Return to Golf after Shoulder Arthroplasty: Golf Performance and Outcome Scores

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INTRODUCTION: Golf is an increasingly popular sport in the United States, especially amongst the age group of patients undergoing joint replacement. Return to golf after hip and knee arthroplasty has been previously studied. However, the quality and level of play following total shoulder arthroplasty is less defined, especially following reverse shoulder arthroplasty. We hypothesize that shoulder pain and performance will improve during golf similarly after both anatomic and reverse total shoulder arthroplasty.

METHODS: This is a retrospective cohort study of 69 patients identified as playing golf recreationally prior to undergoing either anatomic or reverse shoulder arthroplasty. All patients were cleared to return to golf activities 3 months following surgery. A golf-specific questionnaire was emailed to patients focusing on their experience returning to golf after shoulder arthroplasty. Results following total shoulder arthroplasty (TSA) were compared to reverse shoulder arthroplasty (RSA). Patient reported and functional outcome scores were evaluated.

RESULTS: The median age at surgery was 70 (62-73) years with 47 (68.1%) total shoulder replacements and 22 (31.9%) reverse shoulder replacements. Thirty-six (52.1%) patients returned to playing golf within 6 months and sixty (87.0%) patients returned to playing golf within 12 months following surgery. Enjoyment of golf either improved or stayed the same in 51 patients (91.0%). There was no significant change in handicap score after shoulder replacement. Pain experienced during golf improved significantly from a median VAS pain of 6 to 1 (p<0.001), with slightly greater improvement in pain for TSA patients (p=0.025). Driving distance improved for 52.2% of patients, with TSA patients reporting significantly greater improvements in distance (p=0.014). For all other questions, patients treated with anatomic and reverse shoulder arthroplasty reported similar experiences. ASES, SST, SANE, VAS function, active flexion and external rotation all significantly improved at most recent follow up (p<0.001).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: Return to golf following both reverse and anatomic total shoulder arthroplasty is a realistic expectation, with significant improvements in pain and function while playing golf. Enjoyment playing golf, golf performance, and average length of drive improve in approximately half of all patients. Patients treated with anatomic and reverse shoulder arthroplasty can expect similar golf experiences following surgery, with TSA patients experiencing a better improvement in driving distance.