From the Club Fitting Bench

The Truth About Custom Fitting

We missed the **PGA Trade Show** last January in **Orlando**, **Florida**, but plan to go again in 2015. The value to club fitters at the show are the technical presentations on club making and club fitting by the top people in the industry. Despite having missed the show, the presentations made at the show were posted on the web site of the **International Clubmakers Guild**.

The presentations included a talk by a senior editor at **Golf Digest**. His main point was that club fitting remains the great, untapped resource for golf improvement. Another expert from **Flightscope** showed statistics revealing that 80% of golfers want to get custom fit, 30% do get some kind of fitting, and only 11% get premium fitting. The gap between those who want to get fitted and those who actually do is pretty big. But for those who do get fitted, what's the difference between the 30% who go through some sort of fitting and the 11% who get the premium treatment?

To explain this difference, perhaps you have been to local golf equipment shops where someone hands you some clubs to hit, and asks which one feels the best (or hits the farthest using their simulator). Then they suggest that those are the clubs for you. That is the crudest form of fitting, but it's possibly better than simply buying off the rack or over the Internet without trying clubs at all.

Then there are the fitting kits. These are racks of particular brands of club heads and shafts. Here the golfer goes through the process of trying different combinations of both, while the fitter watches the ball flight with each. This may be accompanied by the added benefit of a launch monitor. One can see these kits at most pro shops and driving ranges. After working through the kit and taking data, the information about you is sent away to a manufacturer, and your clubs are sent back in several weeks. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this approach. One advantage is that it's better than the crude approach described earlier.

One disadvantage is that the clubs coming back may or may not be correct, i.e. not exactly the specifications you ordered. While we've seen instances where this approach has worked well, we have seen other instances where the clubs ordered came back with the wrong length and/or shaft flex. A principal concern of ours is that the connector between the shaft and club head may stiffen the club so that an accurate reading of correct shaft flex is difficult. Also, we are aware that the average length of time a club fitter is trained to use the kit is about 4 hours. Compare that to the weeks of training taken by premium club fitters. We would include this approach to club fitting in the 30% of golfers who get some sort of fitting.

The 11% who get a premium custom fitting are the ones who go to club fitting specialists, such as Brian's Custom Clubs, who are set up to do that specifically! In our case, we go through a detailed process that results in data concerning your ball striking tendencies and playing goals, about your swing speed and plane, force of transition, wrist release, playing length and grip size as well as much more. What we don't do is send this information off to some anonymous club builder; we do it right here, by hand, each club carefully rendered.

When you see the ads for name brand clubs that say they are custom engineered, fit and built, what do you suppose is the truth? How can mass produced clubs be custom engineered, let alone custom fit? In our opinion, manufacturers are simply taking advantage of the word that is spreading that custom fitting actually helps golfers improve their game. The difficulty for the golfer wanting this service is in separating the fact from the fiction of what is meant by custom fitting, and where to go for the real thing. Because custom fitting helps improve your game, what level of fitting do you really want?