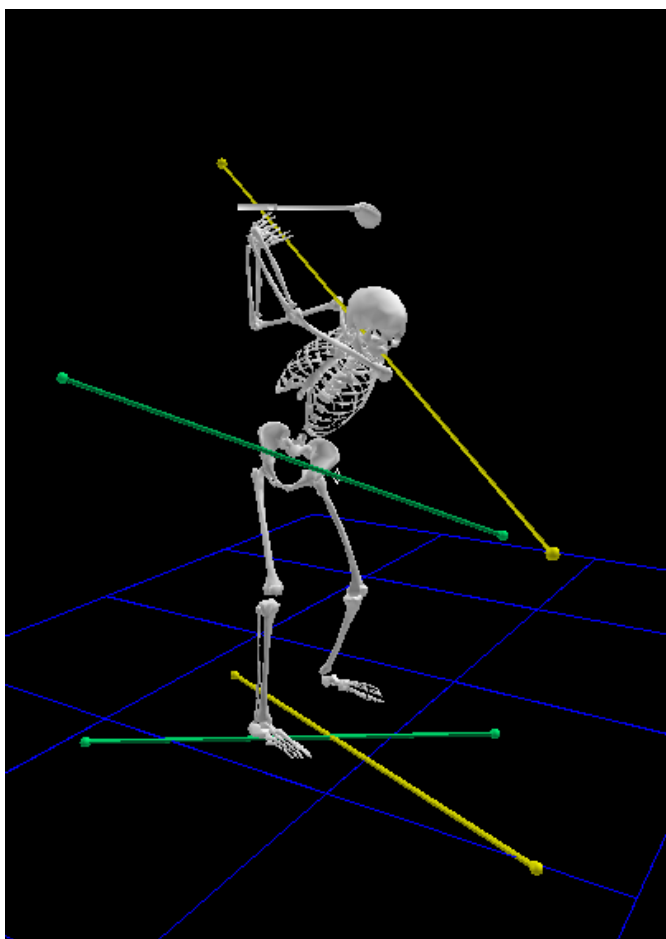


### X-Shape for X-Factor

It's become a common phrase. I hear coaches, pros and commentators quoting it all the time. "Tigers got great X-factor", "Sergio has been working on his", "someone else has lost a bit of theirs", and it's another thing that John Daly has got too much of. Now it's not a pro-endorsed shower gel, or an anti-perspirant that mysteriously attracts golfers to each other. It is simply a hips and shoulders thing. But it is important.

To explain it once and for all, take a look at the diagram below of a pro at the top of their back swing. I have put a green axis rod through the pelvis and a yellow one through the shoulders. You can see how both the pelvis and the shoulders have made a turn, but in relative terms the shoulders have travelled much further round. Without altering these angles I have dropped the rods to the floor and you can see what you get....an X shape. A skinny X means you haven't got much X-factor, a nice wide square X means you have.



Why is it important? Well the more separation you have between these two axes means that you can load up and explode more energy via the big muscle groups of the pelvis and torso. To explain it find a pencil rubber, take hold of it in both hands and just twist it a little way and let go....it will spring back into place. Now twist it a long way and it will positively snap back into shape. Now think of your torso as a big rubber and you will get the idea why the X-factor that drives trunk coil is so important when it comes to producing power in a golf swing.

Now the light bulbs go off and golfers all around the world are desperately trying to grab themselves a bit of x-factor. Books are written about it, DVD's are sold, and quite rightly teaching pros ask it of their pupils. There's a big problem though...just as much as X-factor is a technical thing, it is even more of a physical thing. Modern life ruins X-factor; slumping, driving, computing, sedentary jobs and the fact that we no longer throw spears at our food means that we just don't use our X-factor...and if you don't use it, you lose it. We are just too tight, stiff and "shut-down", and it doesn't matter how much you pay David Leadbetter, and how loud he shouts at you, if you haven't got the range don't go expecting to get it on the range. You need to down clubs and get exercising then get your cash out and ask a pro to mould your new flexibility into a golf swing. It just doesn't work the other way round.

I get asked all the time what is the best exercise to help you gain some X-factor? There isn't one, you need to get into a graduated programme of flexibility and stability exercises. Problem is that's where some folks can lose interest. So I invented this. Instant X-factor. If you have got a healthy spine and you're up for it, go find a wall and try this.

### **X-Stretch**



1. Stand right side on to a wall and half your foot lengths away.
2. Rotate to the right fully and stick as much of your chest, arms and hands onto the wall as you can.
3. Walk your right foot forward and your left foot back, keeping feet straight, heels down.
4. Counter rotate your head to the left, cheek to the wall.

5. As you get more flexible try and cross your left foot behind the line of your right, and really spread your arms high and wide.
6. Hold for about 10 seconds and release. Do it 3 times on both sides.

This exercise drives your shoulders and torso round into maximum rotation, but the foot positioning holds back your pelvis from following this rotation.... in flexibility terms, X-factor. The arm extension opens up all-important lats to follow this rotation, and the neck counter rotation gives you the range to keep your head down on the ball. It has everything.

Don't rush this exercise because it is a tough stretch, and don't push into pain or discomfort. Try a swing before hand, go at the stretch easily, and then swing again. You will feel the difference. Do it every day for 2 weeks, then go book a lesson.

Bob Wood  
Chartered Physiotherapist

