



BY RON KASPRISKE

# TAKE 10 YEARS OFF

THESE EXPERTS' SECRETS FOR LONGEVITY MIGHT SURPRISE YOU

Old Tom Morris thought the North Sea was golf's fountain of youth. According to his biography, *The Life of Tom Morris*, written by W.W. Tulloch in 1907, the legendary Scot believed that a daily dip in its frigid waters kept him healthy. He was once spotted breaking shoreline ice so he could take his constitutional swim. Was what we now know as cold-immersion therapy Tom's secret weapon? He did, after all, win four Open Championships after turning 40 and lived past 86, still relatively healthy and working on golf courses until the day he died. » If you knew for sure that cold baths would make your swing faster and better, we're guessing you'd be headed to the local Cumberland Farms right now to clean out the ice-bag freezer. However, there's not a lot of scientific evidence to suggest it works. The good news: Slowing, or even reversing, the aging of your golf swing might not be something of old-world remedies. We asked several experts, from Hall of Fame golfers to biomechanics specialists to top instructors, what was essential, and their answers were as hopeful as they were diverse. Read on to hear their advice for swinging as well as you did a decade ago, or even better.

**GARY PLAYER**, who competed in a record 52 Masters (the last at 73): "It's no secret I've been a huge proponent of diet, health and fitness. That's why today, at nearly 81, my average score is 70. Taking 10 years off your golf swing is not an overnight task. But those who hit the ball longer have strong hips and core, and are flexible. The best example I can think of is comparing myself to Jack Nicklaus. For years he outdrove me by 20 to 30 yards. But as we've grown older, my strong legs and core, as well as my flexibility, allow me to outdrive him today. Flexibility is the key ingredient. So that's my advice: Stretch, stretch and stretch again."

**TOM HOUSE**, the former Major-League pitcher who has built a second career teaching athletes how to regain that youthful pep: "There's no reason you can't do at 45 what you could do at 25. When someone 33 or older comes our way to train, all we do is work on patterning movements. They have strength, skill, experience, but what they've lost over the years is activity in their nervous systems. What we have to do is trick the body into firing up those systems again, the ones where nerves and myelin were creating this huge bank of learning patterns for movement from age 6 to around puberty. We go back to the beginning. Among the ways we get golfers to regain their former

swing speed is by having them swing clubs that are lighter than what they play with, and swinging them as fast as they can."

**DAVID LEADBETTER**, coach to male and female Major champions: "I think one of the most overlooked things is posture. I can tell just by one's normal posture how old his or her swing is going to look. Make better posture a priority in life. Pull your shoulder blades down, chest up, chin in. Walk and sit like that and certainly swing like that. You'll breathe better, move better, feel better and look younger. You'll soon find that on the golf course, your swing is more fluid and in balance."

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**BOB ROTELLA**, sport psychologist who has counselled many of the game's top players: "Satchel Paige pitched professionally until 59. He once said, 'How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?' It's a great point. So I suggest you start by spending

10 minutes a night visualizing yourself hitting it like you did 10 years ago. Get back to that point in time and think about how you felt, what you did. Then when you return to golf, commit to re-creating those feelings. Also, put the time into the game the way you used to. Practice. Work hard on your short game. And create a pre-shot routine and do it every time you swing."

**ANNIKA SORENSTAM**, winner of 72 LPGA events: "I've always rotated my head towards the target at impact. People ask me why I lift my head. I don't. I rotate it. This enables me to clear my hips and transfer the weight to my left side. It also prevents hanging back in a 'reverse-C' posture, which can put pressure on your lower back. Try it and see if it doesn't free up your swing a lot like it used to be."

**DAVE PHILLIPS**, co-founder of the Titleist Performance Institute: "You have to get back hip mobility and core stability. The fact that most of us spend a lot of time sitting erodes both. It's difficult to exaggerate their importance for every athletic movement. They're like the plug that connects the force that our lower body generates from the ground to our core and then the club. Start by doing a lot more walking. Dump the golf cart if you can. And when you swing, really focus on maintaining your

golf posture. Don't straighten up during the backswing or downswing. In the gym, focus on strengthening your core muscles, as well as hip-hinging and hip-rotation exercises."

**BEN SHEAR**, Golf Digest fitness adviser and trainer to several PGA Tour pros: "Stop trying to be so rotary with your swing. I recommend adding either more vertical or lateral movement to generate the power you used to get from rotary movement. Instructor Jimmy Ballard has taught this lateral shift for decades. As you get older, this is a lot easier than trying to rotate the way the young pros do. But if you're insistent on making that type of swing, let your hips and torso rotate away from the target together when you swing back. Then push off the front leg as you make your downswing. I've seen players at really advanced ages suddenly start making a powerful, repeatable swing this way."

**TOM WATSON**, runner-up in the 2009 British Open at 59: "The most important thing is to add loft to your golf clubs. It gets harder and harder to get the ball airborne as you get older, but getting the ball up in the air is to your advantage. Get a driver with more loft. Switch from a 4-iron to a 4-hybrid. Let equipment produce the shots that your body no longer can produce." 🏌️

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