

'Golf isn't exercise': gym boss takes a swing

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Described by Mark Twain as a "good walk ruined", golf has long divided opinion as to whether it is a bona fide sport.

The game, often associated with networking, business and diplomacy, has again been ensnared in the classic debate over whether it counts as exercise or it is just leisurely recreation.

The war of words was sparked by a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* earlier this week in which Harvey Spevak, a managing partner of the luxury gym company the Equinox Group, claimed that golf was not exercise.

"You're hitting a little white ball around a golf course, using a golf cart,

and drinking at the ninth hole," the executive, who describes himself as "human guinea pig" because of all the health and wellness trends he's tried, said of the sport. "It's fun, it's recreation. But I don't think it's exercise."

The assertion has stirred up the ire of the golf world, with England Golf, the governing body for amateur golf in England, mounting a vigorous defence of the game and espousing its various health benefits.

"Whether it's improved cardiovascular health, strength, balance, or burning calories from walking around a course, golf provides vital exercise which individuals might not be able to access through other activities," a spokesman for the body said. "Not just that, but we

know golf has significant mental health and social benefits.

"It provides an opportunity to be outdoors, providing essential vitamin D and fresh air, which can benefit the immune system and overall health. For many, it's a chance to switch off and relax, reducing stress, improving brain health, and playing alongside people certainly helps build social connections."

Giulio Merolla, 48, the founder of the North London Golf Academy, said his novice students were often surprised by the physical impact golf can have.

"They're definitely sweating when they're here hitting shots, so it's definitely exercise, that's for sure," he said. Referring to wearable health trackers,

the coach added: "Half of my clients wear Whoops and they're always going to me: 'Hang on a sec, I've got to turn it on,' as they consider it a tough workout."

"You're moving, you're rotating, and you're swinging a club that may weigh about 150g or so, but you're swinging it up to 100 miles an hour so it feels a lot heavier than it is," he said.

"Golf makes walking outside a bit easier, a bit more enjoyable, but you are walking around 6km with a 10kg bag on your back, so I can assure you, you do need some level of fitness to play."

For Daniel Webster, a veteran coach and course manager, the claim that golf wasn't a form of exercise was laughable. "Hitting a driver, so that's one shot with the driver full blast, is equivalent to

bench pressing your max weight three times," he said. "Add on all the swings during a round of golf with the walking, and it is quite strenuous."

A number of scientific studies have revealed the health benefits of playing golf. In 2024 a British Journal of Sports Medicine study found that playing in old age could significantly help extend the lives of people with dementia.

Research by the University of Eastern Finland published in 2023 found that playing golf was one of the best ways to keep your heart healthy in retirement. An 18-hole round was found to be better than walking for controlling cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels, cutting the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Visit the home that created a Starman

For a young David Bowie — or Davie Jones, as he was then known — his bedroom was his "entire world" (Andy Silvester writes).

"I had books up there, my music up there, my record player," he recalled. Now fans of arguably Britain's greatest rock star will be able to see that bedroom for themselves as his childhood home near Bromley, southeast London, is to be restored and opened to the public.

The Heritage of London Trust has purchased the unassuming terraced house at 4 Plaistow Grove in which Jones spent 12 years, from the ages of eight to 20.

In that room he first encountered the imported American records that inspired his formative songs on his way to becoming a global star. His decades-long career ended with the release of the album *Blackstar* two days before his death in 2016, ten years ago tomorrow.

The two-up, two-down railway worker's



cottage will be restored by the trust to its early 1960s appearance. Geoffrey Marsh, who co-curated the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition *David Bowie Is* in 2013, will lead the work using a never-



David Bowie moved to the house in Bromley aged eight, and lived there until he was 20. It will be turned into a museum and workshop by a heritage charity

before-seen archive as well as first-hand input from Bowie's childhood friends.

George Underwood, an artist and musician who grew up with Bowie and helped design some of Bowie's early album

covers, said: "We spent so much time [in the house] together, listening to and playing music. I've heard a lot of people say David's music saved them or changed their life. It's amazing that he could do that

and even more amazing that it all started here."

Bowie was born in Brixton, south London, before his father, who worked in PR for the charity Barnardo's, moved the family to Bromley.

The purchase and restoration has been part-funded by a £500,000 grant from the Jones Day Foundation, with a public fundraising campaign also launching this month. When completed in late 2027, the site will host creative and skills workshops for young people.

Dr Nicola Stacey, director of the Heritage of London Trust, said: "David Bowie was a proud Londoner. Even though his career took him all over the world, he always remembered where he came from and the community that supported him as he grew up."

The Times columnist and author Caitlin Moran said: "The chance for us all to walk through a newly opened door, and see the suburban launchpad from which David Bowie almost literally took off into space, is beyond thrilling."

Bowie's relationship with the suburbs was not always easy and his childhood was marked by a desire to escape. But despite his at best agnostic relationship with Bromley, Bowie's particular disgust was reserved for nearby Croydon.

"It represented everything I didn't want in my life, everything I wanted to get away from," he said in 1999. "I think it's the most derogatory thing I can say about somebody or something: 'God, it's so f***ing Croydon!'"

Fraudster detectorist had bought 'Roman' brooch on eBay

A fraudster metal detectorist who claimed to have discovered a valuable Roman brooch has avoided a prison sentence after admitting he bought it from eBay.

Jason Price, 54, was paid £5,000 so the brooch, later found to be fake, could be displayed at a local museum. He had secretly ordered it through the online marketplace, Lincolnshire police said.

The force said over several years Price submitted a number of artefacts

to Lincolnshire county council under the Portable Antiquities Scheme, including Roman coins that were found not to be genuine. Artefacts previously submitted by Price were also tested for their authenticity and concerns were raised to the police.

The force said Price pretended to find the Leasingham horse brooch in the Lincolnshire village of Leasingham in 2019, which led to a change in the historic understanding of Roman

brooches in Britain and was classed a significant find. The brooch, which was described as a "once in a lifetime find", had generated national interest when Price claimed to have found it.

In October 2020, Price also claimed to have found a Roman knee brooch in Long Bennington, Lincolnshire, which was recorded as a treasure, police said.

He also claimed to have found two Roman hoards including a Bronze Age axe and figurines, but many of the

items had been purchased online.

Police said Price buried the items he claimed were a Roman hoard in the hopes there would be a full archaeological dig at the Long Bennington site.

Price, of Grantham, Lincolnshire, was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, at Lincoln crown court yesterday after he admitted four charges of fraud by false representation. Price must pay Lincolnshire county council £3,250 in

compensation. He was given up to ten rehabilitation activity days and must complete 150 hours of unpaid work.

Will Mason, head of culture at Lincolnshire county council, said: "It's incredibly sad and disappointing that anyone would choose to exploit Lincolnshire's rich heritage in this way."

"Thankfully, incidents like this remain rare due to the rigorous examinations carried out on objects before they are added to a museum's collection."