



Lower Your Golf Score...

by: Dr. Bruce Bosler

What? Is that possible? That's right! But who would have ever thought the next big sports doctor to lower your golf scores would be your dentist. How could this be? A "nice smile" on the golf course is obviously the right attitude but it doesn't necessarily mean lower scores...does it? No. It doesn't, but the ability to control body tension and relieve pressure does.

The newest technology to help lower golf scores are specialized, non-contact mouthpieces that are also available for contact sports and for working out at the gym, and will prevent your teeth from clenching and pivot your jaw forward in order to relieve tension so your mind and body can unleash its full potential.

One particular brand of these performance mouthpieces, Armour Bite by Under Armour (UA), is endorsed by several professional athletes and organizations including Hunter Mahan and the PGA. Among the professional athletes who endorse them are Adrian Peterson of the Minnesota Vikings and Marian Gaborik of the New York Rangers.

UA's extensive testing has shown an increase in strength and flexibility, which obviously improves your endurance when using their Amourbite Non-contact

Mouthpiece. A huge benefit to this new technology is the ability to reduce athletic stress, by reducing lactic acid and tension in the head, jaw and neck.

After a night that included several beers and not enough sleep, Keith Gillis, a 31-year-old cyclist in Truro, Nova Scotia, set out on a 74-mile road ride with the caveat that he was feeling fatigued. Yet two-thirds of the way through the ride, Mr. Gillis said, he was setting the pace, riding ahead of his cycling partner. "Even though I'd felt tired at the start, I had the energy to lead, and I wasn't out of breath," he said.

To what did he attribute his stamina? A flexible mouth guard by a Canadian company called Makkar that he has been biting on while riding since April. When fellow cyclists ask him why he isn't winded when they are, Mr. Gillis tells them, "Because I have my Superman guard in."

It's easy to see why there is a growing number of athletes wearing what manufacturers like to call these "performance enhancing mouthpieces" while golfing, cycling, running or weight training. These mouthpieces are light, flexible pieces of molded plastic that fit over the teeth — and are only vaguely reminiscent of that retainer from junior high school or the bulky mouth guards worn by football players.

Dentists say these high-end mouth guards can open up the airways, prevent teeth clenching and align the jaw. Being able to take in more air while exercising has obvious benefits — more oxygen for working muscles — while a relaxed jaw can decrease stress and help an athlete's body function more efficiently.

The performance mouth-



piece is designed for optimal fit and comfort. It is a performance mouthpiece for non-contact sports such as golf, running, swimming, weight lifting, yoga, palates and tennis. The ultra-strong alloy mouthpiece is for limited non-contact sports, such as basketball, soccer, baseball, cycling, skating, volleyball and softball. Then for superior protection, the mouth-guard is built for contact sports, such as football, ice hockey, lacrosse, boxing, martial arts and wrestling.

Benefits may include:

- Increase in Strength
- Increase in Endurance
- Increase in Reaction Time
- Reduces Performance Inhibiting Stress
- Reduces Risk of Traumatic Injury to the Mouth

Dena Garner, an assistant professor at the Citadel who has studied athletes using Bite Tech devices since 2005, said she thought some of her original findings were, “a fluke, but every time I’ve done lactate studies with this mouthpiece, I’m finding there is a difference,” she said.

This year Captain Garner used an Under Armour mouthpiece while training for a marathon. Previously she, “had been happy with running 10-minute miles,” she said, but wearing the mouthpiece, she consistently ran a mile in as little as eight minutes. “It was pretty astounding to me,” she said. “I didn’t feel as tired as when I ran the 10-minute-per-mile pace.”

Let’s face it—the mouthpiece can give athletes an edge. Clenching the teeth can lead to the release of the stress hormone cortisol, which, at excessive levels, can impede athletic performance. Having the Under Armour product in place “interrupts that flight-or-fight response,” said Bob Molhoek, chief executive of Bite Tech.

“When you have the jaw in a relaxed position, the rest of the body can be more relaxed — it’s a domino effect,” said Kathrina Agatep, a dentist in San Diego.

Want to improve your golf score, lift more weight at the gym or improve your marathon time? A call to your dentist might be your next smart move. Visit www.armourbite.com to find an Under Armour authorized dentist near you. ■

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