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Back to the green

By Leith Dunick, tbnewswatch.com

Tiger Woods may be the only golfer in the world who can take six months off, step up to the tee block and threaten to win at Augusta National.

Most weekend duffers would be in tough to scratch out a round of bogey golf at their local pitch-and-putt.

An early start to spring has most local courses open weeks ahead of schedule and members champing at the bit in their elusive search for golfing glory. But while some have stayed true to the sport, practicing all winter long, many have spent the offseason lying around on their couch, waiting for Tiger to return to his self-imposed exile from the game.



Leith Dunick
Miles Peterson demonstrates a proper stretch to warm up for golf.

They're at serious risk of injuring themselves, says a local chiropractor, warning golfers to warm up and stretch before hitting the links.

"Like most sporting activities, people tend to not properly prepare for their sport, especially when it's the first of the season," said Kristina Peterson. "It's certainly early in Thunder Bay, so we want to remind people to warm up before they head out on the golf course."

The prep work is relatively easy, and should only add a few extra minutes to one's natural pre-game routine, she added.

"Do a brisk walk for a good 10 to 15 minutes and then do some stretching that are appropriate for golf – arms, back, legs. Make sure your muscles are warmed up so they're not going to risk spraining and straining their shoulders, backs and necks, which are often the most common injuries we see," she said.

Failing to do so could have dire consequences to your summer, Peterson added.

"It can wreck your whole season. If you're not prepared it will put a hamper on the season and certainly give you a slow start," she said, reminding golfers to drink plenty

of water to stay hydrated. "It helps to keep your muscles sliding and gliding past one another more efficiently."

Equally as important is using the proper swing techniques, said Whitewater Golf Course director of golf Matt Simmons, a certified CPGA professional. Hopefully people spent the winter working on the basics, but if that hasn't happened it's important to look at them before one starts swinging.

"Get into a good balance position, a good posture position. One of the things I work on most is in the overall swing. Getting the grip on the club correctly, getting through the fingers and the hands in a very natural, balanced position on the club," Simmons said.

"Golf is a game where you want to hit the ball in a specific direction, but it's in letting go, it's in not trying to control that direction that will allow you to hit the best shot."

Of course, playing more like Fred Funk and less like the monster-hitting Bubba Watson will also help one avoid a stint on the disabled list.

Most of all, Simmons said, learn to relax.

"You can bring power, you can bring different things into the game without having to tense up. I'm not trying to change your attitude. I want you to be aggressive with that thought process," Simmons said.

"Everybody wants to tee off and be the longest hit off the tee. They want to look back at their buddies. But it's taking a second, and really only a second to have a practice swing. Just think through a softness," he said, encouraging people to take a look at Phil Mickelson's pre-shot preparation for inspiration.

"He's got a great warm-up before every swing. It's not even a full practice swing. He just swings with a club, just small motions back and through, loosening up those joints. And then you get into the shot and you go through your pre-shot routine."