



Golf and Health

Case Study

How Golf Has Changed My Life.

Golf is great for your health, either playing or spectating. In this Q&A, we meet Rachel Ingram, who has seen her health and lifestyle turned around by playing and enjoying the sport.

What are the health challenges you have endured?

Rachel: "Anxiety, depression and an eating disorder called Bulimia. The form I suffered from meant the thought of people watching me eat and judging me for what I was eating is what led to me feeling sick. This eventually led to a big breakdown. I couldn't leave the house or go to work because the fear of having to eat just became overwhelming."

Why did you think golf could help, and how did you get into golf?

"I'm from a family that thrives on contact sports. We are from Hull in England, so rugby is like your religion and golf was never in my upbringing. It was my husband, Jon, who turned me to it. We needed somewhere I could go and not think about what I have to eat or what the people around me would think about me. So we tried the driving range. From the first swing something clicked.

"I didn't take to it straight away and this is what became the thrill of the challenge for me. Once I could confidently hit a ball it was time we moved to the Par-3 course at Sutton Golf Club, just next to the driving range. I was terrified. What if people were watching me? Then I saw an older man totally slice his tee shot and nobody even twitched. I thought 'no one is bothered whether it takes me three shots or nine shots'. Before I knew it I was hooked."

How has it improved your health?

"Mentally, I'm better than ever. Playing golf was the very first step in overcoming a big mental health hurdle. I can now go to restaurants with my friends, have family BBQs and I put that down to golf. My fitness is the other main thing. My previous knee injury really does limit how far I can go, but the more I play the game I just do a little bit more and it becomes less of a struggle.

I also went to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in order to overcome my issues and the main thing they taught me was breathing. This was put to the test in golf. My weight plummeted down to seven stone and I was very frail looking. I now weigh (what I think is) a healthy nine stone."



“Regular physical activity decreases the risk of anxiety, depression and dementia, and golf can be expected to have these benefits”

DR ANDREW MURRAY
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER FOR THE EUROPEAN TOUR

Have you been to any golf events?

"Golf has taken over our lives. My husband is a firefighter so works two 24-hour shifts and gets five rest days. He likes to try and play once or twice a week (very difficult now our eight-month-old son is here). If he isn't talking about it, it's on the TV. Thursday through to Sunday in our house is just golf. I've been to two tournaments here in the UK. My first was the return of the British Masters at Woburn in 2015. There I was, standing at the side of a green when I got a high-five from a player. "Who was that?" I said to my husband. "Ian Poulter" he replied. Next thing I'm watching a 'Miracle at Medinah' documentary and realising I just met Mr Ryder Cup!"



You and your husband appear to enjoy the sport together...

“Golf is our thing. For me, walking around a course with him is my chance to have our catch up. Just me and him. It has brought us together as a family. My son has golf balls and plastic putters to play with instead of regular baby toys. He sits with his daddy and they watch the golf, that’s their bonding time. As I am on maternity leave, I do spend a lot of my time at home. Gone are the days of music channels on in the background... now I’ve got the Turkish Airlines Open on in the living room whilst making bottles in the kitchen!”

What would you say to women or girls wanting to become involved in golf?

“It totally changed my life. Every journey starts with a step and that step for me was getting out of my house and playing golf. On a summer’s day there really is no better feeling then walking around a golf course. I also like that it’s a level playing field. Yes, men may drive the ball a little bit further, but if you are giving it your all and really working towards something then the success of the game is such a high.”

Background: Golf & Health Project

The Golf & Health Project, supported by the World Golf Foundation which comprises the major golfing bodies worldwide including The R&A, USGA, LPGA and the European Tour, has been working hard to show the overall health benefits of the sport, both physically and mentally.

The Project has sought to raise awareness in order to increase participation among golfers and non-golfers, improve the public image of the sport and increase support for golf in the political arena.

As a partner in the World Golf Foundation, The R&A has played a key role in the activity, notably supporting the work of researchers at the University of Edinburgh – fronted by lead researcher Dr Andrew Murray, Chief Medical Officer for the European Tour.

For more information on the project visit www.golfandhealth.org



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