

Mental Health in Elite and Professional Golf-

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Golf is a popular sport played by >100 million persons of all ages globally. The sport can provide health enhancing physical activity, social connections and is associated with improved longevity, physical health and well-being outcomes for recreational players (Murray et al, 2016).

With these comprehensive health benefits people can be encouraged to play golf, although injury and illness can occur. Golf is however a demanding sport for elite and professional players. The major professional tours require players to travel all over the world for many months, often away from friends and family. Rates of depression, and anxiety and other mental health disorders are equivalent to other professional sportspersons (Hopley et al, 2022, Mountjoy et al, 2024). Risk factors for poor mental health are loneliness, social isolation, and lack of social support (Fry, 2017).

International Governing Bodies (the R&A, the International Golf Federation) have worked with disability, female and male professional leagues to conduct research and a needs analysis, better understand mental health and well-being in golf, and provide education and appropriate support.

This presentation will provide an overview of the prevalence of mental health conditions and symptoms in golf, as well as prevention and treatment strategies. The Charter on Mental Health in Sport sets out how organisations adopt good mental health practice. Global governing bodies and leagues set out to create a comprehensive mental fitness and performance strategy. Mental health first aid training is available to all staff and is required for some staff groups. Proactive education is provided for athletes, and their support staff. Mental health and well-being resources are provided each week to include content on maximising mental health and wellbeing. Golfers will often view the Sports and Exercise Medicine physician as their primary resource on health matters, and 20-30% of consultations concern mental health and well-being. Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists are increasingly provided at events, while golfers, their families, and tour caddies are provided with a 24/7 mental health hotline.

References

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