

For your game

Discussing

DISTANCE

By James Acbenbach



PHOTOS COURTESY LONG DRIVERS OF AMERICA

Lee 'The Blonde Bomber' Brandon

The Blonde Bomber

This past September, in pursuit of long driving's biggest first prize for women, \$10,000, Lee ("The Blonde Bomber") Brandon cranked a 332-yard drive down the middle of a tight fairway at Columbia Edgewater Country Club.

The showdown took place at the LPGA Safeway Classic in Portland, Ore., and nobody was close to Brandon. LPGA veteran Laura Davies finished second at 306 yards.

Now 42, the 5-foot-11 Brandon lives in Los Angeles, where she is a physical trainer and spine biomechanics specialist. She has plenty of advice for golfers worried about their backs.

"Anybody who owns a spine needs to be concerned," she says. "Golf is a one-sided sport, and a one-sided sport creates imbalances that can lead to serious injuries. How many golfers do you know who

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<<< LONG, p43 have had trouble with one hip, one knee or one shoulder? It happens all the time."

Through posture-specific strength training and a variety of flexibility exercises, Brandon seeks to undo the imbalances that golf creates.

She laughs at men who focus on how much weight they can lift in the gym.

"Ultimately the bench press is on one plane and doesn't have much to do with the price of pudding," she says. "No golfer can train in one plane and expect to improve his golf game. Golf is a 360-degree plane sport."

Brandon says a chin-up is a better indicator of golf strength.

"How many chin-ups can you do?" Brandon asks. "That's a more accurate question. It all starts with a strong back. The question becomes: How fast can you move your hands (in the golf swing) with a stable back? Guys who try to do it all with their arms will create a shoulder problem for themselves."

Brandon's interest in physical fitness grew from two injuries. When she was 17, she fell through a glass door and severed the brachial artery in her left elbow. During surgery, her heart stopped. But she survived.

Later she "hurt my back really badly in a diving accident. I've always lived on the edge, but these things are the reason I became a strength coach."

At 22, she was named a strength coach for the New York Jets, the first female in the history of the NFL to earn such a distinction.

Just six years ago, a fitness client took her to a golf range. She had never played, but quickly was hooked.

Today she tells people, "Never swing outside yourself. Never swing out of control. Never. Your priority should be to avoid injury. If you understand how to standardize your spine angle, then you can learn how to be aggressive without swinging outside yourself."