

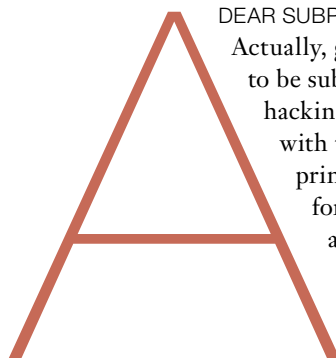
# Helping Clients Achieve Ease in Movement

By Art Riggs



DEAR ART,  
I quite enjoyed your article about working at the end range of motion using examples from yoga. I work on a good number of Scottish golfers near Edinburgh. Do you have any suggestions to bring me up to par on using these principles?

—SUBPAR



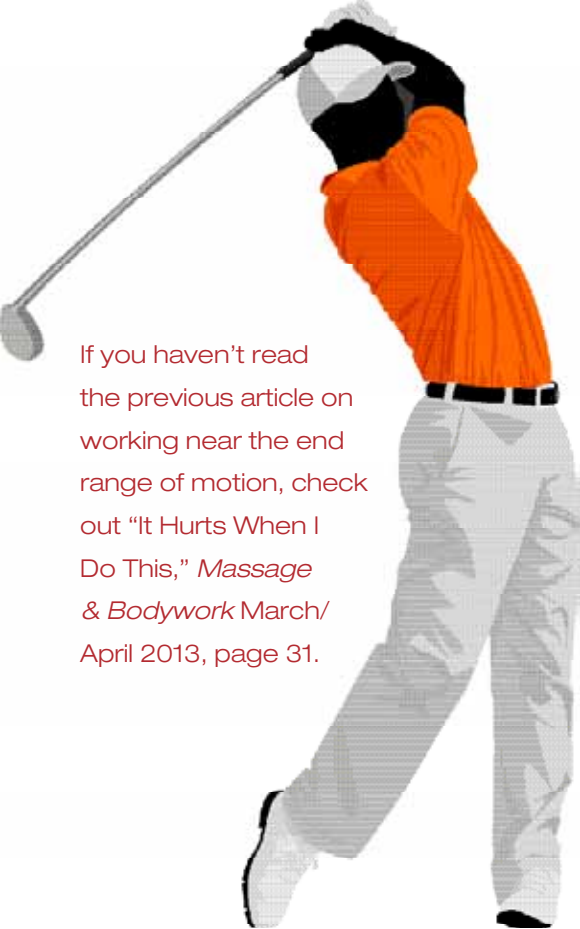
DEAR SUBPAR,  
Actually, golf is one area where we want our clients to be subpar. Indeed, having done my share of hacking up the links, I quite enjoy helping golfers with their flexibility and performance. The principles that follow are perfectly applicable for any client wishing for more flexibility and ease in movement, not just golfers. Virtually everyone can benefit from work in the nonneutral position. Remember that you can then generalize these principles to any activity depending on its movement patterns.

The key to a good golf swing is a smooth connection between the different body segments, but also differentiation between the segments so they can generate force independently from each other in different rotational patterns. One of the best things to do is differentiate the shoulders from the hips, which will allow for greater rotation of the body in the backswing and follow-through, and open the chest and free the arms to swing freely.

## THE BACKSWING

To prepare the hips for rotation to the rear, I always work bilaterally to free the trochanter area, iliotibial band, and adductors so the legs don't impede pelvic rotation. Progressing up from there, any work to free tight muscles and fascia around the sacrum and the habitually tight multifidus and rotatores muscles in the iliolumbar area will allow the lumbar vertebrae to rotate independently from the pelvis.

The key to improving pelvic rotation and differentiation from the shoulder girdle is to rotate the pelvis in one direction while



If you haven't read the previous article on working near the end range of motion, check out "It Hurts When I Do This," *Massage & Bodywork* March/April 2013, page 31.

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stabilizing the shoulder girdle in the opposite rotational pattern, working with either the large muscle groups such as the gluteals and latissimus dorsi, or with the small vertebral muscles that may be restricting lumbar and lower-thoracic rotation up the spine.

In this example (Image 1), I am stabilizing the shoulder girdle in a stretched position that a right-handed golfer would need for a full posterior rotation. The top leg is positioned forward, and most of my intention is to free the pelvic girdle to rotate anteriorly in relation to the shoulders by freeing the posterior pelvic muscles and lumbar spine (think of wringing out a towel), and working along the anterior abdomen to free the abdominal obliques. Lengthening any fascia along the right side would also be helpful.

You can reverse this rotational pattern on either side by moving the bottom knee forward and bringing the top leg back, freeing any anterior restrictions while rotating the right shoulder forward to counter this rotation in the thorax.

Now that you have mobilized the pelvic girdle, we move to freeing the shoulder girdle to rotate posteriorly (Image 2). Keeping the top leg forward to stabilize the pelvis into an anterior rotation, it is simple to rotate the upper thoracic area and chest to the rear for a long and fluid backswing. Lengthen the chest fascia, serratus anterior, and pectoralis major, while at the same time freeing the anterior deltoid and biceps, and working with external rotation of the arm.

#### A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO MOVEMENT

My students and I have found it incredibly effective to work with people upright in the gravitational field to duplicate the actual activities or life situations where they encounter restrictions, whether for dance, sports, yoga, or everyday work activities.

In Image 4, sitting allows for the pelvis to be stabilized while working with the posterior tissues of the shoulder girdle that prevent a full turn to the rear of

the opposite side, thus complementing your work from the previous example in the front of the chest. You can lengthen the rhomboids to allow the scapula to glide laterally over the ribs, or work more specifically with the rotator cuff, the tiny intervertebral muscles associated with immobile thoracic vertebrae and ribs, or the latissimus and broad fascial lines down the back to the iliac crest.

Of course, you may use a shotgun approach and work the opposite side by reversing these directions, but the golf swing is very asymmetrical in its movement. With experience, you will learn how to talk to clients about their challenges: their tight areas, their front/back restrictions, and how they adjust to various situations of backswing and follow-through. Every golfer I've worked on in this manner has loved the results.

Good luck, and stay warm up there near Edinburgh. **m&b**

**6** Art Riggs teaches at the San Francisco School of Massage and is the author of the textbook *Deep Tissue Massage: A Visual Guide to Techniques* (North Atlantic Books, 2007), which has been translated into seven languages, and the seven-volume DVD series *Deep Tissue Massage and Myofascial Release: A Video Guide to Techniques*. Visit his website at [www.deeptissuemassage.com](http://www.deeptissuemassage.com).

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