

# HOUSTON LINKS

The nation's best local golf magazine

JUNE 2010

*Houston Oaks Country  
Club & Family Sports  
Retreat is...*

## A Family Affair

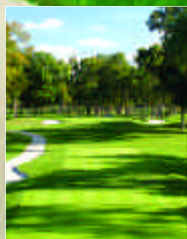
Three Houston families have teamed up to create a unique, all-in-one club that celebrates families spending time together



**This One's  
For You, Dad!**



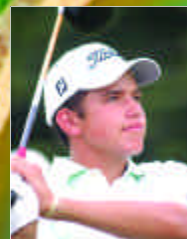
**Andy Dillard's  
'92 U.S. Open**



**The 101st  
Texas Amateur**



**Mid-Life  
Challenge**



**State Prep  
Championships**



**Golf  
Instruction**



**Tiger, Hank  
Part Ways**

## MID-LIFE CHALLENGE, PART 2

## Mark Button Wins His Mid-Life Battle of the Bulge

# GAME CHANGER

*Our own Mark Button spent 18 weeks with TPI fitness expert Pam Owens to see if golf fitness really works. As you will read in his own words, it changed his life, and his game, for the better.*



**TEACHER'S NOTE**—Mark Button was like a lot of golfers I see, out of shape, poor diet, nagging injuries due to weak core and lack of flexibility, overweight, and wanting to get better at golf. He was an “Average Joe Golfer.” But, Mark was teachable and completely committed to getting golf fit. He did everything that I requested through the TPI program and even cleaned up his diet. The results are phenomenal, yet not surprising. He thoroughly followed the program; therefore, his results were “by the book.”

I suppose if these 18 weeks of training were a test of the validity of golf fitness, then once again the TPI program passed. Mark's Golf Fitness Handicap is much lower, which means he is more flexible, stable, balanced, stronger and has more stamina and energy. Mark's body has become a more efficient instrument that can generate power and transfer that power to the club head. Mark has become “Athletic Joe Golfer.”

On a personal note, I felt fortunate to help Mark on his golf improvement plan. I am grateful to have the pleasure of helping golfers get better at their sport which just so happens to improve their health and daily life,



PHOTO: WWW.HHPHOTO.COM

too. The journey doesn't have to stop. Mark can become stronger, more powerful, gain better balance and more mobility. I advised him to continue with his revised workout plan, set new golf and fitness goals and come see me for follow-up sessions. I love what I do!

**E**ighteen weeks of training with the best Titleist Performance Institute Level 3 fitness instructor in the area, 50-plus hours of intense, golf-specific training, days of cardio and a completely revamped diet all resulted in getting me into the best shape of my life.

It's worth repeating: I'm in the best shape of my life.

Back on Dec. 8, 2009, I started my TPI program with Pam Owens at the Houstonian Golf & Country Club. By April 15, I had lost 22 pounds, shaved off seven percent of my body fat and gained solid core strength and flexibility.

About halfway through the program, I started hitting every club in my bag about 10 yards farther. I'm now hitting my driver 15 yards longer, sometimes farther than that. I've picked up seven more miles per

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## MID-LIFE CHALLENGE, PART 2

**BEFORE**

(Pre-TPI Training, Dec. 2009)

**Height/Weight:** 6-2, 201 lbs.

**Weight-Loss Goal:** 16 lbs.

**Body Fat:** 26.6 percent

**Body Mass Index:** 26

**Waist Circumference:** 37 in.

**Golf Fitness Handicap:** 15.3

**Golf Handicap Index:** 12.8

**Clubhead Speed:** 90 mph

**Ball Speed:** 144 mph

**Launch Angle:** 10 degrees



hour in my club head speed, and it really helps.

I'm still learning to control my new distances with each club, but my scores are starting to drop. My handicap index went from 12.8 to 11.1 in the few weeks I've been able to play this year.

A weekly diary I kept during the project is available below. I had 18 weeks of training, so grades of "par," "birdie" or "bogey" after each week were given depending on the results. My goal was to shoot even par or better for the 18 weeks.

This sounds like an ad, but if you're interested in losing weight, gaining strength, flexibility and balance while improving your golf game, then I implore you to call Pam and get started on your own TPI program. It works, but without the aide of an expert, your results won't be nearly as dramatic...and you could injure yourself.

This program has changed my life. My next challenge is to keep training on my own (with occasional visits to Pam for correcting technique, etc.) and continue my healthy lifestyle.

TPI worked for me. It can work for you, too.

**Week One: Dec. 7-12**

Weighing in at a tubby 201 pounds, I started my TPI program. Pam set up a personal profile for me on the TPI website. I can see the exercises and work out on my own when necessary. I think Pam took it easy on me in our sessions, easing me into the intensity of the workouts to come. My flexibility was still poor, my balance worse. My diet? Pathetic. I have a long way to go, but at least I'm off and running. Literally.

**Grade:** Double bogey (Diet needs serious clean up.)

**Week Two: Dec. 13-19**

Pam said my weight would fluctuate in the first few weeks. After just one week of TPI workouts and cardio, I dropped six pounds. I felt good about that, but I still struggled with the exercises. I thought I was more flexible, stronger, had better balance. Nope. Not yet. As part of my new diet, I'm not allowed to eat past 8 p.m. When I pull it off, I wake up and eat a big breakfast, which speeds up my metabolism, Pam says. Right now, I'm working on not eating past 9 p.m.

**Grade:** Bogey (Starting to eat better.)

**Week Three: Dec. 20-26**

Merry Christmas! As the exercises get more comfortable, I feel myself becoming more flexible, stronger. I saw the most dramatic drop in my weight. Thanks to a lot of cardio, and of course Pam's intense workouts, my weight was down to 189.5. I had lost 11.5 pounds! I went home to Kansas over the holidays, but I continued to work out hard on my own. Thanks to mom's healthy home cooking, I ate better, too.

Nine inches of snow on Christmas Eve had us snowed in for two and half days. I worked out a lot and watched movies with my parents. It was perfect.

**Grade:** Par (First solid week of training.)

**Week Four: Dec. 27-Jan. 2**

This was a bad week. I got back to Houston on the

**AFTER**

(Post-TPI Training, April 2010)

**Height/Weight:** 6-2, 179 lbs.

**Weight Loss:** 22 lbs.

**Body Fat:** 19.5 percent

**Body Mass Index:** 23

**Waist Circumference:** 33 in.

**Golf Fitness Handicap:** 6.8

**Golf Handicap Index:** 11.1

**Clubhead Speed:** 97 mph

**Ball Speed:** 149 mph

**Launch Angle:** 10.5 degrees



## MID-LIFE CHALLENGE, PART 2 Mark Button Wins His Mid-Life Battle of the Bulge

28th, but Pam had just left for her break for a few days. I seriously needed her to crack the whip and motivate me. Working out on my own is challenging. My personal sessions lacked the intensity (and expertise) of Pam's sessions. I cheated a little on my diet, too. I couldn't get through the entire holiday break without some chocolate. Regrettable. Oh, and my weight climbed back to 192.

**Grade:** Double bogey (Where is my self-discipline?)

### Week Five: Jan. 3-9

I suffered a minor back injury (by playing golf in 40-degree, rainy weather) and I was unable to workout with Pam on Thursday. Thanks to Dr. Xavier Cadena and his magical Active-Release Therapy and "Stretch to Win" chiropractic treatments, I was back on my feet in a couple of days. Weight was 195, but it was difficult to tell if my flexibility, balance and strength had improved because of my injury. The back pain was gone by Friday night, and I worked out on my own Saturday with some intense cardio. I pushed myself through the TPI workout, too, but it's so much easier having Pam pushing me.

**Grade:** Bogey (Rebounded from back injury.)

### Week Six: Jan. 10-16

After a good workout on Tuesday, the session on Thursday with Pam was the best—and hardest—since I started. I warmed up on my own with about seven minutes of cardio on an elliptical machine. I weighed 194. I lost one more pound! Then Pam warned me as we started, "It's time to step it up into phase two." We added weight to the exercises and juiced the intensity in others. My arms and legs were burning near the end of the session. As I drove home, my legs were heavy, my triceps on fire but my heart had finally slowed down a little. I felt great.

**Grade:** Birdie (Best week yet.)

### Week Seven: Jan. 17-23

It was a rough start. After a good run Monday, I woke Tuesday with a stomach bug. I barely made it through the first 10 minutes of my workout with Pam before dizziness and nausea sent me home. I felt better the next day, so I did about an hour of cardio. My weight was down to 193 at Thursday's session with Pam, which was my best session to date. We pushed it more than previous weeks: more reps, adding weight. "I really think you're turning a corner," Pam said. "You're going from Average Joe to Joe Athlete." I suppose I was asleep on the couch a few years ago with an open bag of Cheetos splayed across my chest when I morphed from Joe Athlete to Average Joe. Getting old stinks.

**Grade:** Par (Missed session hurt.)

### Week Eight: Jan. 24-30

Started with a great workout on Tuesday. It's finally getting warmer and drier outside, so I know I'll be playing golf soon. I'm really eager to see if I can feel a difference. After Wednesday's cardio, chest and abs workout, I had another great session with Pam on Thursday. I feel like I'm finding my stride. I dropped three more pounds; I'm down to 191 and feel great. I'm headed to Dallas this weekend for the North Texas Golf Expo, and if the weather holds up, I should squeeze in a round of golf to see how my new-found flexibility, strength and balance translate on the links.

**Grade:** Birdie (Still losing weight.)

### Week Nine: Jan. 31-Feb. 6

I was able to keep eating healthy in Dallas. It was rainy and cold

(even snowed one afternoon), which made golf impossible. I did get in some cardio and one good workout. Tuesday, back in Houston, brought a new set of exercises with Pam. We used greater resistance and more weight on several upper-body flexibility drills, but I felt comfortable as we went. I dropped two more pounds; down to 189.

I've learned to deal with the hunger at night. Not eating past 8 p.m. is tough, but I just go to bed hungry. It makes me wake up earlier and hungrier, which leads to a big breakfast. My mid-week cardio work fell off this week with the cold weather.

**Grade:** Par (Great workouts, cardio needs improvement.)

### Week 10: Feb. 7-13

Great week. Started with strong cardio work on Monday, then a challenging session with Pam on Tuesday. We added a 10-pound weight to my ab crunches (I hold the dumbbell across my neck), and Pam introduced the cross-chop ab crunch exercise Tuesday. Extending my arms over my head and tilted to one side, I hold an 8-pound dumbbell with arms straight and crunch it down to the opposite knee. It burns, but my abs are getting tighter. Pam cranked up the intensity on Thursday, when I weighed in pre-workout at 188. I did cardio on my own Wednesday and Friday. Kept my diet clean, too.

**Grade:** Eagle (By far the best week yet.)

### Week 11: Feb. 14-20

I'm finding that food I used to love—live on, actually—doesn't "cooperate" with my system anymore. The lasagna from my favorite pasta joint doesn't sit well and the thought of fast food is revolting. I'm learning to cook and bake healthy dinners now. My body is changing, too...I can see a tiny bit of definition in my abs when I flex. My workouts with Pam were solid. I'm down to 187, but I'm not just losing weight. I'm losing inches. Pam explains: "A pound of muscle is about the size of your fist. A pound of fat is about the size of a grapefruit." So even though I'm losing weight off the scale, I'm gaining muscle and losing inches. Oh, and I also hit balls for the first time this year. Didn't hit it great, but I definitely felt stronger and more flexible. Feels like I've picked up 5-10 yards with every club.

**Grade:** Par (Decent week, need more cardio.)

### Week 12: Feb. 21-27

Finally, warm weather! I played golf Sunday at my home course, Memorial Park. I warmed up with range balls and putted for 15 minutes. I felt so much tighter in my core while addressing the ball. I played great for my first true round of the year. I was pounding my driver 10-15 yards longer than normal, and all of my iron shots were flying an extra 10 or so yards. I was 3-over through six holes (great for me, a 12-handicap), but a couple loose shots and too many three-putts kept me from breaking 85. Still, it was so much fun to drive the ball farther. It's only made me more excited to work out even harder.

**Grade:** Birdie (Good workouts, pounding the driver.)

### Week 12: Feb. 28-March 6

I hit a wall. My weight remains at 188, although I often feel bloated. Pam tells me to focus less on the number on the scale and more on my body. My gut is gone, and my arms and chest have grown. But I'm bored with my diet—chicken, chicken, chicken; I'm growing feathers—and haven't experimented with new recipes. My workouts have been good, and I've played golf four times. I'm hitting the ball farther, but bladed wedges and three-putts stop me from breaking 85. Must find time to practice and get motivated to push through this plateau.

**Grade:** Bogey (Lackluster week overall.)

## Mark Button Wins His Mid-Life Battle of the Bulge

## MID-LIFE CHALLENGE, PART 2

### Week 13: March 7-13

What plateau? My first golf lesson of 2010 with Neil Wilkins helped me snap out of it. My swing path still needs work, but Neil was impressed with my ability to control the club-face, increased swing speed and added distance. "The ball is jumping off the face," he said. "Is that your 7-iron?" Nope. It was my 8-iron, the same club we always use in our lessons. The week continued on a good track with strong workouts and a trip to the grocery store.

Eating healthy isn't easy, but it's not brain surgery, either. Just requires some effort. It's time to stop obsessing about my golf scores, too. I feel stronger over the ball (my feet "grip" the ground), so I know the scores will drop in time. My weight dipped to 184.

**Grade:** Birdie (Good bounce-back week.)

### Week 14: March 14-20

The timing was perfect. Pam is out of town, on spring break with her daughter. I had to push myself and work out hard—a great test for my fitness once this project ends. Solid workouts Sunday and Tuesday gave me a good start. Before she left town, Pam found my new favorite store: My Fit Foods. They have single-serving, freshly made meals to go. The tilapia with broccoli and couscous, the ground turkey with black beans chili and salmon with steamed veggies. For the single guy on a diet, My Fit Foods is Utopia.

I sneaked in one round of golf, but I won't mention the score. I've definitely added distance, but my swing path needs major attention. It will come. Capped off the week with good workout Thursday and more cardio Friday.

**Grade:** Par (Not a bad solo effort.)

### Week 15: March 21-27

That cracking sound you may have heard was Pam popping her whip on me in our first two sessions together in more than 11 days. She tortured me; Thursday's workout ran 20 minutes long. Kicked my tail, but I needed it. Weight is 183.

Here's the best part: I played golf Saturday and Sunday morning at Memorial Park. I walked and carried my bag both days. Pre-TPI, if I carried my bags for 12 holes, I'd struggle to get out of bed the next day. Not now. I played my best golf late in both rounds. I finished par-birdie for an 89 Saturday; came in birdie-bogey-par for 86 Sunday. My back felt strong. Still does. I am a new man thanks to the strength, flexibility and balance I've gained from TPI workouts.

**Grade:** Birdie (Hardcore workouts, clean diet.)

### Week 16: March 28-April 3

I'm in Lake Charles this week for a work trip. Pam and I had an intense workout on Monday; there seems to be no end to her array of abdominal exercises. This work trip is golf intensive, to say the least.



I played 90 holes in five days. I could tell my fitness paid off right away. I arrived late, stepped off the plane Tuesday and, without time to hit a range ball, joined my group at the second course. I stretched out, but didn't feel warmed up. No matter. I shot 38 on the front with a chip-in birdie. The rest of the week was much the same. No soreness despite the nonstop golf. I shot in the low 80s every round. Did my best to eat healthy—it was Louisiana, after all—so I wonder what I'll weigh come Monday when I see Pam again.

**Grade:** Par (Scores dropping.)

### Week 17: April 4-10

Patience truly is a virtue. My game is improving. Walked and carried my bag at the not-yet-opened Old American Golf Club in Dallas on Thursday. Played from almost 7,000 yards in 15-20 mph winds. My body felt tight, core strong. Shot 39-43, and that was with a double bogey on No. 18, my only bad drive of the day. It was the best score on a hard course I've shot in probably 18 months.

While in Dallas, I ran to a park on Wednesday and Friday mornings for workouts. Did some push-ups on a park bench and pull-ups on a kids'

jungle gym.

My weight is 182. Over the weekend, my friend Tony Belzer invited me to play in the Stonebridge Country Club member-guest at the Dye Course, the toughest course in the state. We finished the 36-hole event birdie-eagle to shoot 72 in alternate shot. We finished fifth in our flight, but we had a great time. Plus his girlfriend, Simone, was nice enough to cook us ultra-healthy dinners both nights. It was an awesome week.

**Grade:** Birdie (Looking forward to re-assessment.)

### Week 18: April 11-17

The home stretch started off great. I weighed in at 181 on Tuesday before a killer workout with Pam. She put me through a series of exercisea—with increased weight and resistance—to prepare me for the re-assessment next week. I felt like running Wednesday, but took the day off and rested. On Thursday, I weighed 179. I'm probably as skinny as I was in college.

Thursday's workout was another good one. I feel good about the re-assessment. I wonder how much I've decreased my body fat percentage. I feel like a new person. This program wasn't easy, but it was so worth it. I'm hitting the golf ball 10-15 yards farther and I've lost 22 pounds. My once-chronic back pain is all but gone and my beer belly vanished weeks ago. I plan to keep working out—I'm running now, too—and I have no plans to return to my once-porous diet.

No matter how I do on the re-assessment, I know I succeeded in this project. I'd highly recommend TPI training to anyone who wants to lose weight, vastly improve their diet and start hitting the golf ball farther. It really works, folks.

**Grade:** Birdie (Solid finish. Thanks, Pam!) TL