

COLUMN

Nice to be 'Back'

Compleat Golfer's playing editor is South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen. Apart from providing regular instruction, his monthly column takes you into his world

There is only so far you can get, being a professional golfer, relying on talent and good fortune. These days, physical fitness plays a huge role in preparing for an event.

About a year ago I made a conscious decision to start doing something properly with my body, not just in a golfing sense, but generally. I lost quite a bit of weight and started working with a personal trainer, trying to get into shape. It all began because of the problems I had with my back and I needed to strengthen it considerably if I was going to keep going at the level I demand of myself.

I've still got some issues, but we have been managing them well, and 2016 has been so much better than the last few years -

I think the results on the course are showing the benefits.

Our tour schedules are hectic and at times they feel relentless. There is a lot of travelling - it's not uncommon to spend 16 or 17 hours on a plane and then you start a tournament. You have to be in good shape, or it's a week that will quickly turn bad.

So, there are a lot of things to think about and act upon - it's not just a case of travelling and playing golf.

Last year, I also started working with a new putting coach, but it wasn't easy. For large chunks of 2013 and 2014, my back was so bad, I couldn't stand on a putting green even for five minutes and practise. I was hitting a few putts on the practice green before playing

a round. If I spent more than 15 minutes, I was close to not being able to play. Now things have improved so much that we can do an hour before teeing off, but it has been hard work!

Scheduling sessions with my trainer has been important because I don't like doing gym work during a tournament; I don't like feeling stiff in the morning. When I'm 'home' at Old Palm in Florida, I spend

a lot of time with my trainer, but it's a juggling act.

Cardio-wise, my wife got me into jogging at the end of 2015, which I hadn't done for more than 15 years!

I feel great now - not having that fear hanging over my head that my back is going to play up again or cause me grief. And because of my fitness, I'm feeling good about my game. ◉



BUMP AND RUN

This is always the option when you've got a lot of green to work with and you're only a metre or two away from the green. What I'll do is pull my 8-iron out of the bag, and the majority of the time, it's my go-to club for the bump and run. There are occasions when I use a 7- or 9-iron, but the 8 is my preferred choice. Obviously, if it's a bit further away from the green I sometimes use my 6-iron. The way I play the shot is basically the same as when I'm making a putt. I use the same putting grip and play the same stroke; it's just a shoulder thing. There are no hands in it. I do it a little bit off the toe of the club, right at the end of it. My hands are pressed a bit forward, just to release the ball and you carry on with the putting stroke. If it gets on to the green, the ball normally releases nicely, and it is really effective when trying to control the distance.