

MUSCLE MYTHS FOR MRS. AND MISS



LATELY, I'VE BEEN NOTICING MORE finely defined biceps on the golf course, and that's during my club's ladies' day, so it's not men I'm admiring.

How things have changed. We used to feel "muscles" meant "masculine" and aspired to a softer image. Not today. The toned look is in and there is no doubt it helps our golf game.

My last personal trainer was not only an expert in kinesiology but also a golf pro. She had me lifting barbells, bench pressing, doing cable rows and much more in our work-out sessions. Then she'd give me a treat: Special movements using weights that mimicked the golf swing. Alas, she moved to Alberta, and my fitness and golf game are feeling like they moved with her.

I asked Sean Casey, ClubLink Academy's Head Teaching Professional, for his thoughts on strength training for golfers. "I think a lot of people and certainly golfers come up with excuses as to why they don't work out," he told me. "The days of golfers not working out because it will ruin their game are over." Then he pointed out two major myths.

Myth No. 1: Strength training isn't good for golfers because a muscle-bound body ruins the short game and makes the swing less smooth. "Look at Tiger Woods, Annika Sorenstam and most of the top players in the world," Casey said. "They have packed on muscle through heavy workouts in an effort to increase their power. This allows them to hit the ball further and also allows them to hit shots others cannot. This in no way affects their ability to have a smooth swing and a good short game."

Myth No. 2: Getting in shape is too expensive, thus unaffordable to many with the cost of gym membership, trainer, equipment and so forth. To this, Casey says, "You can't afford to not get in shape. A back injury could end your season and possibly your golf career. You have to accept that being better at golf and being in better shape is an ongoing, lifelong journey. Stop looking for the quick fix and make working out part of your routine. You can get a great workout with a pair of sneakers, set of dumbbells and a balance ball."

Casey said the biggest issue with his women clients is they tend to avoid weight training in fear of bulking up. Pilates, yoga, running and aerobics are popular with them but not the heavy dumbbells. I would have to agree. My women friends and I certainly have participated more in those exercises than lifting weights. But Casey says strength equals power and that means greater club-head speed. We just can't hit the ball further unless we work out.

So bless those bulging biceps. The bonus is that a workout with weights burns lots of calories and that's music to any woman's ears.

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Strength training and conditioning took Annika Sorenstam's game to a higher level and it can do the same for you... and burn calories at the same time!

Photo: AP Photo/Chip English