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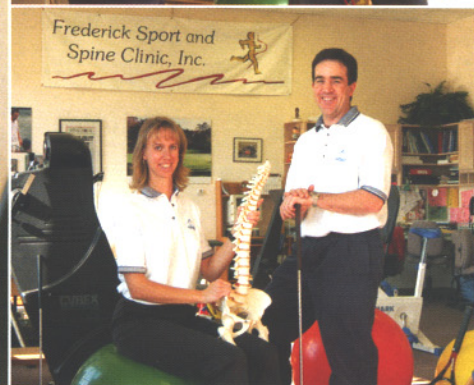
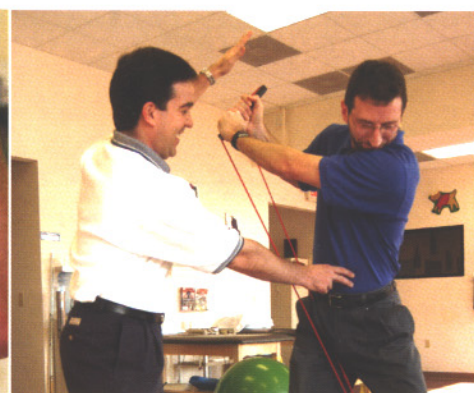


of Frederick

**A W A R D S**

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Mark Acierno uses his background in biomedical engineering and physical therapy to help golfers perfect their swing using a performance enhancement program called SwingMAX. He also runs a busy local practice and serves as physical therapist to the Frederick Keys.

# The Swing's the Thing

Could your golf game use a good therapist?

It's said that a bad day on the golf course is better than a good day at the office. But if you'd like to increase your number of *better* days on the course anyway, it's time to call a pro—although, interestingly, not the golf pro.

Mark Acierno, of Frederick Sport and Spine Clinic, has developed a performance enhancement program called SwingMAX. Based on physical therapy and biomechanics, SwingMAX targets muscle weaknesses and inflexibility. His goal is to teach clients "to use their body as their most important tool in their bag."

Acierno is a self-described "people person and sports fanatic." He graduated from Boston University with a degree in biomedical engineering, but felt dissatisfied with the work. So he pursued a master's degree in physical therapy; although he loved athletics, he didn't have the ability to compete at the highest levels. As a physical therapist, however, he could help top athletes and weekend warriors alike.

And Acierno has definitely helped a lot of people. The list of those he's rehabilitated during his 12 years working in California and Maryland includes members of the San Jose Sharks professional hockey team, as well as the Frederick Keys (he's currently the team's physical therapist). He also operates a busy local practice which employs five physical therapists and treats between 225 and 260 patients a week.

"We are experts in the mechanics of the body," he says. "However, as a physical therapist, you have to be more diverse than just treating golf injuries, so I brought on clinicians who are experts in different areas." At Sport and Spine, these areas

include foot and ankle conditions, manual therapy, massage therapy, and SwimEx pool therapy—a state-of-the-art rehabilitation program.

Acierno emphasizes that SwingMAX is a team approach; it's not just him and the client. Instead, clients also have at their disposal golf pros to enhance their game, and pro shop attendants to custom fit clubs as needed. Ultimately, the SwingMAX team enables players to enhance their game by achieving maximum distance, consistency, ability, and longevity.

Each SwingMAX client receives a customized plan geared toward improving the body's interaction with the club. During the initial 90-minute consultation, Acierno observes clients' body positioning as they address the ball. He also studies their swing, follow through, and finish, paying close attention to problems with tightness, weakness, and muscle coordination.

Upon leaving the clinic, the client will have a personalized plan consisting of strengthening exercises and stretches. "As long as the client puts in the effort on their own, they will see results," says Acierno. "They can't expect me to make them better alone. I'm giving them the tools to make themselves better."

Of course, everything has a price, and improving one's golf game is no different. The initial consultation fee is \$180, and each follow-up visit is \$90. However, Acierno points out, "people will spend this much on a new club in their efforts to improve their score." Over the course of a year, the average client requires between two and five sessions.

Jeff Hurwitz, owner of Colonial Jewelers, received a gift certificate for SwingMAX last spring. He says that the program helped increase his awareness of his arm area, where he'd been having trouble. His confidence in his game has grown, too.

In fact, all of Acierno's clients seem to have benefited from the program. Some report that their swing is easier, while others, like Hurwitz, feel greater confidence overall. And many participants simply say that they're enjoying golf a whole lot more.

If that's not heaven, what is? ❖

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