

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

Let's call this my "Slice of Ache" column. You see, for the past several months, I've been nursing a bad back. And just when I thought I was back to normal (OK, not mentally speaking), I incurred a setback (notice the insidious overuse of the word "back") this spring after a fairly mild session of spreading wood chips in my yard. But permit me to back-up and review some past events and information:

In late January as I worked extra hard to get ahead of office tasks and attend the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando free of worry and the wintry clutches of Michigan, I "strained" my lower back. How did I do it, you ask? No, I wasn't shoveling snow off of my roof. No, I wasn't a mugging victim by a deranged Judo expert. No, I didn't even try to move my Homer Simpson-endorsed Lazyboy with the built-in remote and commode closer to the TV set. Instead, I hurt my back by writing for too long in a bad posture at my computer. I'll address the bad posture (flash-back to grade school: "Sit up straight, Mr. Moore!") matter later but let me tell you first about Orlando.

I suffered in Orlando. Sure, the back pain was bad enough but having to do a "West Dakota" (WD in tournament parlance) on four rounds of Florida golf drove me up the wall. In fact, I flew home two days early after I realized no more golf was in the cards for me. And yes, Dad, I did attend the Merchandise Show. Best product for me: an innovative briefcase by Ogio with an ergonomically designed shoulder strap that lessen the pain on my back.

Once back home, I immediately went to see my most capable and knowledgeable physical therapist, Dan Distin. Dan is a real pro who has helped me (and others) tremendously in previous bad back episodes. Besides, Dan's a golfer so he could feel "my inner pain" after being shut out in Florida. Dan knows too that many golfers suffering back pain harbor many dark thoughts and doubts. Such as: "Will I ever be able to swing freely again and reach the OB stakes?"

Dan and his team of therapists diligently worked on me for several weeks. They also recommended a series of stretches and exercises to strengthen my abdomen and core trunk muscles—key body areas that support the back.

I also visited my family physician who'll go nameless for now in print. He's an excellent doctor with a good sense of humor and

with a special empathy for golfers. ("It's the end of the world for you golfers even if you can't play for one lousy week!") He prescribed and reinforced my extended therapy sessions with Distin while also prescribing an aggressive and sustained use of the pain reliever Ibuprofen. The good doctor explained that in the case of a sprained or strained lower back, it's imperative to lessen the inflammation. In so many words, he said it's often the inflammation that's the root cause of the pain. By dampening the inflammation, one can lower the discomfort and friction between the disks. Or something like that. (Hey, that's why he's not identified. No legal depositions will ever start here.) Suffice to say, the ibuprofen kicked in nicely and did its job.

So through the physical therapy, at-home exercises, and proper dosage of over-the-counter medication while faithfully minding my doctor's instructions, my lower back pain and tightness finally and thankfully subsided. This all occurred, however, over a three or four week period. At the end, I was singing spirituals in gratitude.

With my back on the mend, I even decided to join a "Yoga for Golfer's" class. The catalyst for this decision was a letter I read in The New York Times. It read in part: "As a yoga teacher, I work with students with chronic pain,

and more often than not, the source is clear as day: bad posture. Americans spend hours slumped behind the wheel and computer and stand with their feet turned out, pinching the sacrum; and of course many have an extra load to carry, contributing to the weakening of the back muscles..... Learning to stand and sit up straight is very important.”

So I enrolled in the five-week class which met on Saturdays for two hours. It was very worthwhile and I learned a great deal about the importance of stretching, balance and flexibility. I also learned I’m not as flexible as first thought. As I age, I now realize I

must step up my efforts to be more supple and flexible. It’s common sense for golfers to have a sound body and strong back, especially in the post-fifty era. I was in the grandstands last June at the U.S. Open at Olympia Fields when I witnessed Hale Irwin collapse in utter pain with back spasms. He had to withdraw from the Open and then later had to cancel his long-awaited appearance at the Farmer’s Charity Classic in Grand Rapids. And this happened to one of the best conditioned and seasoned Tour players around. I can now see why this Irwin quote, with its double-edged meaning, finds its way in a very fine book entitled “The

Golfer’s Book of Yoga” by Drew Greenland: “You can talk about strategy all you want, but what really matters is resiliency.”

Yes, resiliency and flexibility and pain-free are very good words. I’m doing my best to keep them in my vocabulary. Rest assured, I’ll bounce back from my recent dumb weekend of landscape labors. I won’t make that mistake next year. Next year, I’ll rely on another word, now in current public disfavor, that’ll guarantee me no back pain while my yard is handsomely strewn with cedar chips.

Outsourcing. *MG*

Michigan Golfer Television Show Interviews: Golf Course Architects

Paul Albanese

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show19/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show22/index.html>

Steve Forrest

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2002shows/show19/index.html>

Ray Hearn

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show21/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show8/index.html>

Arthur Hills

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show13/index.html>

Harley Hodge

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show12/index.html>

Mike Husby

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2002shows/show6/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show18/index.html>

Robert Trent Jones

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show19/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show20/index.html>

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show21/index.html>

W. Bruce Matthews

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show16/index.html>

W. Bruce Matthews III

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show3/index.html>

William Newcomb

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show1/index.html>

Jack Nicklaus

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/the-bull/index.html>

Rick Robbins

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show33/index.html>

Charles Scott

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show27/index.html>