

Club Swinging Problems and Solutions

Finding something tough? Use this chapter as a reference guide when you are experiencing any difficulty. Look down the following list for the problem and consider if the suggested solution is appropriate. The answers are mostly common sense. Make use of these tips to achieve greater progress with your club swinging.

Strains

Painful, but not uncommon for those who throw themselves straight into a hard practice session without any preparation. Identify the strained muscle. You will probably need to rest it for a few hours if not days. Gentle massage may aid the healing.

In future, do not be so impatient to practise. Always warm up the weak area with special care and go easy on it until the strength is fully regained. Another tip is to specifically tailor your warm up to flex those areas with stiffness or where you have had difficulty in the past, breathing into them on an exhalation.

Club swinging has been used as a physiotherapy exercise to strengthen and cure joints with injuries. Perhaps the strain was caused by mishandling heavy loads or by some other activity, in which case, gentle swinging will heal and firm up the muscles.

Hitting Yourself

Learning a new move will often involve dealing with a few knocks to your body. Do not be put off by the first badly placed swing. **Slow down and learn from it.** Where did it hit and why?

Q) Were you going too quickly to keep control?

A) Slow right down before building up speed, now with improved control.

Q) Did you lose concentration?

A) Regain your focus by looking straight ahead at a distant spot. If this does not work, then take a short break.

Q) Was it due to inflexibility in any particular joint?

A) Work on this joint with warm up exercises before attempting the move again, with improved suppleness and reach.

Q) Were you transferring unsuccessfully from one move to another?

A) Plan the transition so that it flows. The change you are attempting may not be working because your timing needs adjustment.

Q) Was it because you were stepping in an incompatible direction?

A) If so, then rethink the twist or steps and try the move again.

Bruising

If knocks are hard, or repeated, then bruising may result.

a) Analyse which particular trick is causing painful hits.

b) Accept the warning signal from your body's defences and take a rest from the move that is damaging.

c) If the bruising warrants it, take some ice or frozen vegetables from the freezer and make an ice pack to numb the tender area. Arnica ointment may also help.

Accidentally Hitting Others

Very embarrassing and to be avoided at all times or else you will lose friends. Always apologise before considering if it was your fault.

Q) Were you standing too close to them, i.e. less than an arm's length away?

A) **Always check that you have enough room** in all directions before beginning to club swing. Warn those people that you commonly practise around of the dangers of getting in the way. Children, in particular, often come too close for comfort.

Q) Did a club inadvertently fly off at speed?

A) This loss of grip is a symptom of loss of concentration. Have a rest and then go slowly, taking care not to be over-confident when there are others around who could get hurt.

Clubs Colliding

Take a moment to consider at what point, and why, did the clubs collide?

Make sure that you allow the clubs to pass one another by:

- swinging one hand in front of the other, or
- widening the distance between the clubs, or
- trying the pattern in a different timing before returning to the move that caused a collision.

Q) Did you lose concentration?

A) Regain your focus before continuing.

Q) Is it really feasible to perform this move without a collision?

A) If not, then perhaps it is possible to turn a gentle beating of the clubs to your advantage - for instance a domino effect or an opportunity for comedy - Look at the sections on beating in Lesson 20.

Sore Hands

A committed club swinger may suffer from sore hands following heavy practice over successive days. This is a natural consequence if you are aiming at rapid progress. The sore points can be eased by the use of a moisturising cream. Eventually your skin will toughen up.

If you are using a fuel (paraffin), for fire club swinging, it is worth cleaning your hands carefully after packing away. This helps prevent the fuel from causing a rash to develop on already sore areas.

Blistering

Blistering is most often a sign of poor grip. Make sure that the knob of the club is not in between the fingers. It should be held in the notch between thumb and first finger.

Preferably, the knobs on your clubs should be both rounded and smooth. Protect the blistered area from further rubbing with a plaster and take a rest.

Uneven Circles

If your patterns are producing ovals or ellipses rather than circles, you have poor swinging planes. Watching yourself practise in a mirror and making adjustments is the best cure.

Q) Is one hand worse than the other?

A) Work hardest with the weaker hand, practising with it alone until planes are flat to the front.

Problems with Alternating Timing

This is a difficult timing and so practise the move with your weak hand alone until it is smooth. Bring in the stronger side whenever it feels right to do so. Continue the move with the subdominant side and let strongest hand find the rhythm. With practice your coordination will improve until both sides are equally strong.

Problems with Parallel Movements

Parallel movements require both arms and hands to be equally flexible. Keep the movement flat to the correct swinging plane.

Q) Are you going faster with one hand?

A) Slow right down so that you can control the dominant hand.

Q) Is one hand much weaker?

A) Practise with the weak hand alone for 8 counts slowly and 8 counts at faster speed.

Problems with Patterns in Follow Time

Follow time patterns are demanding and so require much practice to master. Begin in parallel then slightly speed up the lead hand until it is a half a circle in front of the other hand. Note that strong parallels are a prerequisite to learning good follow time patterns.

Sometimes you may not believe that you can do a trick correctly when, in reality, you have accomplished the move, although still only in a rough form. Ask someone who is able to do the pattern to look at your follow time swinging moves.

Problems with Snakes

Snakes are advanced tricks which take work to perform with any fluidity. This is because the club does not swing with gravity, but must be directed around the arm using a limber wrist. Watch the movement of the snake in a mirror and keep the pattern high and flat to the plane. It may be that you are performing snakes but that you do not realise it! This is because snakes feel very awkward until you have practised them for some time.

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www.cosmosjugglers.co.uk - see the *Holidays* pages for Anna's annual May and August UK events for club swingers, poi & pole spinners, jugglers, fire enthusiasts and glow-in-the dark/UV performers.