

# GOLF “MOST-ABILITY”: PART II BALANCING THE FACTS

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The word “Most-Ability” has become a popular term in recent years and is derived from combining two more common terms, “Mobility” and “Stability”. This word is credited to the teachings of well known Physical Therapist, Author and Educator Gary Gray also known as “The Father of Functional Training”. Although more slang than a technical term, “Most-Ability” is an accurate descriptive when discussing joint function as the fitness and medical communities alike have come to realize that mobility is directly related to stability. In most cases a joint’s range of motion will not long exceed its ability to stabilize its maximal range, as any additional joint movement beyond this represents instability and an increased risk of injury. In past articles we have discussed these facts related to different topics such as why stretching to create muscle flexibility is not effective without reciprocal strength training. Also related to “Most-Ability” we presented why specific forms of manual therapies focused on creating greater joint mobility through releasing adhesions, treating fibrotic muscle or breaking down scar tissue, may have better effect when complemented with other treatment techniques designed to improve proprioception, increase strength, and promote joint stability. In this article we will discuss how “Most-Ability” relates to one’s balance and different forms of balance training that may help improve overall performance in specific sports and in life itself.

Increasing one’s stabilization and balance abilities has long been recognized as a valuable component of an athlete’s training program and for some, a critical element for success in their specific sport. For a sport such as Golf, where both feet are typically kept in contact with the ground, balance training is often overlooked as an attribute that could contribute to overall performance. Although it does not compare to a gymnast performing back flips on a narrow balance beam, or a surfer balancing on his board while battling rough ocean waves, there are specific balance demands contained in the Golf swing and could be enhanced through proper training. However, when training to improve balance, there are some basic yet rarely applied facts that must first be understood in order to choose the right type of balance exercises that will match the specific reflex actions needed for the specific sport.

Balance demands can be grouped into two basic categories that each elicits different reflex reactions from the neuromuscular system. The two general types are known as “body-righting reflexes” and “tilting-response reflexes” with each requiring different stabilization strategies and train different neural pathways. Once these facts are taken into account, it should be easy to understand why one form of balance training can only improve its specific related reflex actions and will not offer much towards improvements for the other type. It is also relatively easy to understand the difference between the two general types of balance training without having to understand all the complicated structures and systems the body utilizes to generate appropriate reflexes and how it actually adapts to improve reaction time and motor control when exposed to proper training.

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“Body-Righting-Reflexes” tend to dominate when the body is moving on or across a stable surface such as the ground, a basket ball court or even a balance beam as in one of the aforementioned examples. Therefore these types of reflex actions are by far the most common we develop and utilize to meet the predominance of the balance demands we face during life activities and for most sports.

Most life and sport activities we perform including Golf, take place on a relatively stable surface. Therefore training exercises should be selected that also challenge balance working off a stable base in order to train the correct specific reflex actions and elicit the appropriate neuromuscular adaptations. This ensures for more effective transference from exercise to life or within the sport we wish to improve. Exercises can be trained on a reduced surface area, on one foot, with unequal loads, or even with the eyes closed to better challenge and develop “body-righting-reflexes” if deemed appropriate for the person’s needs and abilities.



“Tilting-Response-Reflexes” tend to dominate when the base of Support is unstable or also in movement such as standing in a Canoe, riding a horse or balancing on a surf board as again mentioned in an above example. These types of reflex actions are less common and typically require specific environmental components that are difficult to reproduce other than when doing the activity itself.

Although very popular, the use of exercises while balancing on Wobble boards, foam rollers, stability disks, Bosus, or Swiss balls are unlikely to elicit adaptations that transfer much towards meeting sport specific “tilting response” demands. Further, such training choices offer even far less likelihood of helping the body to improve balance for any of the more common “body-righting” reflex actions demanded in life and for most sports including Golf.

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This is not to say that use of these various balance tools that have flooded the industry have no benefit at all. In fact, use of such tools particularly in group training has attracted more people and gained more participants in recent years. When implemented, these tools can increase the challenge of the class or workout, help burn more calories, and make training fun and more enjoyable for those looking for different exercise formats. For these reasons balance devices have a legitimate place in fitness even if they are not technically the best choice for developing functional balance.

The point of this article as is with all of our “Ortho-KineticsR for Golf” articles is not to attempt to place judgment on any product or personal philosophy. But rather it is our aim to simply present the facts on all such related topics dealing with testing, treating or training the body so that our readers will be better informed to make better choices. So as related to balance training, it is important to take away from this article to be sure to match the specific type of training for the specific goal you desire to obtain. Armed with just the basic facts it is easier to avoid being confused by the marketing hype and claims attached to tools, devices or techniques dealing with “balance training” or “core training” that make promises for results they simply have no way of physiologically delivering.

Equally important we must point out is that balance of any type begins with the proper proportion of joint “Most-ability” throughout each joint of the body. For example if the mobility or stability of the foot is lacking, that same side hip as well as the entire spine will be compromised and forced to develop compensation strategies in order to balance when standing or moving off that foot. In such scenarios that are more common than not, these such balance challenges can not be totally corrected by any exercise selection or training program alone. “Most-ability” of any limited joint will most often also require some ongoing accurate assessment and periodic specific treatments or manual therapies to better mobilize and stabilize it. Only when the joint limitations have been addressed can the rest of the body be reeducated and retrained to eliminate compensation and improve balance through corrective exercise. As always, we would like to extend an offer for all NTPGA members to experience a complementary Ortho-KineticsR Assessment and receive a tailored corrective exercise program that best serves your needs and helps you to achieve your goals including of course, improving your Golf game.

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