



by Brian Wilkes
Brian's Custom Clubs

FROM THE Club FITTING BENCH

Why The Clubfitting Process Works

The golf season seems to be in full swing – pardon my pun. Even I have been out on the links enjoying the game. This is unusual; I'm more often busy in my studio and don't have time to actually play. So, it's a good time to talk about the club fitting process again, for those who are interested.

Club fitting is the process of understanding your swing characteristics and physical abilities, as well as what your playing goals and aspirations are, and then designing clubs that will fit you physically, but also satisfy your playing goals. Golf is a "head game" like no other sport. The truth is that if you are confident that your clubs fit you properly, then mentally you enhance your ability to play better.

Another way to look at it is that if you have the right tools in your hands, then the chances that you will play better are greatly enhanced. A lot of people want to get more distance and expect that fitted clubs will deliver that, but I don't promise more distance. Instead, my focus as a clubmaker is on fitting clubs that you can hit as solidly and consistently as possible. I believe that solid, consistent shot-making is more important than more distance. And, by the way, hitting the ball solid in the centre of the club face will get you all the distance that club and your swing speed can deliver.

Even though each golfer's swing is different, there are a few key universal principles that apply to just about everyone:

1. The club should be fit to your swing. Don't change

your swing to make ill-fitting clubs work better.

2. The results from fitted clubs are best when combined with playing lessons and lots of practice.

3. Buying clubs off the rack is a crap-shoot. There are no industry standards for shaft flex, and clubhead designs are all over the map.

4. We are trying to achieve solid feel and greater consistency in shot quality with each club.

5. Key measurements in the fitting process include swing speed, tempo and plane; these are important to understand for all golfers.

Apart from the technical aspects of fitting, I focus quite a bit on how the clubs feel. Feel is an intangible; I can't measure it, I can only try different combinations of shaft, grip and head design until you tell me the feel is right. Lots of experience now permits me to get it right a lot more often and a lot sooner than when I first started out in this business.

Part of the phenomenon of feel is making on-centre hits. That means, when you hit a club right in the centre of gravity in the centre of the clubface, the feel is best. This is best helped by making sure the clubs are the correct playing lengths for each golfer. There are some clubs out there, where when you strike the ball on the centre of the clubface, you hardly feel anything at all, and yet the ball really goes. That's "feel".

One way to get feel is to switch from steel shafts to graphite. The graphite shaft absorbs shock and vibration better than steel. Die-hard steel shaft users insist that this is good feedback to the hands, but others think it's just annoying. Graphite shafts are so good these days that there really is no excuse not to try them. And you can play with less fatigue too, since graphite shafts usually save over an ounce of weight per club.

When your clubs are the correct playing length, weight, flex, the grip fits and the clubs feel great in your hands, the head design is pleasing and instills confidence, don't you think you will play better golf? Say yes. That's why fitting works.

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