

# Gyrotonic on the Green

Improve your golf game by reprogramming dysfunctional movement patterns, strengthening the core and improving flexibility.

BY SUSAN GAINES // PHOTOS BY MARSHALL FRANKLIN LONG

Gyrotonic is being hailed by many as the “new Pilates.” While offering some of the same benefits as Pilates—development of core strength and power to generate movement throughout the body—Gyrotonic is distinctly different in several ways.

The exercises, typically performed in one-on-one sessions on special equipment, encourage spiraling from the center of the body, and opening of the shoulders and hips—both keys to playing a good game of golf.

“The nature of the work allows you to develop the mechanics that you need for the game,” says Lonna Mosow, owner of Lonna Mosow’s Center for Mind/Body Fitness in Eden Prairie. “There couldn’t be a more perfect application. [Gyrotonic] encourages spinal and shoulder mobility, both of which are necessary for the swing and follow-through.”





## One of the key movements in Gyrotonic is also the key to a powerful golf swing.

This three-dimensional exercise system, developed by Julio Horvath some 30 years ago, builds strength while lengthening the muscles, creating space in the joints and developing fuller range of motion. Because of its combination of strength and flexibility in movement, increasing numbers of PGA tour players and professionals—as well as amateur golfers of all levels—are discovering the unique benefits of Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis, the mat class version of the work.

“It allows me to maintain my flexibility to make the swing and the stretch and the follow-through, while keeping my balance,” says Edina resident Bill Strang, 74, an avid golfer and Gyrotonic student of Mosow’s for several years. “Colleagues my age and even younger have trouble doing this. They have to turn their whole bodies instead of keeping their feet planted.”

With principles in common with yoga, Tai Chi and swimming, Gyrotonic calls for a mind-body attention that many practitioners find both relaxing and energizing. The work not only has a whole-body focus, but it helps people re-program lifelong, dysfunctional movement patterns. It starts with the core. “Every golfer needs the core,” Mosow says. “It should happen first. It’s a three-dimensional interaction of different layers of muscle that create the ability to have a source of strength and power. It can’t be the shoulders. If you don’t have that [core] power, you start using inappropriate spinal muscles, shoulders and knees.”

One of the key movements in Gyrotonic is the spiral. It is also the key to a powerful golf swing. “With a lot of golfers, the body gets rigid, especially for rotation,” Mosow says. This rigidity leads to compensation; golfers begin to recruit other muscle groups, putting unhealthy pressure on the joints. Something as subtle as restriction in the forward bend can lead to profound compensations in posture. This creates what Mosow calls a “chain of dysfunction.”

As is true for many sports, golf creates asymmetry in the body, which also leads to dysfunctional movement patterns, putting the body in a very imbalanced space. “A person ends up with back and shoulder issues and eventually knee surgery,” Mosow says. “Unless a golfer really does a workout to maintain proper mechanics, they’ll end up with a poor handicap and discouraged about the game. Gyrotonic works the body equally in both directions.”

Susan Gaines at Minneapolis Gyrotonic, working out on the Pulley Tower, doing an exercise called “canoeing.” The fluid motion uses multiple muscles throughout the back and core. (Previous page) Susan is doing a spiral on the handle unit, an exercise particularly useful for anyone interested in improving their golf swing.



Lonna Mosow, shown here in her Eden Prairie studio, believes that if golfers don’t maintain proper mechanics—enhanced by Gyrotonic training—they’ll end up with a bad handicap and be discouraged with the game.

Golfers are arguably one of the most self-analytic groups of athletes out there; they’ll do anything to improve their game. While many want to get a lesson with a pro, Gyrotonic sessions are arguably more beneficial for rooting out fundamental flaws in the game than working with a personal trainer or a pro.

While Gyrotonic exercises are all applicable to the game, specialized training in Gyrotonic applications for golf has provided instructors with specific exercises. By breaking down the mechanics of a golf swing and applying Gyrotonic principle, clients find greater mobility in their spine, openness in the shoulder and power in the swing. In Strang’s case, he’s happy he can still sit cross-legged on the floor. Functional fitness is not only about the game of golf, after all. //

*Susan Gaines is the health and fitness columnist for METRO magazine. She’s also a certified Gyrotonic instructor with specialized training in applications for golf. She teaches at several studios in the Twin Cities, and welcomes your questions at: [susan.gaines@metromag.com](mailto:susan.gaines@metromag.com).*

MOSOW PHOTO BY TATE CARLSON