



Ginn-sponsored, two-time U.S. Open Champion **Lee Janzen** shares the secrets of his physical approach to the game

CHANGE OF APPROACH

BY SUSAN HILL

Seasoned PGA Tour professionals like Lee Janzen are all-too aware of the new breed of golfer coming up through the ranks today — young players who, in many cases, are looking to make a name for themselves early on in hopes of securing a spot on the competitive professional circuit.

At the tender ages of 11 and 12, this new kind of golfer likely has already traveled around the world in pursuit of “the dream:” a full college golf scholarship and the hope of someday playing on the PGA or LPGA Tour. This golfer meets with a personal sports psychologist, works with an individual instructor for three-hour sessions, and attends golf-specific fitness training sessions each week.

The golfer’s single-minded focus and intensity is generally developed at a remarkably early age, and while this competitive pursuit is certainly admirable, it is a clear departure from the path Janzen and others followed growing up in the early- to mid-1970s. And it’s an evolution that Janzen says has dramatically changed his game — for the better.

“Kids these days are being trained in a completely different way than I developed my game,” says Janzen, a proven winner in his 15th year on the Tour. “I can’t go back and change that, but I can work out hard now and use their drive as motivation.”

Unlike the youth who make up the newest breed of aspiring golfers, Janzen’s childhood, spent in Baltimore, Md., was not consumed by golf. Instead, he recalls being among the first to show up on the baseball fields as they thawed out each spring. In those days, his father would help him practice his craft of that day: catching ground balls and working on his batting skills.

Baseball was a detour on Janzen’s way to the PGA Tour and, like many seasoned pros today, Janzen discovered his love for golf through an exposure to many different sports.

It was not until later in high school that Janzen focused solely on golf, and he followed what many would consider a traditional route on his rise to success before he turned pro in 1990. As a teen, he started by playing in national junior tournaments in hopes of garnering attention from college coaches. Ultimately, Janzen landed on the golf team at Florida Southern College where his team won the Division II national championship and he was the individual medalist.

In those early years, Janzen explains, the attitudes and expectations of fitness and “optimal training” programs were virtually nonexistent. “We had one fitness trailer on Tour and it wasn’t very big. I would go in there to do some cardio and that was about it. They had one little island of the old Universal machines, and if there were eight or nine people in there at a time, it was super-crowded.”

At that time, fitness was focused primarily on rehab and injury management, Janzen says. “I used to ride the bike or the treadmill and that was the extent of a workout.” Although he knew that staying in shape was important, his personal fitness routine was not the priority in those days that it is today. “It was sporadic when I worked out. Usually I only worked out or stretched when something started hurting. If my back was bothering me, I’d go stretch or whatever,” Janzen says. “I didn’t have a full-time maintenance program to avoid injury.”

In spite of his somewhat casual approach to overall fitness, through dedication to excellence and a great work ethic, Janzen secured eight PGA Tour victories — two of which are majors — including the 1992 Northern Telecom Open, 1993 Phoenix

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Open and U.S. Open Championship, 1994 Buick Classic, the 1995 Players Championship, Kemper Open and Sprint International and the 1998 U.S. Open Championship. He ranks among the top 50 in career earnings on the PGA Tour.

Janzen has not been one to be left behind by the rapid changes his sport is seeing. As the game has evolved, so has his approach to fitness. “Obviously, the older you get, the more wear and tear your body receives. Those little injuries become bigger injuries.”

In his 15 years on the PGA Tour, Janzen says he has seen some distinct differences in the way that Tour players view their games and their bodies. “It was the mid-90s when I became a little bit more dedicated to working out

and saw the benefits. I realized that those areas that used to bother me — my wrists, my elbow, whatever the case may be — stopped bothering me all together because of working out. It was a double benefit—no injuries plus I got stronger.”

Janzen says his commitment to fitness has also allowed him to steadily increase his driving distance — from 260 yards when he was in his mid-20s to more than 285 yards, now, in his early 40s. While age has a way of challenging the strength and flexibility of golfers at any level, Janzen feels his success is due, in large part, to his positive attitude and willingness to adjust to new training methods.

Jeff Troesch, the previous director of sports psychology for the David Leadbetter Academies says he can corroborate the changing trends that golfers like Janzen have noted throughout their careers. “I have been working with professional golfers since the late 1980s, and the change in attitude among golfers toward exercise and fitness regimens has been phenomenal. In the past, many were of a mind that exercise negatively impacted their game. Today, the vast majority of players recognize that a quality, golf-specific fitness plan is an essential component for a golfer’s success.”

But as the attitudes on Tour have changed over the years, so have the resources available to golfers. According to Janzen, “Now we have two trailers on Tour, and both are considerably bigger, probably double the size that we had then. One trailer is designated strictly for working out, and the other one is for therapy. It’s great. They have free weights, various weight machines and all the cardio equipment we need. The other thing is now we have a group of personal trainers that travel the Tour and train a number of guys on a full-time basis.”

Unlike in the early 90s when the golfer with a regimented workout routine was in the minority, today it’s difficult to find someone who isn’t working out, Janzen says. “I think there are probably just a handful of guys that are not doing some sort of exercise. Almost everyone is making an effort to at least get stronger or maybe eliminate the risk of injury by getting in better shape. Most of us see now that it is a key part of being competitive on Tour, and to promoting our long-term health.” ■

