



by Brian Wilkes  
Brian's Custom Clubs

## FROM THE Club FITTING BENCH

### Enduring Myths About Golf Clubs

I don't know why, but certain myths about golf clubs just keep going on and on. Like the one that says graphite shafts are too whippy. Anyone playing half decent modern graphite shafts that have been properly fitted knows this is nonsense. Or, how about the one that says a driver with less loft will hit the ball farther? Ha! Or, what about the myth that some shafts will hit the ball farther with the same club head? And then there's the one that says you can hit a driver or 5-iron with a longer shaft in it further than you can one with a shorter shaft.

None of this stuff holds up under serious scrutiny. Of course, there *may* be occasions when *some* of it might occur, because there are exceptions to every rule, but for the most part, for the average golfer, it's bunk! A lot of this stuff is made up by the major manufacturers in the golf club industry to get you to buy their clubs and not some other brand. I've seen lots of players swear by some big name golf clubs, because they play them so well. Mentally they tell themselves that they can hit that brand of clubs better, and so that's okay, whatever works. But the truth is, technically, they really aren't much different from any other.

Let's look at the so-called "whippiness" of graphite shafts. Have you noticed that all tour pros now have graphite shafts in their drivers, fairway metals and hybrids? Do you think that's because they are too whippy? Some even use them as their iron shafts, like Matt Kuchar and Brandt Snedeker. Jordan Spieth carries a 3-iron with a graphite shaft. Do you want to bet it's too whippy? The truth is that the graphite and resin materials that the new generation of graphite shafts are constructed with make them as stable as steel shafts, with half the weight. We like the Accra, Aerotecy, Wishon and UST

Recoil shafts. Personal preference is one thing, but avoiding this equipment on the basis that you think it's whippy is just wrong!

I get customers asking if a different shaft in their driver or fairway metal will hit the ball farther. The short answer is no. A longer answer is maybe. It depends. More distance is really a function of clubhead speed, angle of launch, and loft on the clubface. The flex of the shaft tip may slightly affect launch angle. The general rule of thumb is that softer flex shafts will tend to hit the ball a bit further, but with less accuracy. A stiffer shaft will tend to hit the ball a bit less far, but with greater accuracy. By a bit farther, we're referring to a few yards, not jaw-dropping distances.

So, getting more distance really involves adding swing speed and/or optimizing the launch angle by using the right loft for a particular club. In our experience the standard 10.5 degree driver head launches the ball too low for the average men's clubhead speed of 87 mph. A 13 or 14 degree driver would be better and fly the ball in the air farther, all else being equal. So in this case *more* loft lets you hit the ball farther. And, a lot depends on how you hit it. A steep angle of attack means you likely need even more loft on the clubface to achieve the same results.

There is also the matter of the shaft flex that is printed on the shaft itself. You may have a driver or irons that say R Flex or S Flex on them. The truth is that there is no industry standard for what a regular (R) flex, Seniors (A) flex or a stiff (S) flex is. One manufacturer's R flex may be another's S flex. The only way to really find out the true flex of a shaft is to mount the butt of the shaft in a frequency counter, put a weight on the tip, and oscillate the shaft to count the frequency in cycles per minute. If you've been to my studio you've probably seen me do this.

Stiffer shafts oscillate faster than softer shafts, and the relationship between shaft length and frequency establishes the actual flex. It's science, not guess work. But the club manufacturers do not check each club to establish the actual flex. Instead they have the flex pre-printed on the shafts, and mass-produce the clubs for sale off the rack in the golf stores and pro shops. That's why I have lots of customers who think they are playing the right flex, but in fact they are not; usually they are much too soft, or way too stiff for that golfer.

So yes there are many myths and misconceptions out there about golf clubs. It's my pleasure to try to explain some of the realities to my customers so that they can make more informed decisions about their golf equipment. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call and make an appointment or drop in during my regular drop-in hours.

For custom repairs or custom fitting, Brian Wilkes can be reached at [brian@briansclubs.com](mailto:brian@briansclubs.com), by telephone at 250-516-3392, or you can visit his website at [www.briansclubs.com](http://www.briansclubs.com).

I see things written about the  
golf swing that I can't believe  
work except by accident.

Harvey Penick