even a beginner a fighting chance of racking up a good score; you are basically allowed a certain number of "extra" shots in a round, which you can deduct to get your actual net score.

It is reckoned that fewer than 10 percent of ALL recreational golfers break 100 shots for a round, so a good target if you are just starting out is the magical ton. As you get better, you set your sights on a lower net score and so on.

But starting out in golf can be a daunting experience; standing on the first tee of a public course for the first time, with a gallery keenly watching, is akin to turning up for your first day of work in your pyjamas...

So confidence, married to sound technique, is

DID YOU KNOW?

Former world No.1 tennis star Ivan Lendl turned to golf after retiring. Lendl, 50, now has a handicap of 0 and competes on the celebrity circuit in the US. Three of his five daughters are also top amateur golfers.

essential. And learning good golf habits, or eradicating bad ones, is where teaching professionals such as Perth's David Milne come in.

David has guided some of the top amateur and professional players in the state (at the time of going to press he was in Arizona helping up-and-coming WA pro Michael Sim prepare for the World Matchplay Championship) but has pupils of all ages and abilities at his Joondalup Golf Academy.

He sums up the beauty of golf thus: "You can play on your own, or with partners. You can play socially, or if you're competitive, against someone who is a lot better because the handicap system is the best and fairest in any sport played.



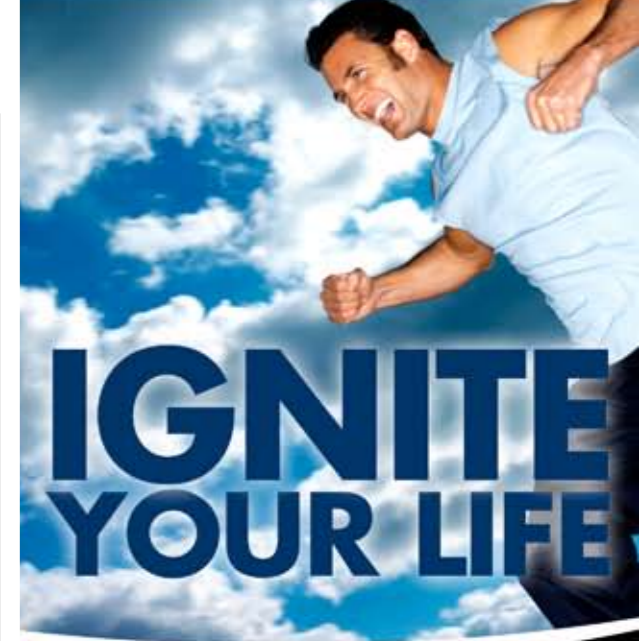
HERS: (above, clockwise from bottom) adidas ClimaCool 3/4 pants in black (\$119); Footjoy Contour Shoes in white/black (\$199); adidas ClimaCool Polo in white (\$89); Slip on golf visor (\$19); adidas ClimaCool polo in pink (\$89).

HIS: (above right, clockwise from bottom) Nike Pinstripe slacks in navy (\$129); Nike Tiger Woods collection cap, in white (\$49); Nike Tiger Woods polos in red and white (\$139); Nike Zoom Elite golf shoes in white/brown (\$269).

Thanks to Mike Glover, at Golf Box East Perth (cnr Newcastle and Lord Sts, (08) 9421 8000) for supplying the golf equipment and clothing. For details on other Golf Box stores, see golfbox.com.au or email sales@golfbox.com.au.



TOP GEAR: Callaway 10" Tour Bag (rrp \$499); clubs clockwise from left: Ping Wack-e putter (\$269); Cleveland DST Driver (\$379); Callaway FT-i-z Driver (\$549); Callaway Diablo Edge Driver (\$369); TaylorMade r9 460 Driver (\$499).



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“(Golf’s) a fantastic networking tool for anyone in business... and if you want to find out the true personality of someone, play a round of golf and it will show itself!”

But, he says, to improve in the sport it’s essential to get the right advice from the start.

“The most common mistake people make when starting out is taking advice from friends and spouses, as although it is given with good intent it normally creates wrong concepts – which take a long time to undo.”



BY THE NUMBERS

12,000,000,000 estimated drop in stock value (US dollars) of Tiger Woods’ sponsors in 2009 in wake of world No.1’s sex scandal

1,000,000,000 US dollars, career earnings of Tiger Woods (PSS*)

540,000,000 number of golf balls sold in the US each year

150,000,000 US dollars, cost of building Liberty National Golf Course, New York

29,200,000 estimated number of rounds played in Australia each year

23,000,000 US dollars, career earnings of former women’s world No.1 Annika Sorenstam

1,200,000 number of registered golfers in Australia

500,000 US dollars, joining fee of Liberty National Golf Club, New York

470,000 estimated number of “social” golfers in Australia

110,800 number of registered golfers in WA

32,000 US dollars, cost of world’s most expensive clubs, platinum and gold-plated Five Star 14-piece set made by Honma, Japan

20,000 number of courses in the US

9750 US dollars, cost of Louis Vuitton Damier Geant golf bag

1566 number of golf clubs in Australia

1 best possible score on a single hole in golf i.e an ace, or hole-in-one. On a par-five (it has happened!) this is known as a condor, double-albatross or triple-eagle

*Pre-Sex Scandal

Choosing your clubs, too, should be something done in consultation with a professional.

“The most common mistake is buying clubs off the rack, rather than consulting with a fully qualified PGA member who is trained to fit the clubs to your specifications.

“Incorrectly fitted clubs are the main cause of golfers with major swing issues, caused by making compensations to accommodate the clubs that don’t suit them,” says David. He suggests new golfers are better off starting with group lessons.

“In general new golfers learn better in small clinics, as the dynamics of learning in a group is less intimidating than individual lessons. Plus, it is more cost-effective as equipment is also supplied during the course... individual lessons are tailored to fast-track someone who has specific goals and wants measurable results.”

There’s also a myth that you don’t need to be fit to play golf (OK, ditch those mental images of a chain-smoking wild-living pre-stomach stapled John Daly for the moment); for a start, the average length of a course is around 6000m; that’s six kilometres of solid walking, and a whole lot more if you’re an exponent of “army golf” (hitting the ball left, right, left, right).

You need power, flexibility, strength and stamina in equal doses. Golf is a sport where you need to be fully concentrated and relaxed at the same time. So what exercises are good for golf?



Where to play

Perth and surrounds has some fantastic courses open to the public. Here are 10 of the best:

ARALUEN GOLF RESORT, (08) 9397 9000, araluenc.com.au.

BURSWOOD PARK, (08) 9362 7576, burswoodparkgolfcourse.com.

COLLIER PARK, (08) 9450 6488, collierparkgolf.com.au.

JOONDALUP, (08) 9400 8811, joondalupresort.com.au.

DID YOU KNOW?

The odds of making a hole-in-one vary, according to a study published in authoritative US journal *Golf Digest*, on the quality of the player. For a professional tour player, this is 3000 to 1; a low-handicapper 5000 to 1; an average player, 12,000 to 1.

Melbourne-based Ramsay McMaster, a world authority on golf-specific physiotherapy, suggests cycling, running and swimming as “golf-complementary” activities.

Swimming is particularly beneficial because it is low-impact on joints, is not weight bearing and, provided your technique is sound, encourages good trunk rotation – essential in the golf swing.

But, says Ramsay, pushing big weights in the gym, in order to “bulk up” will do more harm than good when it comes to golf.

A regular stretching routine is probably the golfer’s best friend but don’t overdo it, he says.

For more on golf-specific exercises, see ramsaymcmaster.com.au.

POINT WALTER, (08) 9330 3262, pointwaltergolf.com.au.

SUN CITY COUNTRY CLUB, YANCHEP, (08) 9561 1352, suncitygolf.org.au.

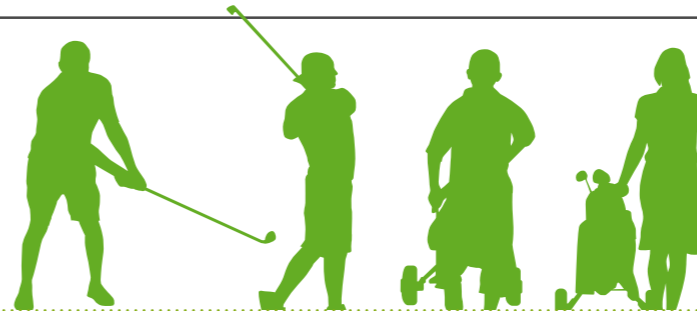
THE CUT, (08) 9582 4444, the-cut.com.au.

THE VINES RESORT AND COUNTRY CLUB, (08) 9297 0777, thevines.com.au.

WEMBLEY GOLF COMPLEX, near to completing a \$12 million upgrade of its facilities, including an 80-bay, fully automated driving range (pictured), the most modern and biggest of its kind in Australia. (08) 9387 7272, wembleygolf.com.au.

WHALEBACK GOLF COURSE, (08) 9457 8999, whalebackgolf.com.au.

For details on more courses, see golftourismwa.com. WA also has some of the finest private courses in Australia; many are open to “green fee” players. Check with clubs directly or see wagolf.com.au for more details. For lessons, check out davidmilnegolfacademy.com.au, (08) 9301 2599, or contact your local golf professional.



WALK THE WALK, TALK THE TALK

– a guide to golfing slang.

Aiming juice: Alcoholic refreshments.

Adolf Hitler: Two shots in a bunker.

Army golf: Inconsistent shots, “left-right, left-right”.

Backdoor: The part of the cup opposite the ball on the green. To reach, a putt must curl around most of the hole before dropping in.

Dance floor: The green.

Drive for show, putt for dough: Booming drives might be spectacular but it’s the putts that bring in the big bucks.

Fried egg: A ball that’s buried in sand, with a ring around it created on impact.

Gimme: A conceded putt. Shortened from the phrase “give it to me”.

Grip it and rip it: Taking a shot without a practice swing.

Hacker: A shocking golfer.

Hit it fat: To hit the ground behind the ball first so the shot has no spin and doesn’t go the desired distance.

Jail: The ball is hit into an area nearly impossible to hit out of; deep rough, trees, etc.

Make the turn: Going from playing the front nine holes to the back nine.

Moving day: The third day of a four-day tournament when players set themselves up for the final crack at the title the next day.

Mulligan: A “free” shot (ie your drive goes straight into a water hazard and you declare it a “mulligan” and have another drive without taking a penalty). Never legal in competitive play.

Rainmaker: A ball hit very high.

Short grass: The fairway.

Snowman: Eight on a hole.

The back: The final nine holes on a golf course.

Top it: To strike the top half of the ball with the bottom edge of an iron.

Up and down: To recover after a bad shot(s) and make par on a hole.

Worm burner: A low shot that buzzes along just centimetres from the ground.

Embarrassed by your smile?

You’d be amazed at the number of people who avoid smiling, or try to hide their smile. They know their smile isn’t “working” for them and simply do not feel their best.

If you are suffering from chipped, cracked, gapped, worn-down, yellow, crooked, or missing teeth, cosmetic dentistry may be the answer.



Suzi is a happy client of *Advanced Dental Artistry*, NOT a stock photography model. Results may vary from person to person.

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