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Ready to hit the links? The experts suggest you get in swinging shape first



**Story by Andrew Hind
Photos by Ted Brown**

Here in Ontario, winter is long and often harsh, resulting in golf courses being closed for as much as six months at stretch. As a result, most golfers—save perhaps those lucky enough to spend winters down south—experience a lengthy winter layoff.

When spring finally comes around, it naturally enough takes a while to get back into the swing of things.

Your layoff will likely have left you out of shape for golf. Contrary to popular belief, playing golf, or at least playing the game well, requires you to be in good physical shape.

“The repetitive motion of playing golf, particularly the ballistic action of the swing, can cause wear and tear on a body not used to physical activity,” explains Peter Oliphant, Senior Teaching Professional at Glen Abbey Golf Academy, where so many Halton golfers go to tune their games while their local Clublink courses (such as Eagle Ridge, Blue Springs and Glencairn) are closed for the winter.

“It’s important to remain physically active even when not playing golf so you don’t hurt yourself when you return to the game in spring,” he said.

Prepare for the coming season at least a month in advance by working on your overall fitness. Particular attention should be paid to cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, and strength. You’ll notice the difference in your game right away.

Overall fitness is important, but some specific muscle areas should be focused on. Wrist, lower back, and shoulder injuries are the most common among golfers, so before the season even begins get these in shape. There are numerous golf exercise books available that outline simple stretches for these areas. Alternatively, inquire with the pro at a golf course or retail outlet.

Once the courses are open, you’ll want to focus on getting back your feel for the game.

“I recommend trying to key on the basics when you return to the game in spring, focusing on fundamentals such as grip, stance, and posture. You lose the feel over winter and it takes time to get your form back,” says Cory Jentes, golf pro at North Halton.

“Jack Nicklaus did this every spring to make sure everything was perfect, so it’s obviously a good practice to get into.”

Oliphant notes that the indoor facilities at Glen Abbey ensures their



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