

GOLF FITNESS



Find power by loading and firing strong, flexible muscles, says top physio Bob Wood

Where power really comes from

Bob says: It's not the forearms, it's not the shoulders, it's not even the hips. Power comes from your ability to load and unload a muscle. By loading a muscle, I mean lengthening it so it can contract. The more you can lengthen a muscle, the faster it can contract and drive your movement. This is why flexibility is so important for power. The more elastic your muscles, the more they can stretch and load.

In terms of your golf swing, the best way to load your muscles to the max is through what has become known as the X-factor - making the biggest difference possible between your shoulder and hip turns.

The muscles that drive the X-factor are the glute muscles in your backside and the lat muscles under your shoulders. In the most powerful backswing coil, your right glute and left lat are stretched out to their maximum length as you reach the top. From here they contract and fire off the downswing, powering the club to impact. Just after you hit the ball - and when the club reaches maximum speed - your body switches over. Now your *left* glute and *right* lat grab your momentum, slowing it down to the finish. This slowing down of power is just as important as its creation; the deceleration allows you to harness and control the power you've created; try hitting a shot without putting on any brakes and you'll see what I mean.

The power mantra is 'Lengthen, Load, Explode, Decelerate'. The drills and tests on the next page will help you click in to this process. Work on them and watch your drives soar.

Fully loaded

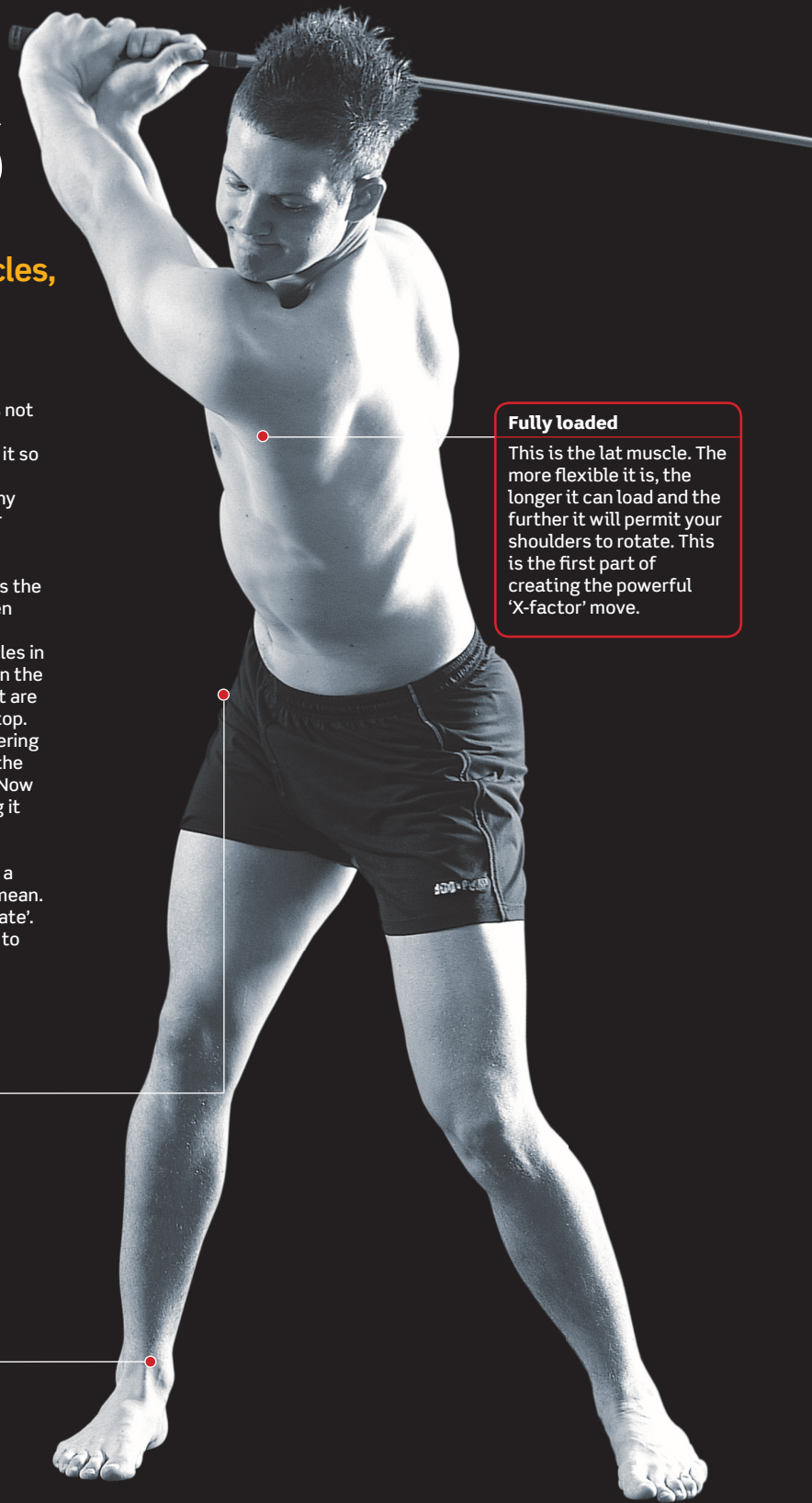
This is the lat muscle. The more flexible it is, the longer it can load and the further it will permit your shoulders to rotate. This is the first part of creating the powerful 'X-factor' move.

Bum steer

It's hard to see from here but the glute muscle of the right buttock is also fully stretched. When your glutes can take the strain like this, it allows you a massive turn with no loss of stability.

Ankle sock

You can't fire a cannon from a canoe. Similarly, you can't hit hard with a stable lower half. Leg strength is a big part of power. Your pins must be able to harness the torque from your X-factor coil.



X-factor demonstrated by Gareth Johnston, assistant pro at Downshire GC