

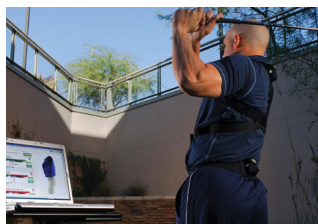
## Balancing Act

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**Think that slice is attributed to a swing flaw? Think again. It could very well be muscle restrictions causing those miss hits.**



It's a familiar scene. A lone golfer grinding away on the range long after the greens keepers have gone home for the day, making every last attempt to relieve some kinks before his country club's four ball in the morning. Millions of golfers find themselves in this predicament; yet, in some cases, taking to the grind stone unfortunately can't undo muscular imbalances that may be impeding on your swing and causing your woes.

Thankfully, Swing Flex Golf Therapy has the hands to help. Created by Paul Ruth, owner of Scottsdale-based NPI Therapy, Swing Flex locates and addresses muscular "hot spots" where an imbalance affects function.

"When a muscle is injured or imbalanced, your brain protects it by tightening it up, but it compensates by sending signals to other muscles," Ruth says. "Muscles are identical to sponges in a way; when you squeeze a sponge it wrings out all the water. If it stays like that it gets shriveled, hard and shortened. So when a muscle is constantly tight, it doesn't have a lot of blood in it—and without enough blood the brain can't use it. It's called ischemic inhibition."

Ischemic inhibition causes a redirection of brain signals (neurons) away from the affected muscle to other muscles in order to accomplish an action or movement. The trouble, according to Ruth, is that the newly signaled muscles still have a primary role of their own to fulfill. Translated into golf terms, a golfer's perception of what their swing action is and the muscles that they think are firing when they take a swing are very different from reality. The swing-limiting effects of this imbalance can have a severe impact on a golfer's ability to improve their game.

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"In an older golfer, not being able to finish the swing is the most common problem," Ruth says. "And instead of a professional [instructor] observing and saying 'well, you are not finishing your swing, here's what we are going to do,' I look at them and say this is why your body is not allowing you to load up on your left side and open your hips."

An initial consult determines the trouble areas through a palpation exam (essentially a strategic poking and prodding of all the major muscle groups in the body). The resolution and road to recovery is through Neuromuscular Release Therapy (NRT), developed by Ruth several years ago. NRT combines aspects of neuromuscular therapy and Active Release Therapy (ART). Using his skillful hands and knowledge of physiology and anatomy, Ruth patiently works through problematic muscle areas by releasing one muscle layer at a time.

"When I do this full-body map, it pinpoints literally where you have all this wasted energy and need for all this protection," Ruth says. "So as I release the specific areas, your body is basically being freed up from a muscular standpoint."

Less muscular restraint translates into a freer swing and an ease of release through the ball. It gives new meaning to the old excuse, "I was trying to muscle it."

Tom Lehman, Aaron Baddeley, Steve Jones and Tim Clark are just a few Tour pros who have tried Swing Flex.