

Hit the Ball Harder

By Paul Sims

If you play golf, tennis or baseball, hitting the ball harder could be the edge you are looking for to become a better player. Hitting the ball involves timing, accuracy, placement, and head speed of the club, racket or bat you are swinging. Improving that head speed and the power follow-through, as well as the deceleration after can be accomplished through strength training: that is training with weights and machines.

Let's take a moment to clear up some misconceptions about weight-lifting and your sport. Performed properly, weight-lifting will not make your muscles tight. Just because you start to get that toned and tighter look to your muscle, it still will function through its full range of motion.

Another misconception is that weight-lifting will make you so big that you can't get a proper swing. Unless you can start eating 8,000 calories a day, you won't get so big as to interfere with your swing. Proper strength training will give you a toned, athletic look that is probably not bigger than you are now. You will just be shaped differently.

Yet another misconception is that weight-lifting will make you slow. Just the opposite is true. *Weight training will make you faster.* That will produce the head speed you are looking for.

The workout at first is not necessarily sport specific. It should be as full body as possible. Yes, you will be working your legs also because your swing depends a lot on how you are planted. Your weight training will be more involved and intense during the off season of your sport. An experienced personal fitness trainer can help you get to your goal faster and more safely than you can on your own.

I'd like to leave you with this: since hitting the ball involves many muscles and strength training will improve your quickness and reaction time, you will be able to position your body correctly in that last split second before contact with the ball and "Hit The Ball Harder."

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