



Enter the -ZONE

Can a piece of hi-tech circuitry worn around the neck really enhance stamina, energy and sporting performance? Can it reduce stress and jet lag? Set your dial to Cautiously Open-minded and prepare to enter the world of QLink

BY MATT CLEARY

DAYDREAM WITH US for a moment: it's the 18th tee at Augusta in the 2003 US Masters. You lead by one shot over your playing partner, Tiger Woods, who's birdied the last five holes and just smashed his ball 330 metres down the fairway. The crowd is going bananas. Tiger high fives his caddie, double pumps his fist and bellows "C'MON!" like Lleyton Hewitt in a long queue at the bank.

You stand over your ball knowing there are about 300 million people pondering your mental state and that most are assuming you'll choke. Are you cool?

Are bears Catholic? Of course you're not cool! But what may loosen the choke hold of nervous tension is the QLink, a device its makers say neutralises stress and transports golfers into that fabled land of peak performance known as "The Zone".

That place where your mind is at peace: balls fly sweetly off the clubface and putts roll unerringly towards the hole, like bees zeroing in on the first blooms of spring. A place where you really can "be the ball".

Sound too good to be true? Perhaps, but there are enough people singing QLink's praises – and not just golfers – to make one wonder if there might indeed be something to back up the brochure's bold statements, which claim that QLink can:

- » Increase stamina, energy, concentration and resilience to stress;
- » Enhance sleep, sporting performance and mental acuity; and,
- » Reduce jet lag, headaches and fatigue.

WHAT IS IT? QLink is a pendant worn around the neck. It contains a microchip, a gold-plated tuning board, a resonating cell and 25m of copper coil wound into its three-centimetre diameter.

The chip is programmed with what its makers, Clarus Products International, call "sympathetic resonating technology (SRT)" – a pulsating frequency which is claimed to protect wearers from the stress created by electromagnetic fields (EMFs), those invisible waves that radiate from mobile phones, computers and microwave ovens.

QLink, says the brochure, acts like a "tuning fork for the body, resonating with the optimum life-supporting frequencies for the human energy system".

DOES IT WORK? QLink's Web site and pamphlets are packed with endorsements from academics, sports stars and everyday punters. In a November 2001 White Paper, Dr Beverly Rubik, a US specialist in biophysics who served on the White House Health Care Task Force on Alternative and

Complementary Medicine, tabled data from hundreds of tests on the cells, blood, organs and muscles of people wearing the QLink.

The results, she claimed, proved conclusively that "SRT in products such as the QLink pendant... can counter stress from a variety of situations. As a result, performance, wellbeing and dynamic stability are enhanced".

But being new technology with no historical scientific equivalent – it's not a magnet, copper bracelet or Steve Waugh's red hanky – Australian scientists are divided over its effectiveness.

As the head of Biomedical Science at Wollongong University, Dr Paul Else, observes: "In this area, it's hard to find an expert. It falls in the crack. From a personal point of view, the research seems tenuous. Even though a statement like 'biological systems would be strengthened and more self-resonant with its own healthy function' sounds good, what does it mean?"

Not much, according to one physicist, who remarked: "It sounds like total crap and a scam to separate desperate and ill people from their money."

However, the results of clinical trials carried out by Wollongong University and Imperial College, London, studying QLink's effect on combating EMFs had the paper's author, Dr Rodney Croft,

concluding that: "QLink does have an effect on human neural function. The lack of difference between the control and QLink conditions suggests that the QLink may be mitigating the mobile-phone's effect on neural function."

The study is still to be reviewed by Croft's peers (read: scientists who weren't funded by Clarus Products International) and it will be their conclusions that will decide if the product sinks or swims in sceptical, science-trusting Australia.

Until then, Clarus will rely on their own in-house research studies and endorsements from "unpaid advocates". In Australia,

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these include biochemists, sportspeople, managing directors, even horse trainers.

That's right, four-legged hay burners apparently benefit from using the device, with champion trainer Bart Cummings giving it the thumbs up.

He remarked: "The QLink has proven to me to significantly reduce the negative effects of stress, improve overall health and rebalance the functioning of the horses' internal systems."

Another prominent Sydney trainer, John Morish, adds: "We saw an improvement in our horses' red-blood-cell count. These

cells contain haemoglobin - which carries oxygen around the body - and for whatever reason, it may have helped them assimilate their food better, we definitely saw a higher haemoglobin count after they were in contact [with QLink] for two weeks. It also seems to have a calming effect. Horses that were a bit highly strung seem to have become more relaxed."

And does Morish follow the example of his gallopers and wear one himself? "Yes. I took it off for a few days a month ago and did think I felt more lethargic without it. It was the first time I'd ever taken it off and I definitely felt a bit more... doughy."

Other human fans include beach-volleyball gold-medallist Natalie Cook, who says the pendant allows athletes to make better decisions under pressure.

"You're more centred and your reaction time's a lot better. It prevents you becoming flustered and frustrated. I've noticed a decrease in stress and I'm not as edgy or jumpy. My focus has been a lot clearer, a lot sharper. It allows you to access more resources in your body."

Wheelchair athlete John McLean, who's swum the English Channel, completed three Hawaiian Ironmans and been a *Men's*

Health cover model, has been wearing the pendant for three years. He says: "I don't know the science and stuff behind it, but it's just a matter of feeling comfortable. I guess the winner for me is that nothing's gone wrong. I haven't had any sort of flat stages."

"I try and have a non-stressful time anyway, but it's like taking vitamin C to prevent getting a cold. I wear it to prevent getting stressed. It's keeping me together, put it that way," he adds.

The last (but by no means definitive) word comes from your correspondent, who's bravely played the guinea pig with QLink since January last year.

As someone who's umbilically joined to my PC, mobile phone and microwave oven, I can honestly say I'm sleeping better, feeling calmer and have more energy at the end of the day. Whether this is physiological (it really works), psychological (the placebo is messing with my mind) or because I've finally given up smoking after 17 years (in itself possibly due to QLink) is a moot point.

My golf still sucks - indeed I'm further from the 18th tee at Augusta than Osama Bin Laden is from the White House Health Care Task Force on Alternative and Complementary Medicine - but I find myself less troubled by the fact.

If this sounds like the sort of boost you need, the company offers a 100-day trial period, with a full refund if you're not totally satisfied. But, as always, buyer beware. **MR**

WANT SOME STRESS RELIEF? THEN GET IN THE Q

»» WHAT IS IT?

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»» HOW DOES IT WORK?

The chip is programmed with what its makers call "sympathetic resonating technology" (SRT), which produces a frequency that pulsates around the body via a "passive crystalline oscillator" (the resonating cell). SRT is claimed to protect wearers from the stressful influences of electromagnetic fields, those invisible waves which radiate from mobile phones, computers and microwave ovens.

The maker says the pendant, acts like a "tuning fork for the body, resonating with the optimum life-supporting frequencies for the human energy system".

»» IS IT ANY GOOD?

Fans rave about it. Sceptics don't. And scientists are divided. A recent research study in the *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine* reports positive results and this writer has experienced benefits.

Around the world there are reputedly 275 professional golfers wearing the pendant, including world number two Ernie Els, who'd been wearing a QLink for just three weeks when he won the 2002 British Open.

So next time you're watching the golf, study the neck of your favourite pro and see if you can spot it.

Depending on which model you buy, the QLink ranges in price from \$240 to \$1448. For more information check out either www.sportsinthezone.com.au or www.qlink.com.au.

