

## Body Types and the Golfer

By Ramsay McMaster



### Introduction

A topic of discussion that constantly arises in golfing circles is the relevance of body type and body shapes in relation to playing good golf.

As we are aware golfers such as Michael Campbell and Ian Woosnam are different from Robert Allenby and Tiger Woods and their body shapes and types are different from the likes of Greg Norman and Ernie Els.

These players are highly successful in golf yet they are capable of achieving this success with differing body shapes and types.

Arguably the most popular publication on body shapes was carried out by Sheldon in the 1940's. This categorised three body types. "Mesomorph, Ectomorph and Endomorph." These three body types were further graded from 1-7 to describe the extent of the physique in these three categories.

It should be emphasised that these categories have been greatly affected over the past twenty years due to migration, inter-multi racial relationships, diet, more emphasis on exercise and health awareness, world climatic changes and lifestyle changes.

In this chapter we will outline these three categories of body types and their relevance to golf performance.

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### **Ectomorphs and Golf**

These people are generally tall and thin which can lead to a stooped kyphotic posture.

In everyday life, as a result of being tall, they tend to lean forward in the work place, etc. and they tend to have habitually poor posture.



#### **Advantages of Ectomorph Body Type in Golf**

1. Being tall will result in having a longer lever system i.e. the arms and the club. When swinging correctly this can result in a great flying distance of the golf ball.
2. Being tall and thin can result in having more rotation around the spine as a result of less muscle bulk.

### **Disadvantages of Ectomorph Body Type in Golf**

1. Prolonged practice (eg. putting) can result in increased stooping and bad posture that can result in stiffness and poor turn in the golf swing.
2. Prolonged poor posture can cause muscles at the front of the body to become tight and the muscles at the back of the body to become weak. This can also reduce turn and affect good address positions.
3. Poor core muscle stability can cause injury, as there is insufficient muscle strength to absorb and control the power created by club head speed.

### **Recommendations**

The Ectomorph should place emphasis on postural exercises, stretching tight muscle groups and strengthening weak muscle groups that are associated with prolonged fixed postural positions.

## Endomorphs and Golf

These people are generally described as short and round. They may also be generally de-conditioned which may lead to a decreased aerobic capacity. Aerobic capacity is critical for maintaining performance throughout 18 holes and practicing intensively.

A typical posture of an Endomorph is a protruding stomach, resulting in the forward tilt of the pelvis.



### Advantages of Being an Endomorph in Golf

1. Endomorphs have a lower centre of gravity and therefore are able to have more balance in their swing.
2. Endomorphs as a result of their short, stocky stature will have a more compact swing.

### Disadvantages of Being an Endomorph in Golf

1. As a result of forward tilt of the pelvis and protruding stomach the abdominal muscles can be weak and the muscles around the hip region can be tight. This may inhibit frontal rotation and therefore affect turn in back swing and follow-through.
2. Excessive body fat can also exacerbate the problem at #1 and result in reduced trunk rotation and turn in the body during the golf swing.

3. Being overweight can cause fatigue on the golf course.
4. Tight muscles around the hip region and poor abdominal muscle strength can result in an increase in stress on the spine and can result in injury to this region.

### **Recommendations**

The endomorph should place emphasis on stretching tight muscles around the hip region and carry out a controlled specific abdominal strengthening program. Weight loss and an aerobic exercise program may also be required to improve performance of the endomorph.

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## **Mesomorphs and Golf**

This body type is generally described as muscular and athletic in physical appearance.



### **Advantages of a Mesomorph in Golf**

1. Mesomorphs are more synonymous with performing well at golf and are arguably the best of all body types for playing golf at a competitive level.
2. Mesomorphs normally have good aerobic fitness and can cope with intensive practice regimens and competing well throughout 18 holes of golf.

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3. Mesomorphs, as a result of their natural strength, have the capacity to produce good club head speed and therefore are capable of attaining considerable distance with a golf ball.

#### **Disadvantages of a Mesomorph in Golf**

1. As a result of their muscular physique, mesomorphs can have problems with reduced flexibility, especially after excessive weight training and/or a poor stretching programme. This will obviously affect rotation and turn in the golf swing. It may also affect their swing plane.
2. Muscle tightness can also affect coil and recoil when the muscles are placed on stretch to produce power in the golf swing. If muscles are tight during coil and recoil it can result in tearing and injury to specific muscle groups.
3. Excessive muscle bulk can lead to a restriction in range of movement which will in turn affect the fluency of swing geometry and result in deviation in swing plane.

#### **Recommendation**

Mesomorphs should place emphasis on stretching programs to maintain their flexibility and should implement stretching regimens in their weight training programs, practice regimens and in cold, windy conditions when muscles are more prone to tightening up.

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**NB** Once again it should be noted that highly skilled golfers are a crossover of ectomorphs, endomorphs and mesomorphs and that specific strength, flexibility and conditioning programs in conjunction with a specific dietary and nutritional regime.

**Questions**



Name the three body types.	
Describe the physical appearance of each body type	
State 1 advantage of each of the body types has for golf	
State 1 disadvantage each of the body types has for golf	
What body type or combination of types would you consider yourself as being?	

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**For more information on posture and body types contact**  
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