

## Stay Fit, Focused in the Off-Season



This time of year, between the holidays and the weather, opportunities to play a round of golf can be few and far between. Consider some of the following suggestions to maintain or even improve your game for next season:

**Stretching** – Five to ten minutes of stretching each day can help you improve flexibility, and make you less prone to athletic injuries. You can fit it into your day as you wake up, during a break at work, while watching evening television, or right before bed, just find a time that is convenient for you, and make it a goal to do it everyday. You'll want to do a variety of stretches to isolate each muscle group, and try to hold each stretch for at least ten to fifteen seconds.

**Fitness** – An exercise program can help you gain strength and distance. Focus on the core muscles of the abdominals and back, as well as the shoulders, triceps and forearms. Traditional exercises like push-ups and crunches are great, as well as free weights and gym equipment. Yoga and Pilates are also terrific choices for improving strength and flexibility. You may wish to consult with a Personal Trainer, your Doctor, and maybe even a Golf Professional as you begin a fitness program.

**Drills you can do around the house** – If you have short carpet somewhere in your home, you can practice your putting stroke (and maybe even your chipping) all winter long. Aim for the legs of tables or chairs, or just to another golf ball. Practice from various distances and in different directions (it's not unlikely to have break in an indoor putt, especially in the basement).

Another idea, find a small piece of carpet remnant and mark it with a line using permanent marker or spray paint. Take a wedge and practice a chipping or pitching swing, and focus on brushing the carpet at your mark time after time for about five minutes each day. I like to do this drill in a rhythmic manner, without stopping between the end of the follow through and the start of the next backswing. Pay special attention to the gentle weight shift that should be occurring from your back foot to your forward foot as you make your downswing, and also to squaring the clubface through the impact zone. This drill will help you avoid thin and fat shots, and will help to improve your rhythm.

**Commit to practice** – Crystal Springs Golf Center is open year round and has heated tees available. Try to schedule one day each week to come out and hit balls, and stick with it. The ball doesn't fly as far when it is cold out, so don't fret about distance, just focus on good mechanics, and solid ball-striking. You may want to consider a lesson once per month to keep yourself motivated. Call the Golf Center at 314-514-0154 for current hours of operation and to schedule lessons.

**Get out and play** – With the proper apparel you can golf in relative comfort when the weather is in the 40s. Take advantage of the weather and our great off-season rates whenever you can.

