

Fueling Your Game

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Have you noticed your back nine scores seem to be a bit higher than front nine scores? Does your putting average go up on later holes? Do your drive distances seem to ebb after an hour or so of play? If any of these trends exemplify your game, then lack of energy resulting from improper fueling could be your problem.

Fuel is essential to any sport if optimal performance is the goal. This is especially relevant in golf which combines long play times (hours) with a need for precise biomechanics in order to maintain consistency and stay ahead of the pack.

If you talk to cyclists, runners, or other endurance sport athletes, the subject of how and when they fuel their bodies for maximum performance is always up there in importance. I've learned this first hand while training for my first marathon. I quickly discovered I needed to bring proper fluid replacement drinks (Gatorade, Powerade etc) and energy bars along to complete long runs. I also realized that eating carbohydrate-loaded foods such as pasta and staying well hydrated even the day before made an enormous difference in my performance the next day. I've never heard golfers talk about their fluid replacement strategies. Just think how happy you'd be if you could shave two or three shots off your score, especially without doing anything else but fueling better!

Running and cycling require a constant high output of energy and so it is very easy to see when performance is affected by lack of fuel. Contrast this with golf, which has a low energy output but whose match play often lasts much longer and you will begin to understand why declines in performance may be more subtle. Golf is very much an endurance sport and so thinking like an endurance athlete will help your game.

Golf is also unique in that the body must exert different effort using different clubs. This makes it difficult to see that a poor shot may be due to low fuel leading to poor technique. Poor technique can also lead to more injuries.

As an experiment, the day before your next game, drink plenty of fluids and eat more carbohydrates than you would normally consume. The day of the game, drink a glass of water an hour before play and then carry a few bottles of energy drinks and a few snack bars with you to consume during play. See what a difference adequate fuel and hydration make in your game—I think you will be pleasantly surprised!