



THE HOT LIST

WE ARE GETTING BETTER. And equipment technology is the reason. Either that or we're in the midst of one of the most curious coincidences in the 500-year history of our game. First, to the evidence about us. The USGA is unequivocal about average golfers: Despite decades of naysayers and experts alike suggesting that the average handicap is not dropping, has not dropped and never will drop, the fact is, it has. Let's say that again: *The average handicap of all golfers—men, women and children—has decreased consistently for the past 15 years.* The average handicap today is two strokes better than it was in the early 1990s, according to research provided to Golf Digest by the USGA's Golf Handicap & Information Network (GHIN). This decrease coincides with a remarkable decade of equipment innovation that has brought us titanium drivers in every shape and size, game-changing hybrids and oversize putters. →

THE SHAPES
EVOLUTION OF IMPROVEMENT



TaylorMade Burner Plus: 144 cubic centimeters, hollow stainless-steel casting filled with foam



TaylorMade TI Bubble 2: 278cc, titanium casting with springlike effect



TaylorMade R580XD: 440cc, titanium casting with separate titanium face insert



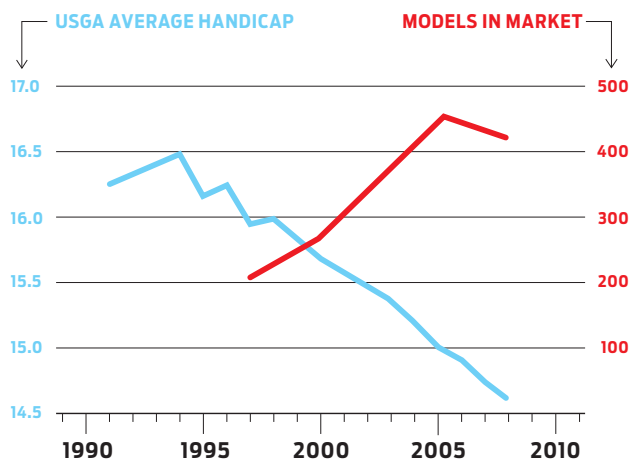
TaylorMade Burner: 460cc, titanium casting with 45 percent thinner walls than TI Bubble 2

→ Those clubs and others like them have been introduced in record numbers the past dozen years. All because a lot of smart people have come to golf with ideas to make the game easier. Consider that the number of products tracked by Golf Datatech, an industry-research firm, has more than doubled since 1997, and equipment submissions to the USGA have gone from about 500 a year in the early 1990s to almost 2,500 in 2008. One reason for that increase is that the USGA evaluates more products for rules conformance, but all those new products and improvements can't be unrelated.

What's that, you say? Your handicap hasn't budged since the first Bush Administration? Maybe the problem is that the contents of your golf bag haven't changed. Oh, sure, we've heard the familiar protests: "I'm not good enough," "None of this stuff really helps average golfers that much" and our favorite: "I'm doing just fine with what I've got."

Not really. Or at least you could be two shots better. For those of you who need further convincing, we present the

THE TRUTH
MORE CLUB CHOICES=LOWER HANDICAPS



Coincidence? We think not. Handicap data provided to Golf Digest by the USGA (the blue line in the chart) shows a decrease in the average Handicap Index for men from 16.5 in 1994 to 14.6 in 2008 (the drop for women during this time went from 29.9 to 27.4). That coincides with the greatest expansion in golf technology in history. Annual equipment submissions to the USGA's Research and Test Center have nearly quintupled since the mid-1990s, and the number of products being tracked by research firm Golf Datatech has doubled (the red line in the chart). In 1997, there were 217 clubs and balls on its list. In 2008, there were 454, down slightly from a high of 475 in 2005.

MIKE STACHURA

Golf Digest Hot List. Our annual equipment review and analysis has yielded 116 exceptional products in 12 categories, the most exhaustive review ever of the game's top clubs.

What we've learned over the years is that new equipment is designed to help average players more than tour players, and the engineers behind golf's new technologies can explain in detail how they're making improvement happen.

"Golfers have gotten better because new equipment helped make it easier to produce adequate launch conditions," says Benoit Vincent, chief technical officer at TaylorMade. "New equipment also has allowed golfers to maintain adequate launch conditions for bad shots and to maximize launch conditions with their best swings when custom-fit."

The game can be made easier. Not easy, mind you, but easier, and probably easier than it has ever been. (Of course, golf courses are getting longer and more difficult, so for many of us it might not seem like we're improving. But take a trip back to that munny where you grew up, and see if you aren't driving to places you did in your youth or even farther.)

Technology update. This year's technological advances

THE AWARDS



GOLD products earned a score of 93 to 100 on our weighted scale. **SILVER** products earned a score of 88 to 92.99. For example, a product scoring 94 in Performance, 91 in Innovation, 96 in Look/Sound/Feel and 86 in Demand would earn a weighted score of 92.7, or Silver status. There was no minimum number of stars required to earn Gold or Silver status.

THE RATINGS

The star ratings are meant to reflect the various levels of judges' scoring from Poor to Outstanding. Each star represents a scoring range, with a 1/2-star generally equal to the upper end of a particular range. For example, scores in the 93 to 96 range represent a score of ★★★★★½. Products that led the scoring in a particular criterion are designated with a circled blue star. If a product is also available in a women's-specific model, it's tagged with a "W" in a pink circle.

| | |
|-------|--------------|
| ★ | Less than 50 |
| ★★ | 51 to 69 |
| ★★★ | 70 to 87 |
| ★★★★ | 88 to 96 |
| ★★★★★ | 97 to 100 |

★ CATEGORY LEADER

W ALSO IN WOMEN'S

THE CATEGORIES

To get on our final list, candidates for the Hot List were judged in four weighted criteria by our five judges.

1. PERFORMANCE (40%)
Based on interviews with our player panelists, robot testing and other sources, the judges assessed the utility of each product. In other words, this is a grade of what happens to the ball when it's struck by the club.

2. INNOVATION (30%)
In consultation with our technical panel and based on company interviews and our review of company technical documents, this grade reflects how a particular technology advances the category in all aspects, to what degree the commitment to fitting the vast majority of golfers is executed, and how that technology is explained to the public and to our editors.

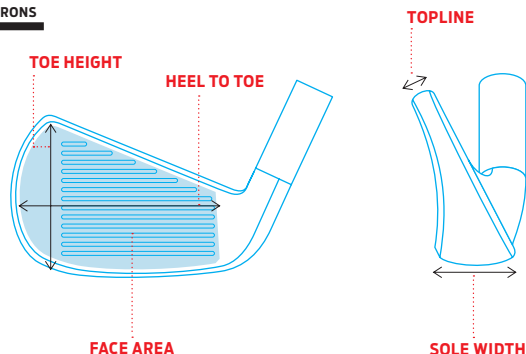
3. LOOK/SOUND/FEEL (20%)
Exactly what it says. Our judges evaluated the relative excellence of the visual, auditory and tactile experience of using a particular club. The more the club resonates with our understanding of what a golf club should be, the higher the grade it receives.

4. DEMAND (10%)
An assessment of the reputation, interest, intrigue and excitement about a particular product, considering market presence, tour use, relative value and consumer satisfaction through consulting research by Golf Datatech, other published resources and a panel of leading retailers.

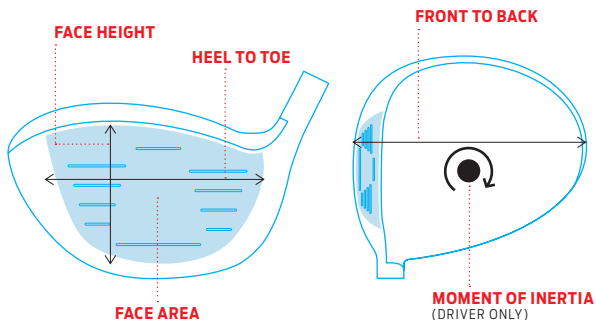
THE NUMBERS

Golf Digest measured all sample clubs using digital calipers and a digital planimeter. Measurements of moment of inertia in drivers were collected in partnership with the Department of Physics at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass. (HIGH MOI = 4,000-4,699; VERY HIGH = 4,700-5,299; EXTREME = 5,300+)

IRONS



DRIVERS/WOODS/HYBRIDS



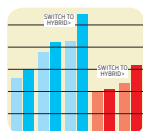
Independent robot testing for **DRIVERS** was conducted by Golf Laboratories Inc. of San Diego. The launch angles and spin rates are designated on these scales, relative to the field of drivers tested. The lofts were chosen based on a 95-miles-per-hour clubhead speed, per the manufacturers' recommendation. Of the 31 drivers tested, launch angles ranged from 9.2 to 13.8 degrees, and spin rates ranged from 2,300 to 3,600 revolutions per minute.



THE IMAGES



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CHARLES LABERGE



ILLUSTRATOR
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SCHULZ



JUDGE
MIKE
STACHURA

Senior Editor, Equipment. "Gouge" of Bomb & Gouge blog on golfdigest.com; 10.8 Index.



JUDGE
E. MICHAEL
JOHNSON

Equipment Editor, Golf World. Golf writer for 22 years; "Bomb" of Bomb & Gouge; 5.1 Index.



JUDGE
STINA
STERNBERG

Senior Editor. Co-host of "Big Break" on the Golf Channel; former golf-shop owner/operator; 12.4 Index.



JUDGE
JOHN
STREGÉ

Writer based near manufacturers' mecca of Carlsbad, Calif.; USGA Book Award winner; 12.9 Index.



JUDGE
MAX
ADLER

Associate Editor; former collegiate golfer; editor, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Golf Book*; plus-0.5 Index.

OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERACTIVE VIDEO GUIDE TO DRIVERS WILL NARROW YOUR FIELD TO THE MODELS JUST FOR YOU AT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST.



go a step beyond engorged drivers and ridiculously strong-lofted irons. Drivers, for example, feature the performance properties of extreme geometries within a more pleasing, almost traditional frame. The best iron designs reflect a pattern of optimizing each individual iron within a set based on how a player might best use it. Companies, for instance, are designing 7-irons significantly different from 4-irons, even within the same set.

Most important, fitting has become nearly automatic, thanks to adjustable fitting systems and the virtual omnipresence of launch monitors. It's so vital (and no doubt related to our two-stroke improvement) that we're beginning every section of the Hot List with a golf success story based on a proper fitting.

Of course, in the onrush of the present, we sometimes lose sight of how much progress is being made. Golf has benefited from technological leaps the past dozen years, but in real time they can seem like baby steps.

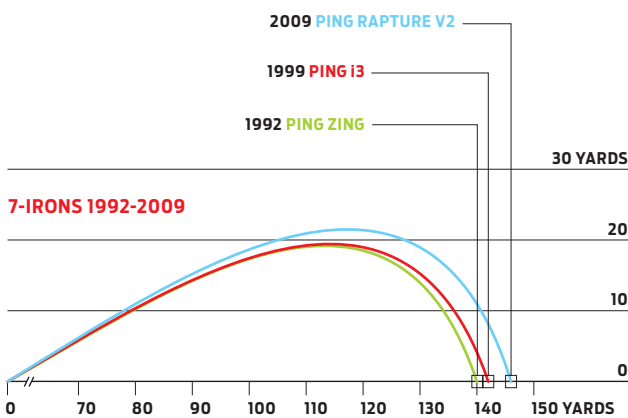
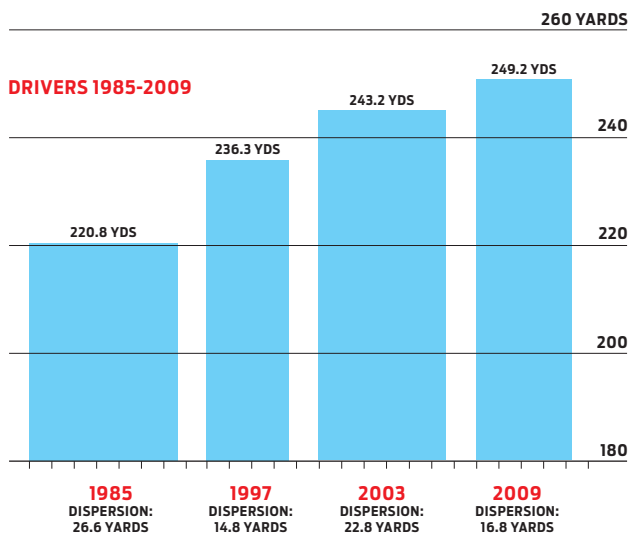
"Internally here, I call it aggregate incrementalism," says Jeff Colton, senior vice president of research and development for Callaway Golf. "It's the idea that as an R&D team, adding up tenths of yards of improvement is OK. You add up slight improvements in ball speed or aerodynamic patterns or off-center-hit robustness, and all of a sudden it becomes a large macro-effect."

Hot List 2009 changes.

This relentless pursuit of innovation explains why we began our Hot List research this

THE PROGRESS

THE TECHNOLOGY EFFECT: LONGER, HIGHER, STRAIGHTER



year with 471 candidates, each with a story to tell. Those that excelled in making improvement possible in the most intriguing and appealing ways found their way onto this year's Hot List.

Our process also has been improved in two ways: First, where appropriate, we have split a club category into two price divisions to reflect the market. As a result, we eliminated the need for Value

as a criterion. Second, we've added the criterion of Look/Sound/Feel because readers aren't just interested in how the club affects the ball, but how it affects the player.

One more change: Our **Hot List for golf balls** will appear in an issue later this spring so we can review products that weren't available for evaluation this issue. It'll be our most complete examination of this segment ever.

The experiment was simple: Get some of today's equipment and some vintage clubs (courtesy of 3balls.com, a used-club website), mix in average golfers and fire up the TrackMan launch monitor to find out how much modern technology matters. Of course, when we say vintage, we're not talking about hickory-shafted spoons and niblicks. The oldest club we evaluated was less than 25 years old. Most were introduced within the last decade.

As expected, the results were convincing, starting with the driver, the single club that has improved the most in the past 20 years. We looked at four TaylorMade drivers from the past three decades ('85 Burner Plus, '97 Ti Bubble 2, '03 R580XD and the new Burner). According to our TrackMan ball-flight data, the new Burner driver averaged 28 more yards than the '85 Burner Plus, with significant improvement in dispersion despite the fact that the shaft in the modern Burner is about three inches longer. The results are dramatic, but what was more intriguing was the six-yard gain in distance—and accuracy—since the R580XD, a model just six years old.

We conducted this experiment with three generations of Callaway fairway woods, and the results were similar (straighter with each new generation and a 21-yard improvement in distance). Irons? It was the same story for low- and middle-handicappers hitting three Ping 7-irons introduced in the past two decades. The newest clubs produced more distance and a higher ball flight. Of course, your results might vary from ours, but you won't know until you try. —MS

Golfers have long been fascinated with technology as a means to improvement, but for much of the game's history new products have had no documented impact on the performance of average golfers. In the last decade that has changed significantly. *Two strokes' worth of change.* That's something we all can buy into, and what better place to start than the 2009 Hot List?



THE PROCESS ARRIVING AT HOT LIST WISDOM

Author and physician Martin H. Fischer wrote: "Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification."

He could have been describing the Hot List process. We do pile up facts. One Excel spreadsheet for driver testing contained more than 5,000 data points. But that was just the beginning. Manufacturers submitted more than 1,200 pages of technical data to be reviewed by our editors and technical panel of Ph.D. scientists. In addition, our editors visited numerous manufacturers during the year.

We took the universe of clubs—471 separate entries were considered—and examined every detail that covers our four judging criteria. We then settled on 218 preliminary finalists. What followed was a 13-day visit to CordeValle Resort near San Jose, Calif., where, among other things, we met with our scientists to evaluate technology claims and trends, spent two days with six prominent retailers to better

understand the market, and conducted three days of club testing with 20 player panelists, gathering insight and opinion into what resonates with golfers of different abilities and what doesn't.

After returning home, the judges gathered to discuss the results. We evaluated and debated every club based on each of the four criteria. In the end, the judges voted on 218 clubs—meaning there were more than 800 debates during nine days of meetings that included several cartons of take-out food. Once the votes were tallied, we had our 116-club Hot List—or as Fischer might say, the wisdom of our simplification.

E. MICHAEL JOHNSON

WRITERS

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Section openers | Ashley Mayo |
| Drivers | Mike Stachura |
| Fairway Woods | John Strege |
| Hybrids | Stina Sternberg |
| Irons | E. Michael Johnson |
| Wedges | John Strege |
| Putters | Max Adler |
| Instruction | Ron Kaspriske |

THE GLOSSARY

SOME TECHNICAL TERMS DEFINED

BOUNCE The amount of space between the leading edge and the groundline when the club is in the square address position. In general, more bounce is better for soft sand and lush grass; less bounce is better for firm sand and turf.

BULGE The face curvature from heel to toe that corrects spin on mis-hits.

CAMBER The radius measurement of the sole from front to back or heel to toe.

CAST A way of manufacturing a clubhead by which molten metal is poured into a mold.

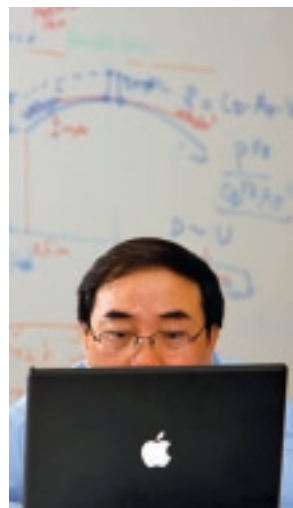
CC A cubic centimeter is the unit of measurement for clubhead volume.

CENTER OF GRAVITY (CG) A theoretical point that defines the average location of weight in a clubhead. It's the internal point about which the head rotates. A low CG helps to launch the ball higher. It isn't always found at the geometric center.

COMPUTER MILLED Refers to the process by which an automated machine cuts and shapes solid blocks of metal by reading code. Grooves and faces are often made this way to ensure tight tolerances.

COEFFICIENT OF RESTITUTION (COR) Used by manufacturers to refer to the springlike effect of a flexing clubface. The USGA limit is .83, which refers to the efficiency of energy transfer between two colliding bodies (clubhead and ball). For example, if a ball is projected at a face at 100 miles per hour, it must bounce off at 83 mph or less for the club to be conforming.

CUPFACE In this construction the faceplate is part of the front portion of the crown, sole and skirt. This pushes the joint farther from the face, allowing the face's perimeter to be thinner.



Technical panelist Jack Hu studies driver data during the Hot List Summit.

FLANGE The part of a putter that projects back from the face.

FORGED A way of manufacturing a clubhead in which heated metal is stamped into shape.

LEADING EDGE The most forward part of the sole, opposite the trailing edge.

MOMENT OF INERTIA (MOI) The measure of a club's resistance to twisting on off-center hits (sometimes called forgiveness). The USGA limit for drivers is 5,900 grams/cm².

TOE HANG The angle the toe of the putter deviates from horizontal when balanced at the shaft tip. In general, the greater this angle, the more suited the head is to arced strokes. **MAX ADLER**



PHOTOGRAPHY CHARLES LABERGE



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CALLAWAY FT-9

STREET PRICE
\$400

LOFTS
9, 10, 11; draw: 9, 10, 11, 13 HT; tour: 8.5, 9.5, 10.5; tour draw: 8.5, 9.5, 10.5

TECH TALK
The carbon-fiber composite frame is 7 percent longer front to back than the FT-5 and uses six materials to push the center of gravity (CG) low and deep. The titanium cupface has an internal X-pattern design to improve ball speed on off-center hits.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "They've toned down the sound. It now has a more conservative 'bang.' ... (M) "The trampoline effect feels outstanding, and at setup this lies perfectly on the ground." ... (L) "Great feel. Not too busy."

HOT
No one is better than Callaway at using multiple materials. Solid and comfortable, the FT-9 has improved weight distribution (18 percent lower CG), and OptiFit makes trying and buying almost seamless.

NOT
We like options, but 13 stock loft/weight configurations might cause confusion.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height 55 mm | Face area 46 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 107 mm | Shaft length 45 in |
| Front to back 118 mm | MOI VERY HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

CALLAWAY FT-iQ

STREET PRICE
\$500

LOFTS
9, 10, 11, 13 HT; tour: 8.5, 9.5

TECH TALK
The carbon-fiber shell of the FT-iQ is designed to improve overall head stability (high and low and heel to toe) by using a hyperbolic X-design in the cupface and a rear-weighted, stretched square shape that increases the moment of inertia (MOI). In addition, to help launch the ball high with low spin, the CG is half the height that it was in the previous model (the FT-1).

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Very straight with a muted sound at impact. This could benefit a slicer, too, because it's almost impossible to curve to the right." ... (L) "Explosive off the clubface. There's no ping or vibration." ... (T) "Saw no curve even on toe and heel mis-hits."

HOT
As sleek a square shape as there has been. The Mitsubishi Fubuki shaft is a bonus.

NOT
A closed face on all lofts in the standard version.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height 53 mm | Face area 43.7 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 103 mm | Shaft length 45 in |
| Front to back 112 mm | MOI EXTREME |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

NIKE SQ DYMO/DYMO² STR8-FIT

STREET PRICE
\$450

LOFTS
8.5, 9.5, 10.5, 11.5, HL

TECH TALK
Dymo and Dymo² versions allowed designers to manipulate the CG, lie angle, rear weighting and face size, but the most interesting feature is the adjustable hosel. Players can change to one of eight lie- and face-angle combinations. (Lie angle and face angle can change by 4 degrees.)

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I like the ball flight, and it's long. The ball goes left, for sure." ... (M) "A good-looking club at setup. It sounds a little thud-ish, but the ball went forever." ... (L) "My favorite of the square shapes."

HOT
It's easily the most interesting, effective and flexible implementation of the USGA's recently relaxed rules on club adjustability. The three weight options of the impressive UST AXIV Core shaft are unique.

NOT
The high MOI doesn't push the USGA limit as it did in last year's SQ Sumo² 5900.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height (DYMO²) 49 mm | Face area 40 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 107 mm | Shaft length 45.75 in |
| Front to back 115 mm | MOI EXTREME |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



NIKEGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



TRACKMAN SAYS
THE KEY TO DISTANCE: LOFT OR FLEX?

The more we discover about the science of distance, the more it seems there is to learn. Golf Digest research over the years has suggested that most average golfers would benefit from a higher-lofted driver. To refine this idea, we wondered what role shaft flex plays, especially the combination of clubhead loft and shaft flex. We wanted to know what works better: less loft with more flex, or more loft with less flex. To find out, we tested average to above-average golfers with swing speeds of 95 to 102 miles per hour and discovered that less loft but more flex tended to produce better launch conditions (more carry and more total distance). In our test, a 9-degree driver with a regular-flex shaft worked better than a 10-degree driver with a stiff-flex shaft.

Why would that be? According to Tom Wishon, founder of Tom Wishon Golf Technology and author of *The Search for the Perfect Golf Club*, the reason has to do with a player's swing type. Less-skilled players who cast the club from the top cause a shaft with more flex to bow and return to straight well before making contact with the ball. Conversely, a better player who maintains wrist angle for a later release will cause the shaft to bow and spring forward just before impact, essentially adding loft at impact. "This is one of the reasons," Wishon says, "that we advise our clubmakers to always err on the side of a more flexible shaft, even with later-release players." —MS



SILVER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
INSIGHT TECH A4

STREET PRICE
 \$370

LOFTS
 8.5, 9.5, 10.5

TECH TALK
 The pear-shape head features a 15-gram external weight on the rear of the sole that allows for a lower and deeper CG by using internal weighting. The curved sole is designed to maintain structural strength and save weight.

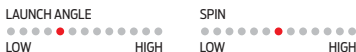
PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "It has a nice teardrop shape and isn't too closed at address. I feel like I can let my wrists roll over without risking a snap hook." ... **(L)** "That's a classic metal-wood look. The sound and feel are fabulous." ... **(L)** "One of the longest I've hit. The ball just flies off the face, but the head rolls too much at setup; it doesn't seem to sit flat."

HOT
 It's more smartly designed than it appears, and the Ozik shaft will pique interest from gearheads. Slicers might want to look at the a4OS.

NOT
 Has 46 custom shafts but no fitting system.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|--------------------|
| Face height | 57 mm | Face area | 45 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 104 mm | Shaft length | 45.5 in |
| Front to back | 109 mm | MOI | HIGH |



- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- DEMAND**
★★★½



ADAMSGOLF.COM



SILVER

COBRA
L5V

STREET PRICE
 \$400

LOFTS
 X-Speed: 8.5, 9.5; F-Speed: 9.5, 10.5; M-Speed: 11.5

TECH TALK
 Take your pick of the technologies here: The design maximizes the face area and footprint, expands the use of weight-saving carbon composite in the crown and sole, and features an adjustable hosel that changes the face angle by 1 degree.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I like the big, rounded head, and the dimples on the top are cool; it gives me something to focus on." ... **(M)** "Very lightweight, and it screams confidence with its high trampoline effect." ... **(L)** "It sent the ball on a consistent, low-to-middle trajectory. Hard to have a mis-hit with it."

HOT
 Few attempt "big" the way Cobra does, but the L5V offers substance *and* size. Kudos for the Diamana Red shaft.

NOT
 Changing the face angle by 1 degree might not produce a meaningful difference.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|--------------------|
| Face height | 60 mm | Face area | 46 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 115 mm | Shaft length | 45.5 in |
| Front to back | 120 mm | MOI | VERY HIGH |



- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



COBRAGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER **(M)** MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER **(L)** LOW-HANDICAPPER **(T)** TEACHER



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

**ADAMS
SPEEDLINE**

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
8.5, 9.5, 10.5; draw: 9.5, 10.5, 12.5, HL

TECH TALK
The company believes big, boxy drivers lose clubhead speed because of increased drag, so the head shape of the Speedline has been streamlined to help achieve aerodynamic efficiency. Design features include scooped heel and toe slots, a smaller face and optimal crown height and curve.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Just flat-out bombs it. The head shape is different but not distracting." ... (L) "It might be ugly, but I could be dating it. The ball goes far." ... (L) "The rounded sole rocks like an egg, but the ball comes off the face easily." ... (T) "Surprised. Hit some beautiful soft fades with that toe-y head. Smaller face can encourage center hits."

HOT
There is a sense that Adams has discovered something others have overlooked. The good news is, it still looks like a driver.

NOT
Some MOI has been sacrificed.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height 47.5 mm | Face area 40.6 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 117 mm | Shaft length 45.5 in |
| Front to back 110 mm | MOI HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



ADAMSGOLF.COM

**CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA DIABLO**

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
8, 9, 10; draw: 9, 10, 11, 13 HT

TECH TALK
The all-titanium construction uses a variable-thickness hyperbolic cupface for optimizing ball speed on off-center hits. In addition to the face, the head fuses three separate sheets of titanium, including a .68-millimeter crown that frees weight for use in an internal chip in the sole. Available in two head shapes (for golfers who prefer neutral and draw-bias ball flights).

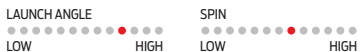
PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "Straightest club in the bunch." ... (M) "Sleek graphics. A little closed, but it's extremely forgiving and feels solid. Definitely a high-launch driver." ... (T) "Anybody who has never hit a draw will love this club."

HOT
The differing head shapes aren't especially noteworthy, but the intriguing construction results in a club as hot as its color.

NOT
Wish it could be part of OptiFit.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height 55 mm | Face area 46 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 106 mm | Shaft length 45 in |
| Front to back 118 mm | MOI VERY HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

**CLEVELAND
LAUNCHER**

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
9, 10.5, 12

TECH TALK
A thin, 0.5-millimeter crown slopes down from the large face (which is 21 percent bigger than the original Launcher 460) to help launch the ball high. An internal horseshoe-shape weight pad at the back of the sole improves perimeter weighting and lowers the CG.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Swings itself. Get it started, and the balance just allows it to get through impact on its own. Similar to a Momentus training aid, it won't let you swing off plane." ... (M) "I found it difficult to align, but once I did, the ball went long and straight." ... (L) "The most consistent one I hit."

HOT
Think hidden, efficient power, like a butler with a maul in the umbrella stand. This is about skill-enhancement, not correction.

NOT
A breakout face technology would be nice. As would a serious commitment to fitting.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height 55 mm | Face area 46.8 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 109 mm | Shaft length 45.5 in |
| Front to back 119 mm | MOI VERY HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



COBRA
S9-1

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
F-Speed: 9.5, 10.5; M-Speed: 10.5, 11.5;
M-Offset: 9.5, 10.5; Pro: 8.5, 9.5, 10.5

TECH TALK
The all-titanium driver has been selectively downsized to optimize the CG for each loft. Changes include a slightly narrower front-to-back measurement, a smaller face and less crown-surface area. The weight has been reduced by six grams to increase clubhead speed, and the variable-thickness, "dual-rhombus" face has been enhanced.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I had no slice whatsoever on any shot. Feels great and goes straight." ... (M) "It's so easy to swing, and it feels lighter. Easy to square the clubface." ... (T) "Every player could find a match in this line."

HOT
Cobra's face technology is interesting, and the S9-1 shows that the only extremes worth pursuing are in performance.

NOT
Four different 10.5 models and two Pro versions seem confusing.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height..... 53 mm | Face area 43.7 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 107 mm | Shaft length 45.5 in |
| Front to back 120 mm | MOI..... VERY HIGH |



- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★★



COBRAGOLF.COM



PING
G10

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
7.5, 9, 10.5, 12, 13.5; draw: 9, 10.5, 12, 13.5

TECH TALK
Certain sections of the crown are thinner to save weight and to help lower the CG. The sole and sloped crown are designed to work with the variable-thickness face to improve energy transfer. Draw versions have extra heel-bias weighting.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Seems to be missing a 'wow' factor, but it's a nice club with good results." ... (L) "This is a '57 Les Paul Junior. Very solid and soft at the same time. Nothing about it says technology, but the results are amazing. A heck of a driver." ... (T) "Love lining up that half-moon."

HOT
The G10 is so blue-collar it should come with its own lunch pail. But good doesn't need flash. The nFlight fitting software is game-changing and video-game cool.

NOT
The stock shaft is still at least a quarter-inch too long (45¾ inches) for many.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height..... 57 mm | Face area 43 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 110 mm | Shaft length 45.75 in |
| Front to back 107 mm | MOI..... HIGH |



- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



PINGGOLF.COM



TAYLORMADE
BURNER ('09)

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
9.5, 10.5, HT

TECH TALK
The 49-gram, 46¼-inch shaft promotes speed, as does the deep face enhanced by the company's inverted-cone technology. The gently triangular dual crown positions the CG lower than the previous Burner.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Foolproof. A straight ball on every swing. The club feels good through the whole swing." ... (M) "Great, consistent, solid feel and sound. It goes far, and the ball has a nice, boring trajectory." ... (M) "Long, forgiving, accurate." ... (L) "Longest club to date. Put a star next to this one."

HOT
Anybody can stick a 46¼-inch shaft on a driver and pretend it'll increase distance. Only the exceptional can figure out how to make a better, hotter driver and stick a genuinely faster 46¼-inch shaft on it to impressively feed our need for speed.

NOT
Average shaft length, PGA Tour 45 inches.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height..... 57 mm | Face area 48.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 108 mm | Shaft length 46.25 in |
| Front to back 121 mm | MOI..... VERY HIGH |



- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★★



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



SILVER



SILVER

MEASURING VOLUME

ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

To determine the head size of the modern-shaped woods and hybrids that made the Hot List, who knew we'd have to borrow a method from classical antiquity? The Greek thinker Archimedes discovered that the volume of fluid an irregular-shaped object displaces is equal to its own volume. So by dipping each clubhead in a bucket of water on a scale, careful to first smoothly fill in concavities with clay, we determined its volume by the weight (in grams) of the water it displaced. This is the same method the USGA uses to determine clubhead-size conformance.

You'll notice that not all drivers are at the maximum head-size limit of 460 cubic centimeters. Volume can vary across lofts, with the highest lofts typically being the largest. Sometimes stretching the volume can mean a compromise in other aspects of the design, especially in clubs for better players who most often hit the center of the face. "Large faces take up a lot of weight and pull the center of gravity forward," says Tom Wishon, founder of Tom Wishon Golf Technology, "Smaller faces can save weight that can then be used in back at the perimeter." —MA

| CLUB (10°-10.5° loft) | VOLUME |
|---|-------------|
| ADAMS INSIGHT TECH A4 | 460cc |
| ADAMS SPEEDLINE | 454cc |
| CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA DIABLO | 460cc |
| CALLAWAY FT-9 | 456cc |
| CALLAWAY FT-1Q | 450cc |
| CLEVELAND HIBORE MONSTER XLS | 460cc |
| CLEVELAND LAUNCHER | 460cc |
| COBRA L5V | 460cc |
| COBRA S9-1 | 460cc |
| MIZUNO MX-700 | 460cc |
| NIKE SQ DYMO/DYMO ² | 460cc/460cc |
| NIKE SQ DYMO/DYMO ² STR8-FIT | 460cc/460cc |
| PING G10 | 460cc |
| PING RAPTURE V2 | 450cc |
| TAYLORMADE BURNER ('09) | 460cc |
| TAYLORMADE R7 LIMITED | 434cc |
| TITLEIST 909D2/D3 | 454cc/440cc |
| TITLEIST 909D COMP | 452cc |
| TOUR EDGE EXOTICS XCG-V | 460cc |
| WILSON SMOOTH | 444cc |

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT'S NEW IN DRIVER TECHNOLOGY? HEAD TO GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO WATCH THE HOT LIST JUDGES DISCUSS MOI, VARIABLE-THICKNESS FACE AND MORE.



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CLEVELAND HIBORE MONSTER XLS

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
8.5, 9.5, 10.5, 11.5; draw: 9, 10.5, 12; tour: 8.5, 9.5, 10.5

TECH TALK
The scooped crown is designed to lower the CG, and the wide shape helps increase MOI. Internal ribs strengthen the crown to improve energy transfer.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "It goes straight and has just the right height, even if it's ugly. It's more solid-feeling than other drivers and is very forgiving. I like the loud sound." ... (M) "They sure did fix the sound and feel of this club; both are great now. The trajectory is nice and high without being too high." ... (M) "The ball has a lot of roll and is exceptionally long overall. A very hot face. If you have the room to run—and ear plugs—this is a great club."

HOT
This is a powerful shape, and the MOI is among the highest we measured.

NOT
It's louder than Boo Weekley's fan base.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Face height | 54 mm | Face area | 45.75 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 109 mm | Shaft length | 45 in |
| Front to back | 122 mm | MOI | EXTREME |



PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

INNOVATION ★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★

DEMAND ★★★★★



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM

MIZUNO MX-700

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
9.5, 10.5, 12

TECH TALK
The wide-body geometry is designed to push the CG toward the back, and the face incorporates Ti-9, a titanium alloy designed with a grain structure that allows for a thinner face, which helps improve ball speed on off-center hits.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "It's just about perfect. I couldn't not hit it straight." ... (M) "This is just a cannon, deadly long, and it looks very comfortable at address." ... (T) "I like the graphics. They accentuate how big the head is, which will give a lot of players confidence."

HOT
Maybe average hacks have been intimidated by Mizuno, but they shouldn't be with this club. Its subtle use of geometry is effective without sacrificing looks.

NOT
Mizuno offers dozens of custom shafts, but with no interchangeable-head fitting system, it's hard to test all those options.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|----------------------|
| Face height | 52 mm | Face area | 44.6 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 113 mm | Shaft length | 45.5 in |
| Front to back | 120 mm | MOI | HIGH |



PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

INNOVATION ★★★★★^{1/2}

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★

DEMAND ★★★★★^{1/2}



MIZUNOUSA.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



SILVER

NIKE
SQ DYMO/DYMO²

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
8.5, 9.5, 10.5, 11.5, HL

TECH TALK
Round or square, each loft is treated as a separate design. Many crucial elements are optimized, including the CG (deeper as loft increases), lie angle (the highest loft is 4 degrees more upright than the lowest) and face height (lower as the loft increases).

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I don't love the square head, but it works well on center hits and corrects a slice nicely." ... (M) "I think the round version is incredibly long, a beast. Won't hurt you for forgiveness, either, but the square is better." ... (L) "Trajectory is somewhat high, but the ball carries a long way."

HOT
A free-thinker's design, this update is handsome, solid and Nike's best-sounding effort ever. The company's fitting commitment is finally worthy of its product line.

NOT
We would like to see more innovation in the face design.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (DYMO) ... 52 mm | Face area 40.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 111 mm | Shaft length 45.75 in |
| Front to back 115 mm | MOI VERY HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL** ★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND** ★★★★★



W

NIKEGOLF.COM



SILVER

WILSON
SMOOTH

STREET PRICE
\$300

LOFTS
8, 9, 10.5, 12* (*also in offset)

TECH TALK
It progressively incorporates a changing weight pad in the sole to optimize the CG within each loft (middle-low in the low lofts, low and deep in the high lofts). Also, a "trap face" doubles the face area with the highest coefficient of restitution (COR).

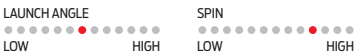
PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "That club's on steroids. Maybe not the most forgiving, but great distance." ... (M) "A terrific performer. I'd tell you how it does on mis-hits if only I could mis-hit it, but I can't!" ... (L) "Wow, that's a good club. I missed two or three, and all would have been in the fairway."

HOT
It has softer edges, and there's some interesting work here on the CG and the face design. Wilson even points to research that shows R-flex and S-flex players picking up extra clubhead speed with its club.

NOT
Its MOI is nothing groundbreaking.

THE NUMBERS

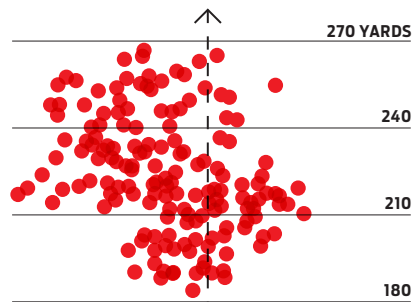
| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height 48 mm | Face area 40.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 127 mm | Shaft length 45.5 in |
| Front to back 111 mm | MOI HIGH |



- ★ **PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION** ★★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL** ★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND** ★★★★★



WILSON.COM



| SHOTS | LEFT OF CENTER | RIGHT OF CENTER |
|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| TOTAL SHOTS..... | 147 | 56 |
| TOTAL YARDS..... | 226.2 | 219.6 |
| AVG. DISPERSION (YDS)..... | 26.2 | 13.5 |

TOTAL DISPERSION (YDS): 15.3 LEFT (all shots)

TRACKMAN SAYS
JUST HOW ANTI-SLICE CAN A DRIVER BE?

It's a fact: Anti-slice drivers will help you hit the ball straight, or even (gasp) draw the ball. To test how well they work, we had a group of low- to high-handicap golfers hit 11 anti-slice drivers (aiming for a center line) and used TrackMan to measure the ball flights. Of 203 hits, 72 percent went left of center, and the average dispersion of all shots was 15.3 yards left. Another piece of good news: Shots that went left went an average of 6.6 yards farther than those that went right.

So how do these slice-fighting clubs work? "A true anti-slice driver is designed with more technology than just a closed face," says Jeff Sheets, vice president of research and development at Golfsmith and designer of the Killer Bee B-Sting (below left). For instance, Sheets says the center of gravity in the Killer Bee is back and toward the heel of the club to produce a higher launch angle that imparts less ball spin. This causes toe and center hits to have draw spin. The driver also is 5 degrees more upright than usual to encourage face closure at impact. The Bob Burns No Bananas DAT (below right), which in our testing averaged 38 yards left of center, has a 7-degree closed face and a lightweight head to promote a draw.

Only you know how much slice correction you really need, but regardless of how bad you have the rights, today's driver technology offers help. —AM





GOLD



GOLD



GOLD

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

**CLEVELAND
LAUNCHER**

STREET PRICE
\$180

LOFTS
13, 15, 17, 19, 22

TECH TALK
The crown is a half-millimeter thick, saving weight that has been added to the horseshoe-shape weight pad on the perimeter of the sole. The result: A moment of inertia (MOI) exceeding 3,000 and a center of gravity (CG) that promotes a higher trajectory. The face is 11 percent larger than previous Launcher fairway editions.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "The longest one I've hit so far. The ball took off." ... (L) "Has a crispness at impact that is hard to beat. The ball just shoots off the face. A nice surprise." ... (L) "Long, straight and high—who wouldn't like that?" ... (M) "Very easy to hit. Doesn't feel like it has a tiny sweet spot—it has the same feedback all over the face."

HOT
The rear weighting seems like a nifty arrangement, and we like a trio of 3-wood lofts. Two versions of R- and S-flexes is a keen idea as well.

NOT
We'd like to see a hot-steel face insert.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood) ... 33 mm | Face area 23.5 cm ² |
| Face width 91 mm | Head volume 180cc |
| Front to back 84 mm | Shaft weight 55-65 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM

**COBRA
S9-1**

STREET PRICE
\$180

LOFTS
Pro: 13, 15, 18; F- and M-Speed: 15.5*, 18*, 21*, 24†, 27† (*also in offset, †seniors only)

TECH TALK
Cobra has addressed the needs of three types of golfers: fairway woods for better players (the Pro) and two versions—a regular-hosel configuration and an offset model—for those who need a higher launch. The standard model has a weight-saving shaft and a wide, shallow-face profile.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "They got it right. Solid at impact, and the ball leaps off the club." ... (T) "The regular version flies high, and the pro version penetrates. Nice management of game-improvement and player trajectories." ... (L) "Standard in terms of looks, but there's nothing standard about its performance. There's that hot Cobra 'crack' off the face."

HOT
A solid entry with MOI benefits that are readily apparent. We especially like the confidence provided by the shallow face.

NOT
Check the number on the sole. That 7-wood looks as big as a 3-wood.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood) ... 33 mm | Face area 21.5 cm ² |
| Face width 84 mm | Head volume 172cc |
| Front to back 87 mm | Shaft weight 55 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



COBRAGOLF.COM

**PING
G10**

STREET PRICE
\$220

LOFTS
14, 15.5, 17, 18.5, 21.5, 24.5; draw: 15.5, 17, 18.5, 21.5

TECH TALK
Weight taken from the crown, face and hosel is redeployed in an internal weight pad that positions the CG in an optimal location to increase ball speed and reduce spin. A shallow face and increased heel-to-sole length provide a larger effective hitting area and promote forgiveness.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Just perfect. It's what a fairway wood should look like." ... (L) "After having the same fairway wood for five years, I have a new date. Send me an invoice. This thing is amazing." ... (T) "A great, solid club. Hard to mis-hit." ... (M) "Came off the face with a lot of heat."

HOT
Ping has covered all areas technologically and otherwise, including a 17-degree 4-wood with a 43-inch shaft for players who need more loft than a 3-wood offers.

NOT
The shallow face requires an adjustment for those who like a 3-wood as a backup driver.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood) ... 33 mm | Face area 23 cm ² |
| Face width 88 mm | Head volume 142cc |
| Front to back 80 mm | Shaft weight 64-68 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



SILVER



SILVER



SILVER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
INSIGHT TECH A4/A40S

STREET PRICE
\$270

LOFTS
a4: 13, 15, 18; a40S: 16, 19

TECH TALK
These clubs combine the qualities of a fairway wood (distance) with a hybrid (ease of use). Each model features pull-face construction and a maraging-steel face insert. The a4 has an adjustable weight port in the sole. The a40S has tungsten inserts in the rear perimeter and a lightweight magnesium crown that allows weight to be relocated low and deep.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Everything about this club inspires confidence for a player like me." ... (T) "Looks more like a hybrid, which has got to be a bonus if you have more confidence in hitting a hybrid." ... (M) "Looks a little like a blob on a stick, but the trajectory was perfect and extremely long."

HOT
Adams continues to change the paradigm with an improvement in shape (especially the sole radius) and ball flight.

NOT
The a4's weight screw clogs with dirt; the a40S might be too new wave for some.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (a4 3-wood) 33 mm | Face area 23.4 cm ² |
| Face width 91 mm | Head volume 157cc |
| Front to back 84 mm | Shaft weight 55-65 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



W

BOBBY JONES
WORKSHOP EDITION

STREET PRICE
\$200

LOFTS
Workshop: 15, 18; tour: 13, 15

TECH TALK
The lightweight magnesium crown is used to save weight, which is redistributed to create a CG that is low and back. This results in a higher trajectory. Weight also is taken from the hosel and the 1.6-millimeter-thick face and moved to the rear sole to help with ball flight.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "Get out the flight plan—this thing is a rocket ship." ... (M) "Funkiest look of the bunch, but the sound and the feel are fantastic." ... (L) "Not my look with the triangle stuff, but the Jones woods continue to get my attention with how sweet they are at impact. 'Solid' just doesn't seem to do it justice." ... (T) "I don't know the idea behind the shape, but it works."

HOT
The low profile and relatively small size inspire confidence along with the solid performance the club delivers.

NOT
It's so easy to hit for so many players that we'd like to see some higher lofts.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood) 28 mm | Face area 16.5 cm ² |
| Face width 76 mm | Head volume 164cc |
| Front to back 95 mm | Shaft weight 60 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



BOBBYJONESGOLF.COM
THELIST.COM

CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA DIABLO

STREET PRICE
\$200

LOFTS
13, 15, 18; draw: 16, 18.5, 21, 23.5

TECH TALK
The unusual shape of the stainless-steel head is what Callaway calls "edge technology." It allows designers to place weight deep behind the face to help improve stability on off-center hits and to optimize the CG and trajectory for a neutral or draw ball flight. The traditional Callaway short, straight hollow-hosel design saves weight to be distributed on the perimeter.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "The look takes some getting used to, but it still has that classic Callaway feel. Pretty forgiving." ... (T) "Get these to my pro shop." ... (M) "I like this shape; it encourages you to take it back on an inside path. The ball goes very straight."

HOT
Not a typical fairway wood in looks, but its functional geometry is refreshing. Many middle- and higher-handicap players will like the less-than-60-gram shaft.

NOT
Ugly? Maybe. And why not offer a neutral 21-degree model?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood) 33 mm | Face area 23.4 cm ² |
| Face width 91 mm | Head volume 190cc |
| Front to back 84 mm | Shaft weight 57-59 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★★



W

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



CALLAWAY
FT

STREET PRICE
\$250

LOFTS
15*, 17*, 19*, 21†, 23† (*also in draw, †draw only); tour: 13, 15

TECH TALK
Fusion technology is the foundation of Callaway's research and development. The FT features a stainless-steel face and body fused to a soleplate featuring heavy tungsten. This gave company engineers the ability to situate the CG where they wanted to improve launch and ball flight. Dual runners on the sole help with turf interaction.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I feel like it straightened out some of my mis-hits." ... (L) "I had a big mis-hit off a tee, and it still went a long way." ... (T) "If you need to hit it in the fairway on a tight hole and not lose distance, this is the club." ... (T) "Stands out. Must have its goodies in the right places inside the head."

HOT
Inspired technology finds a way to look classic. The tungsten soleplate serves as a launching pad for long, high shots.

NOT
All 7-woods are draw versions? Maybe it makes sense, but it doesn't look right.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood)... 34 mm | Face area 22 cm² |
| Face width 86 mm | Head volume 160cc |
| Front to back 75 mm | Shaft weight..... 65-66 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM

NIKE
SQ DYMO/DYMO²

STREET PRICE
\$230

LOFTS
Dymo: 13; Dymo²: 15, 17, 19, 21

TECH TALK
Its Quad Keel sole design results in only four points of the club interacting with the ground, diminishing the likelihood of turf interference with the swing. The back of the sole is elevated, reducing friction with the turf. Like in its big brother, the DYMO driver, its characteristics (CG, MOI, lie angle) are adjusted as lofts and head styles change.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Wait out that first impression, because this thing works. Even fat shots were going 200 yards." ... (L) "I love this club, even though it looks like a shovel to me. The ball flight was exactly what I look for, and it might be the straightest of the bunch." ... (T) "Great club off the tee and the fairway."

HOT
This club delivers a punch, but its real strength is a sole design that's a Ginty-like throwback. Add some 21st-century horsepower and thinking, and you have a genuine winner.

NOT
Square look of Dymo² is still a tough sell.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood)... 33 mm | Face area 22.5 cm² |
| Face width 85 mm | Head volume 164cc |
| Front to back 84 mm | Shaft weight..... 45-55 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



NIKEGOLF.COM

PING
RAPTURE V2

STREET PRICE
\$250

LOFTS
16, 17.5, 19, 22

TECH TALK
The 61-gram tungsten soleplate on the 17-4 stainless-steel head moves the CG low and deep, reducing spin and encouraging a higher launch. The wide sole and steeply tapered crown are designed to improve forgiveness. The variable-thickness face is intended to help enhance ball speed even on off-center strikes.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(T) "Looks Martian-y, and I hit it off the planet, too." ... (L) "Its traditional look instills confidence at setup. I felt like the club was made precisely for me." ... (T) "Great sound. If you get used to hearing the sound of a great shot, psychologically you're more apt to hit one." ... (M) "This is really long despite being a degree weaker."

HOT
There's a lot of technical expertise in the mixing of materials, and isn't a 16-degree 3-wood an idea whose time has come?

NOT
The six-piece alignment decal is at least five pieces too many.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Face height (3-wood)... 34 mm | Face area 21.5 cm² |
| Face width 90 mm | Head volume 170cc |
| Front to back 83 mm | Shaft weight..... 59-63 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
IDEA TECH A4/A40S

STREET PRICE
\$170

LOFTS
17, 19, 22, 26 (a4); 17, 19, 22, 25, 28 (a40S)

TECH TALK
Adams combines a square head and a maraging-steel face to increase ball speed and moment of inertia (MOI)—to 3,400 in the a40S. An adjustable sole weight in the a4 allows the company to customize swingweight to fit any player. The a40S comes with a lightweight magnesium crown and heel-toe tungsten sole weights to optimize the launch angle. Its offset hosel is designed to reduce slicing.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Adams has figured out hybrids better than anybody. The ball just takes off, and it's forgiving, too." ... **(L)** "Wow! This hits the ball longer than any other hybrid out there." ... **(T)** "It's really easy to hit, even off tight lies. Versatile, like an iron."

HOT
Another hybrid leap for Adams, and the premium shafts (Graphite Design YSQ-HL and Mitsubishi Rayon Javin FX) are a bonus.

NOT
A rectangle lacks an aesthetic flow.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height (a4)..... 37 mm | Face area 25 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 83 mm | Head volume 124cc |
| Front to back 53 mm | Shaft length 40 in |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★★ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★★ | |
| | | |

ADAMSGOLF.COM



BOBBY JONES
WORKSHOP EDITION

STREET PRICE
\$200

LOFTS
16, 18, 20, 22, 26, 30

TECH TALK
A thin, lightweight hosel helps lower the center of gravity (CG) and features a notch that allows the lie and face angle to be adjusted. Constructed of multiple materials, the clubhead has a thin, strong Carpenter 465 face and a thin maraging-steel crown to relocate 30 grams to the sole.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Amazing. I just hit three balls right on top of each other. It's incredibly easy to get in the air. Certainly good enough to get over the looks." ... **(L)** "For such a small head, it gets the ball in the air, and you can really work it any way you like."

HOT
Being able to bend the hosel for different lie and face angles on a hybrid is new thinking other companies will soon copy. This feature and designer Jesse Ortiz's contoured sole get high marks for versatility.

NOT
The snub-nose toe shape of yesteryear's cleeks might not appeal to modern tastes.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height 30 mm | Face area 17 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 73 mm | Head volume 92cc |
| Front to back 65 mm | Shaft length 40.25 in |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★★ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★½ | |
| | | |

BOBBYJONESGOLF.COM



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA DIABLO

STREET PRICE
\$160

LOFTS
18, 21, 24, 27

TECH TALK
This straightforward 17-4 stainless-steel design incorporates Callaway's variable-thickness face for increased efficiency on off-center hits. A pair of rails on the back of the sole helps improve turf interaction; they also get the leading edge of the face closer to the ground so players can get the ball up fast, even from heavy lies.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "A stealth-fighter-looking club with cool graphics. Without question, it's easy to hit and very long." ... **(L)** "This club does every trick in the book. I hit about seven different shots with it, and it did everything I wanted it to do." **(T)** "This is one of the most user-friendly hybrids you could hit."

HOT
A favorite across all groups, Callaway finally gets the hybrid category right.

NOT
We get it: Diablo, the devil, heat. The red color still looks "roller rink."

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Face height 35 mm | Face area 20 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 83 mm | Head volume 110cc |
| Front to back 63 mm | Shaft length 40.25 in |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★★ | |
| | | |

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



COBRA
BAFFLER TWS/PRO

STREET PRICE
\$175

LOFTS
16, 18, 20, 23 (Pro); 16, 18, 20, 23, 26, 29 (men's TWS); 23, 26, 29, 32, 35 (women's TWS); 23, 26, 29, 32 (seniors' TWS)

TECH TALK
The TWS has three internal weight pads on the perimeter of the sole to place the CG back and low. This is designed to increase the MOI and help launch the ball more easily. The large, laser-welded 275 maraging-steel face is intended to provide consistent ball speed across the entire face.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Just a fantastic golf club in all aspects. It's so easy to swing, and the weight seems just right. It has great distance, too..."
(L) "The leading edge makes you feel like you can dig the ball off the ground and launch it way in the air for a mile."

HOT
A genuine upgrade from DWS, it defines easy, and the smorgasbord of lofts guarantees something for everyone.

NOT
No maraging-steel face for women and seniors. Why?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Face height..... 37 mm | Face area..... 24.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 83 mm | Head volume..... 110cc |
| Front to back..... 61 mm | Shaft length..... 40.5 in |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★½ | | |

COBRAGOLF.COM



PING
G10

STREET PRICE
\$150

LOFTS
15, 18, 21, 24, 28, 32

TECH TALK
The unassuming 17-4 stainless-steel head features more technology than meets the eye: An internal weight pad in the sole and a thin, sloped crown are designed to lower the CG and help raise the MOI. A plasma-welded, variable-thickness face is intended to help players add ball speed.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Has a very powerful sound. Really forgiving on mis-hits..."
(L) "This is the Holy Grail. I could hit this thing for a month. Super-workable. Plus, it doubles as a driver because you can use it off the tee on short par 4s..."
(T) "It works the ball back into play even on heel shots."

HOT
Extensive research—and 10 radial ribs inside the crown—went into tuning the sound of this club, to great effect. It's one of the most solid-feeling hybrids on the market.

NOT
The sloped crown and orange color might turn off some traditionalists.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Face height..... 34 mm | Face area..... 21 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 79 mm | Head volume..... 100cc |
| Front to back..... 63 mm | Shaft length..... 40 in |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★★ | | |

PINGGOLF.COM



TAYLORMADE
BURNER RESCUE

STREET PRICE
\$160

LOFTS
18, 20, 23 (tour launch); 17, 19, 22, 25, 28 (high launch)

TECH TALK
Both models feature thin clubhead walls (0.6 millimeters) and a sole that's distinctly wider than the crown. This allows designers to redistribute weight and move the CG deeper and 35 percent lower than last year's Burner Rescue. The longer, lighter shaft and grip are aimed at boosting clubhead speed. The smaller head has a slight fade bias, and the larger head is designed to draw the ball.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "It's so forgiving, you can't mis-hit it..."
(M) "I found the smaller version more appealing. Definitely very long and high..."
(L) "I hit it out of divots and off the toe, and it still performed well."

HOT
These two models from TaylorMade cover all types of skill and size preferences.

NOT
Wide, fairway-wood-style footprint might not be the most versatile from all lies.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Face height (HL)..... 30 mm | Face area..... 18 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 79 mm | Head volume..... 110cc |
| Front to back..... 69 mm | Shaft length..... 39.5 in |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★★ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★★ | | |

TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM

PANELISTS / SCIENTISTS



JOHN AXE
Lecanto, Fla., 7-hdcp.
A retired physicist, Axe studied features of solid materials and served as a technical advisor to several companies on ball-club interaction.



JACK HU
Ann Arbor, Mich., 18
This professor and associate dean for research in the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan studies manufacturing systems.



JOHN MCPHEE
Waterloo, Ontario, 7
Teaches systems-design engineering at the University of Waterloo, Canada's largest engineering school. His expertise is in design optimization and dynamic modeling.



MARTIN BROUILLETTE
Quebec, 6
Trained at Caltech, this rocket scientist teaches mechanical engineering at the University of Sherbrooke and researches high-speed air flow.



DAVID LEE
Wenham, Mass., 28
Associate professor of physics at Gordon College, Lee is an expert in advance-materials science, including golf-club parts. He owns eight U.S. patents.



GEORGE SPRINGER
Stanford, Calif., 20
Professor in the department of aeronautics and astronautics at Stanford University, his studies include mixed materials and their uses in sports equipment.

WANT TO KNOW HOW WE CHOSE THE SIX SCIENTISTS SHOWN ABOVE? VISIT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO LISTEN TO THE HOT LIST JUDGES EXPLAIN THEIR SELECTION PROCESS.



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
IDEA PRO GOLD

STREET PRICE
\$220

LOFTS
16, 18, 20, 23, 26

TECH TALK
A square-shape player's hybrid might sound like an oxymoron, but the Idea Pro Gold's narrow sole, neutral face angle, lower-loft options, maraging-steel face and mid-range CG are designed for the faster swinger who's looking for a hybrid with a high MOI that will produce a long-iron-like ball flight.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I really prefer the smaller profile of this one; it feels like you can get it off the ground much easier." ... (L) "I hate how it looks, but it performs really well. There's a lot of 'oomph' when it strikes the ball." ... (T) "Set it down on the turf, and you can tell right away it's a player's club."

HOT
Maybe not a traditional look, but a real crowd-pleaser for the high-speed set. The 17 custom-shaft options help, too.

NOT
Good luck getting more than \$200 for a hybrid in this economy, and that sole weight clogs with dirt.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|-------|--------------|--------------------|
| Face height | 34 mm | Face area | 24 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 80 mm | Head volume | 98cc |
| Front to back | 50 mm | Shaft length | 40 in |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½

SILVER



ADAMSGOLF.COM



SILVER

CALLAWAY
FT

STREET PRICE
\$200

LOFTS
18, 21, 24, 27

TECH TALK
The FT's stainless-steel body is equipped with a high-density, tungsten-infused sole that moves 50 percent of the clubhead's weight to the sole. This optimizes launch conditions and offsets the weight of the longer hosel—a feature that allows for a constant distance between the leading edge of the face and the shaft axis throughout the different lofts.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "It has a nice sound and ball flight." ... (M) "Very traditional-looking. In a way it's almost too long—you definitely don't need two of these in your bag. Really amazing in the rough." ... (L) "A really solid club. It'll keep you in contention." ... (T) "It's forgiving on tough lies, even downhill."

HOT
The technology's hidden but powerful, and the look is almost vintage. The neutral and draw options serve two kinds of players.

NOT
Super game-improvement players need more help than the draw version offers.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------|-------|--------------|--------------------|
| Face height | 34 mm | Face area | 20 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 77 mm | Head volume | 104cc |
| Front to back | 62 mm | Shaft length | 40.25 in |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★

W



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



SILVER

CLEVELAND LAUNCHER

STREET PRICE
\$150

LOFTS
16, 19, 22, 25, 28

TECH TALK
The company's first "traditional" hybrid might be its most effective. Engineered on an iron chassis, the Launcher has a parabolic leading edge for easy turf interaction, and the horseshoe-shape perimeter sole weighting helps create the highest-ever MOI for a Cleveland hybrid. To save more weight, the crown has stayed low, and the rear walls have been minimized.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Good feel and balance. It breeds confidence."... (M) "I really like the look of the longer head and how the ball jumps off the clubface. This is the longest hybrid I've hit."... (M) "The alignment aid is distracting, but this club is very easy to launch off the ground and very forgiving."

HOT
Proof that good sound, feel and performance don't have to come with a hefty price tag and an odd shape.

NOT
It's unanimous: The flame alignment decal looks like an unfinished tattoo.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Face height..... | 36 mm | Face area..... | 23.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... | 80 mm | Head volume..... | 108cc |
| Front to back..... | 58 mm | Shaft length..... | 40 in |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



SILVER

MIZUNO MX-700

STREET PRICE
\$160

LOFTS
17, 20, 23, 26

TECH TALK
The strong, lightweight ES230 steel face is plasma-welded to a 431 stainless-steel body to expand the hottest area of the face. The drop-down crown design helps lower the club's CG and allows lie and loft to be adjusted.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I could hit it blindfolded. Super performance. Excellent ball flight."... (M) "The two-tone crown graphics are busy, but it sets up perfectly flat and square. Perfect, aggressive ball flight."... (T) "It's got a hot face. Every ball felt like a flier—a great distance club. Trajectory was a little inconsistent, but that won't bother the average player because the distance is there."

HOT
Known for forged, soft-feeling irons, Mizuno isn't afraid to turn up the volume in its utility metals.

NOT
Another odd-looking crown decal that will keep some players moving on to the next contender.

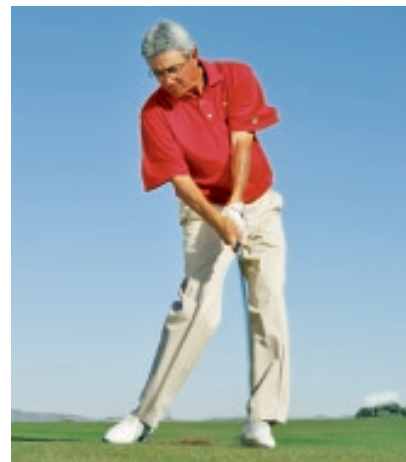
THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Face height..... | 32 mm | Face area..... | 21.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... | 88 mm | Head volume..... | 100cc |
| Front to back..... | 64 mm | Shaft length..... | 40.25 in |

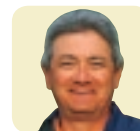
- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



MIZUNOUSA.COM



INSTRUCTION TIPS DON'T DIG: THE HYBRID WILL GET THE BALL OUT



The beauty of hybrids is that you can play them from almost any lie—even when your ball is in a divot hole. The sole of a hybrid, if used correctly, helps prevent the clubhead from getting stuck in

the crater. Most amateurs have a tendency to try to dig the ball out of this lie, and the result is usually a steep swing and poor contact. What you want to do is let the club glide through the divot. To hit the ball solidly, feel as if your shoulders are level as the club swings through impact. That feeling will keep the bottom of your swing as level as possible. If your lead shoulder is lower than your trailing shoulder, the club will dig.

Don Hurter, ranked among Golf Digest's 50 Greatest Teachers in America, is based at Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colo.

IMAGES OF DON HURTER CHARLES LABERGE



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

PANELISTS / RETAILERS



LEIGH BADER
South Easton, Mass.
Bader has co-owned Joe & Leigh's Discount Golf Pro Shop at Pine Oaks Golf Course for 28 years. "You'll see more sets that blur the line between a traditional hybrid and a hybrid-iron," he says.



JOHN LYBERGER
Bethesda, Md.
The director of golf at Congressional Country Club says "component fitting and interchangeable shafts are game-changing and will be big in 2009."



DALE ROBBINS
Knoxville, Tenn.
The owner of Dale's Winning Edge Golf Headquarters for 20 years says "golf companies with first-class fitting systems will have a leg up, but it'll be a tough year."



CASEY BAKER
Ypsilanti, Mich.
The vice president of operations at Miles of Golf says 2009 "will bring higher-lofted wedges, longer shafts and more adjustable-face-angle drivers."



KEN MORTON JR.
Sacramento, Calif.
The vice president of retail and marketing at Haggin Oaks Golf Super Shop says "the evolution of hybrids deeper in the set will be the iron-technology story."



SUSAN ROLL
Carlsbad, Calif.
"People often come to me with a jumbled mess of clubs, and they have no idea which ones to pull out," says the co-owner of Carlsbad Golf Center.

WHAT DO THE JUDGES HAVE TO SAY ABOUT OUR RETAILERS? AND WHAT DO RETAILERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE INDUSTRY? GO TO GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO FIND OUT.



SILVER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

NICKENT
3DX RC

STREET PRICE
\$100

LOFTS
14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29

TECH TALK
The tungsten-polymer inserts in the sole serve two purposes: They increase the club's MOI by 25 percent over the original 3DX Ironwood, making the club more stable through the swing, and the polymer backing helps dampen vibration. Six lofts will fill every possible gap you might have in your bag.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Goes right where you're aiming, good swing or bad. Easy to hit." ... (M) "Destined to be a classic. It might not be as forgiving, but when you hit the ball, it goes." ... (M) "The weight and balance made it very easy to swing. Good distance and a nice sound." ... (L) "I think I'm going to hit this well just by looking at it."

HOT
Nickent's reputation was built on this kind of quality. Golfers get tour-proven performance for \$100.

NOT
Off-center hits feel worse than on others.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Face height..... | 31 mm | Face area | 22.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 86 mm | Head volume | 100cc |
| Front to back | 58 mm | Shaft length | 39 in |

PERFORMANCE
★★★★½

INNOVATION
★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★

DEMAND
★★★★½



W

NICKENTGOLF.COM



SILVER

PING
RAPTURE V2

STREET PRICE
\$200

LOFTS
17, 20, 23, 27

TECH TALK
An investment-cast 17-4 stainless-steel body with a machined, variable-thickness face has been plasma-welded to a two-tiered tungsten soleplate. That moves 48 percent of the clubhead's weight to the sole and positions the CG low and deep to enhance launch conditions.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Anyone could hit this. Very easy to launch, and that scoop in the back isn't distracting at all." ... (M) "It's certainly plenty long enough." ... (L) "Got to be the farthest yet. Off the tee it released when it hit the ground." ... (T) "More penetrating ball flight than the G10."

HOT
The second go-round on Rapture is just as powerful and more playable. The weight movement is no small party trick. Plus, Ping's fitting options are unmatched.

NOT
Are we sure there's a performance leap between this and the G10 at \$50 less?

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Face height..... | 32 mm | Face area | 22.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe | 93 mm | Head volume | 100cc |
| Front to back | 62 mm | Shaft length | 40 in |

PERFORMANCE
★★★★½

INNOVATION
★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★

DEMAND
★★★★



W

PINGGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



TITLEIST 909H

STREET PRICE
\$190

LOFTS
15, 17, 19, 21, 24

TECH TALK
The size, shape, CG location and offset change gradually from loft to loft in this 17-4 stainless-steel clubhead that also features a fast, Carpenter 455 steel face insert. The face is larger and longer than previous Titleist hybrids to add a touch more forgiveness. A factory-adjustable swingweight screw in the back of the sole allows for customization and a low, deep CG.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Beautiful club. It looks like a BMW. Simple and elegant."... (T) "Great trajectory. Not too spinny."... (L) "I've never hit a Titleist hybrid I liked until now."... (L) "Super-traditional-looking at address. Rock-solid feel at impact, and mis-hits didn't travel too far off-line."

HOT
It's elegant and efficient, provided you have the training.

NOT
This is truly a club for high-speed players who don't want a high-launching hybrid.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Face height..... | 32 mm | Face area..... | 23 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... | 86 mm | Head volume..... | 104cc |
| Front to back..... | 63 mm | Shaft length..... | 40.5 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★½



TITLEIST.COM

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS XCG-V

STREET PRICE
\$220

LOFTS
16, 18, 21, 24

TECH TALK
The lightweight, V-shape titanium cupface is brazed to a heavy steel soleplate to move 66 percent of the clubhead's weight to the rear of the heel and toe for a higher MOI and improved launch. A complicated brazing technique bonds the two materials without leaving a weld. The titanium hosel frees an additional 30 grams of weight to add to the sole.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "A wind-cheater. It flies like nothing's in its way—like a bullet."... (L) "There's nothing bad about this golf club. No manipulating necessary: You just set it down perfectly and swing."... (T) "I roasted a few out of divots."

HOT
This meaty hybrid is in fourth gear right out of the headcover. Its low spin rates give it a distinctly metal-wood-like ball flight.

NOT
Resale value can justify some expenditures, but this brand isn't there yet.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Face height..... | 33 mm | Face area..... | 22.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... | 86 mm | Head volume..... | 116cc |
| Front to back..... | 64 mm | Shaft length..... | 39.5 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

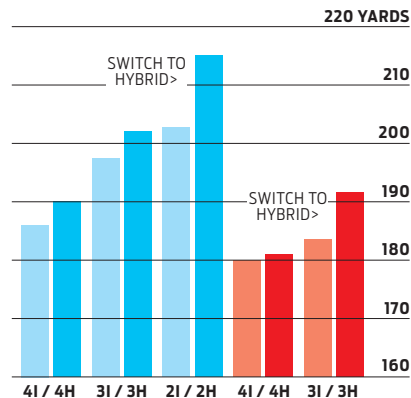
★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★½



TOUREGE.COM



TRACKMAN SAYS WHERE DOES YOUR SWING FALL APART?

When it comes to versatility and ease of use, hybrids have no peer. But just because a hybrid has the same number (or loft) as the iron it's replacing doesn't mean it will go the same distance. In fact, where the gap becomes meaningful differs by player type.

Using TrackMan ball-flight analysis, we tested middle-handicappers hitting long irons and corresponding hybrids. On average, the players we tested hit the 4-iron and 4-hybrid about the same distance (180 yards), and the 3-iron just four yards farther (184 yards). But the 3-hybrid went 192 yards, making it an ideal replacement for the 3-iron.

We also tested low-handicappers. They hit hybrids farther than the corresponding iron in every instance, and that leaves a huge distance gap between the 4-hybrid and 5-iron—not a desirable scenario. Instead, the low-handicappers tested should replace the 2-iron with a low-lofted hybrid (16 to 19 degrees), which they hit an average of 215 yards. That's 12 yards farther than a 2-iron. (Their 3-iron went 197 yards and 4-iron 187 yards.) The 2-hybrid offers a better gap and a stronger option as a driving iron.

Perhaps that explains why hybrids used on the PGA Tour tend to be lower-lofted. At last year's Barclays tournament (the first of four FedEx Cup playoff events), 64 of the 92 hybrids used (69.6 percent) had less than 20 degrees of loft. —EMJ



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
IDEA TECH A4

STREET PRICE
\$800 (set of eight, steel)

LOFTS
6-iron: 29 degrees, PW: 45 degrees

TECH TALK
This is a combination set that includes a pair of hybrids. The six forged irons are made from a soft 8620 carbon steel and feature a stabilizer bar designed to provide feedback at impact and improve feel. The cavity-back design pushes weight to the perimeter for forgiveness. A four-way tour-cambered sole reduces turf interaction for more consistent results.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Now this is a good idea! Loved being able to pick up some extra distance with the hybrids." ... (T) "I like the hybrid-to-iron progression." ... (T) "Crisp impact with the irons that any player could appreciate."

HOT
The hybrids, with Boxer technology that increases moment of inertia (MOI) and a Mitsubishi Javln FX shaft, make this a set to consider. Reducing the number of hybrids from three to two is a plus in this category.

NOT
No matter how good, square hybrids look wrong in the minds of some.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 23 mm | Topline..... 6 mm |
| Toe height..... 55 mm | Surface area..... 32.4 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 86 mm | Stock shaft weight..... 106 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



ADAMSGOLF.COM

CALLAWAY
X-22

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 45

TECH TALK
The sixth iteration of this cast club incorporates several hallmarks of previous X-series irons, such as a variable-thickness face and a 360-degree undercut channel that aids in the location of the center of gravity (CG). The Tru-Bore hosel has a polycarbonate tip for vibration control.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I could hit these blindfolded. Sign me up right now." ... (M) "I was smoking the 3-iron. I can't remember the last time I was able to do that." ... (T) "You can get forgiveness on just about every shot. That's cool." ... (T) "Doesn't dig, yet doesn't look boxy—a rare combination."

HOT
When you have a proven winner, there's no need to change much, but upping the MOI is a nice bonus in forgiveness. That snazzy cavity badge adds a touch of class, too.

NOT
There are three stock shaft-flex choices in graphite, but just one (UniFlex) in steel. Excuse me?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 22 mm | Topline..... 9 mm |
| Toe height..... 57 mm | Surface area..... 31.6 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 91.4 mm | Stock shaft weight..... 110 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★★



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

MIZUNO
MX-200

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
An external power bar and an inner Y-shape cavity pad extend the sweet spot toward the toe to deliver forgiveness on mis-hits. A slightly larger clubhead (than its MX-25 predecessor) and a deep, milled pocket cavity help launch the ball high.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I'm very impressed with the whole set. It's the ultimate point-and-shoot club." ... (L) "The traditional look hides the game-improvement features nicely, and it has a blade feel on center strikes." ... (T) "The softest feel in a game-improvement iron."

HOT
When it comes to forgings, few (if any) do it better than Mizuno, and that extends from its player's irons to this game-improvement set. The aggressive, triple-cut sole is a cool feature for those middle-handicappers who like to work the ball.

NOT
The big, honkin' sole on the long irons is a bit scary to look at.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 25 mm | Topline..... 7.1 mm |
| Toe height..... 55.2 mm | Surface area..... 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 88.4 mm | Stock shaft weight..... 113 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



MIZUNOUSA.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



PING
G10

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 30.5, PW: 46

TECH TALK
A deep cavity allows Ping's engineers to concentrate more weight in the perimeter and low-toe areas to increase MOI and optimize the CG. Offsets are larger in the long irons (for more forgiveness and higher launch) and less in the short irons (to control trajectory). The wide sole is designed to move the CG away from the face, thus promoting a high launch.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "It's a club that has a combination of everything going for it: the look, the consistency, the trajectory, the sound, the feel. This one has it all." ... (M) "It's all about forgiveness."

HOT
This iron has been one of the category's leading sellers since its debut, and it's easy to see why. The game-improvement features are disguised, and Ping is a master at offering fitting and set-makeup options galore. Too big a look for you? Try i10.

NOT
The irons lag in the soft-feel department.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) . . . 23.4 mm | Topline 7.5 mm |
| Toe height 54 mm | Surface area 31.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 84.5 mm | Stock shaft weight 99 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- DEMAND**
★★★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



TAYLORMADE
BURNER

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 27, PW: 45

TECH TALK
TaylorMade has taken its core driver technologies and used them in a progressive iron design. Features include the sweet-spot enhancing inverted-cone face technology and a reduced total club weight through the lightweight grip and lighter, longer shafts to increase ball speed.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "There is nothing not to like about this club. Simply the best." ... (L) "The gold standard. This iron inspires the kind of confidence you want." ... (L) "The name fits—this one is a burner. By far the longest in this group." ... (T) "Wow! Even a solid single-digit player could use these clubs."

HOT
A round of applause for targeting the distance-gap issue and smartly using lofts and club lengths to address it. Expect this club to supplant the Tour Burner as the most popular iron in the TaylorMade line.

NOT
It will take time for some to get used to the longer-shafted long irons.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) . . . 25 mm | Topline 8 mm |
| Toe height 57.6 mm | Surface area 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 90 mm | Stock shaft weight 85 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



TITLEIST
AP1

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
Made from multiple materials, the AP1 uses a tungsten-nickel box that is laser-welded to the back and sole to place the CG low and deep, promoting a higher launch. A dual cavity helps push weight to the club's perimeter, and an elastomer cushion helps dampen vibration.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Titleist has finally answered the call to middle-handicappers." ... (L) "A surprisingly forgiving club. I hit it thin and saved the shot. I'm very impressed." ... (T) "It's nice being able to stand up there and know you don't have to hit it perfect. Feels better than any other cast."

HOT
In prior years Titleist has stepped up its game in this category, but this club qualifies as a huge leap. Even the Aldila VS Proto graphite-shaft option won't turn off the traditional Titleist player.

NOT
Long irons are still too close to tour level and a little too far from hacker level.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) . . . 22.3 mm | Topline 8.4 mm |
| Toe height 55 mm | Surface area 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 91 mm | Stock shaft weight 120 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



TITLEIST.COM



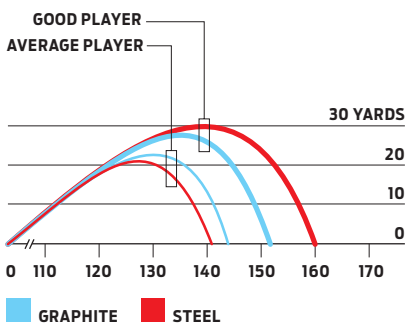
TRACKMAN SAYS STEEL SHAFTS AREN'T FOR EVERY- ONE

What's the difference between a steel iron shaft and a graphite iron shaft of the same flex? To study this consumer conundrum, our 5-handicapper hit two 7-irons—one with a stiff-flex shaft in steel and one in graphite. Our 14-handicapper did the same, except with a regular-flex shaft in steel and graphite.

The steel shaft worked best for the 5-handicapper. He averaged eight more yards in carry distance, and his shots had a tighter dispersion. Conversely, the 14-handicapper was more accurate with the graphite-shafted 7-iron and hit it three yards farther on average. Another bonus: His maximum trajectory was 2.5 yards higher with the graphite shaft.

"Graphite shafts usually have lower bend points than steel shafts, and so they tend to kick the ball up in the air," says Mike Dickerson, president of the International Professional Association of Clubfitters. "In general, driver swings of 95 to 100 miles per hour is the range where you can play either graphite or steel shafts. I often ask people if they're a hitter or a swinger to help them decide. A hitter is someone with tempo like Jesper Parnevik who really goes after it. I'll steer that person toward steel. However, a swinger, or someone with tempo more like Freddie Couples, I'll steer toward graphite."

So the difference between steel and graphite depends on who's swinging it. —MA



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CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CALLAWAY FT

STREET PRICE
\$1,100

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 45

TECH TALK
A tungsten-nickel alloy cradle that is 20 percent heavier than stainless steel surrounds a thin titanium face. The result is that 80 percent of the clubhead's weight has been pushed to the perimeter, boosting MOI. A thermoplastic-urethane cavity insert improves feel by reducing vibration.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "I could put it in the bag tomorrow and score better." ... (M) "It felt so good, I was looking for a forged stamp." (L) "How great does this club feel? I shanked one, and it wasn't awful." ... (T) "The rounded shape is pleasing, not overdone." ... (T) "Get in the right shaft, and you're home free. The club will do the rest."

HOT
One of the sexiest-looking irons on the shelf. The titanium face on the long irons has Formula One horsepower, and the short irons don't sacrifice control.

NOT
With this price tag, it's a good thing gas prices have come down.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 22 mm | Topline 9 mm |
| Toe height 56 mm | Surface area 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 92 mm | Stock shaft weight 110 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★½



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

CLEVELAND CG7

STREET PRICE
\$600

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
Microcavities reduce weight in the topline that is distributed to the sole. Additionally, the microcavities progressively decrease in size from 3-iron through pitching wedge to optimize the location of the CG horizontally and vertically, moving from a small heel bias on the long irons (to fight a slice) to the center on short irons.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "They cut through the turf so well. I could hit these clubs all day." ... (M) "Felt like I didn't have to muscle the shot, which was great." ... (L) "Looks too big, but when you hit it, my word, does it fly."

HOT
A ton of tech for the money, the CG7's CG is 10 percent deeper than last year's CG Gold, with 5 percent more MOI. There is a lot going on in back, but you don't hit the ball with aesthetics. The trajectory is powerful, and it forgives faster than your best friend.

NOT
The clunky-ness factor is fairly noticeable, especially in the short irons.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 18 mm | Topline 7 mm |
| Toe height 55 mm | Surface area 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 85.6 mm | Stock shaft weight 117 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



NIKE VR FULL CAVITY

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 45

TECH TALK
An increase in the face thickness as the club moves from topline to sole is designed to lower the CG. The undercut cavity is contoured to position weight behind the center of the clubface for better feel.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Nike has amazed me with its continuous improvement in looks, design and feel in the irons." ... (M) "Easy to hit, very stable, and it made it effortless to repeat my swing." (L) "It's a lot cleaner looking than most game-improvement irons. It went through the turf perfectly."

HOT
The 4-iron-through-AW set configuration is perfect for this level of player. The Eaton grip—which is designed for added traction on the top and a softer feel on the bottom—is a sound idea. Better still is a sole that has been smartly designed to interact with the turf from various attack angles.

NOT
Lacks the visual pizzazz and technological wizardry you'd expect from Nike.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 24.4 mm | Topline..... 9 mm |
| Toe height..... 56.6 mm | Surface area..... 31.3 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 88.4 mm | Stock shaft weight..... 120 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



NIKEGOLF.COM

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS XCG

STREET PRICE
\$600

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 46

TECH TALK
The dual-density dampening system uses a soft insert in the 7-iron through pitching wedge for added feel around the greens. The long irons have a firmer insert for a more solid feel. The tour grind on the heel section is designed to reduce grabbing.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "The variability on mis-hits was so small, the shots would be on the green." ... (L) "One of the better ones. Sound and feel were great." ... (T) "Good, sharp feel coming off the head. This is a nice set."

HOT
Somewhat of a player's look in a club with more than enough technology, this iron will prove to anyone not already convinced that Tour Edge is more than just the "good value" company. In fact, it might be the best iron the company has ever made.

NOT
The 5-degree gaps between the 8-iron, 9-iron and pitching wedge are too large for the scoring clubs.

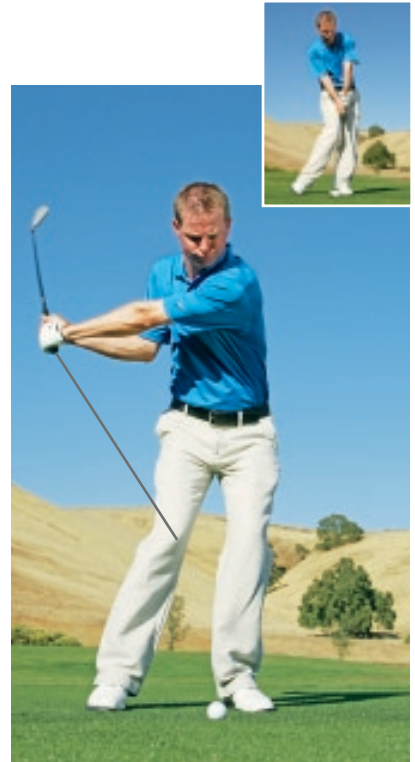
THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 22 mm | Topline..... 7 mm |
| Toe height..... 54 mm | Surface area..... 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 87 mm | Stock shaft weight..... 120 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



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JASON GUSS IMAGES CHARLES LABERGE

INSTRUCTION TIPS 'PULL' THE CLUB DOWN WITH YOUR KNEE



Game-improvement irons have made it easier than ever for beginners to hit passable shots. But to start hitting it pure, you need to get into the proper impact position. You can do this

with some simple swing imagery. As you complete your backswing, picture a string connecting the butt end of the club to your right knee. To get your hands to start down, imagine that your right knee has to move first to pull the club toward the ball. This will help you start the downswing with your lower body and move your weight laterally to your front foot and will put you in position to hit down on the ball.

JASON GUSS, ranked among Golf Digest's top-10 teachers in Michigan as voted by his peers, is based at the Treetops Resort in Gaylord.



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



GOLD

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS
IDEA TECH A40S

STREET PRICE
\$900 (set of eight, graphite)

LOFTS
6-iron: 28 degrees, PW: 44 degrees

TECH TALK
Adams has tweaked its set makeup from last year's a30S by adding a hybrid-like 9-iron, leaving one cavity-back iron (the pitching wedge) instead of two. The Boxer hybrids have a magnesium crown that is 77 percent lighter than stainless steel. The hybrids feature tungsten weights in the heel and toe to improve forgiveness.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "It's not a club you'd fall in love with looking at it on the rack, but you do once you hit it." ... (M) "The feel is fantastic for this kind of club, and the transition throughout the set seems spot-on."

HOT
When it comes to helping golfers, Adams clearly makes an effort. A maraging-steel face and the pull-face construction on the hybrids give choppers added distance, and Adams doesn't skimp on the shaft (Graphite Design's Tour AD YSQ-HL).

NOT
Wood-like hybrids extending to the 5-iron slot might not suit some players.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 31.1 mm | Topline 11 mm |
| Toe height 55 mm | Surface area..... 34 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 89.3 mm | Stock shaft weight 86 g |

PERFORMANCE
★★★★★

INNOVATION
★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★★

DEMAND
★★★★★

ADAMSGOLF.COM



GOLD

CLEVELAND
HIBORE XLI

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 45

TECH TALK
Cleveland has stuck to its hollow-construction concept, but it redesigned this hybrid set to include a larger chassis and face area, along with progressive sole widths (thinner as you move toward the short irons).

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I can go home right now as long as I can take these with me. They feel crisp, and I've never been able to hit a hybrid before—let alone an entire set." ... (M) "You'd never know the clubhead was hollow from the sound. It's sweet!" ... (M) "Much improved over the previous version."

HOT
The number of shaft options for a hacker set is impressive, and the redesign has resulted in a sleeker-looking clubhead that is more palatable at address. Even the short irons don't look offensive—no small feat in an all-hybrid set.

NOT
The hybrid sand-wedge option is pushing the concept too far. What's next, a hybrid chipper?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 45 mm | Topline 11 mm |
| Toe height 49.2 mm | Surface area..... 29.6 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 86 mm | Stock shaft weight 78 g |

PERFORMANCE
★★★★½

INNOVATION
★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★★

DEMAND
★★★★★

CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



GOLD

COBRA
SZ

STREET PRICE
\$800

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 44

TECH TALK
A shorter hosel lowers the CG, and the hefty offset helps promote a draw. The wide sole—nearly 20 percent wider than the S9 model—helps prevent digging into the turf, and it allows the CG to be moved back to improve lift.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "Love the sole. There's no way to chunk it with these." ... (H) "Effortless. It doesn't feel like I'm hitting the ball, just swinging the club." ... (M) "A really high flight. It just seems to soar out there." ... (M) "There's no vibration anywhere when you hit it, even on the thinnest of shots."

HOT
The swings in this player group are widely varied, making custom options critical, and Cobra doesn't disappoint. Among the highlights are the ability to move the lie angle up or down 4 degrees and no restrictions on custom set makeup.

NOT
For a company so successful in hybrids, the lack of them in the standard set is puzzling.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 27.3 mm | Topline 9.5 mm |
| Toe height 54 mm | Surface area..... 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 90 mm | Stock shaft weight 70 g |

PERFORMANCE
★★★★★

INNOVATION
★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★★

DEMAND
★★★★★

COBRAGOLF.COM



MIZUNO
MX-100

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFT
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
The hybrids are designed with a drop-down crown that allows them to be bent for loft and lie-angle adjustments. Like the MX-200, the Y-Tune bar pushes weight to the toe to help mis-hits, and the Exsar graphite shaft comes in regular (65-gram) and light (60-gram) versions. For those seeking custom-shaft options, Mizuno offers 48.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "This set makes a perfect transition from hybrids to irons. Are the hybrid shafts shorter than normal?" ... **(M)** "What you get is a repeatable ball flight with no crazy jumps." ... **(M)** "This club is in the wrong category—and I mean that as a compliment. It has the feel of a player's blade."

HOT
Mizuno gets major kudos for starting the set with 4- and 5-hybrids that use 4- and 5-iron-length shafts, respectively. We'd like to see more companies follow.

NOT
A lightweight steel shaft would be nice.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 31.3 mm | Topline 8.1 mm |
| Toe height 51 mm | Surface area 34.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 92 mm | Stock shaft weight 65 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- DEMAND**
★★★



MIZUNOUSA.COM



NIKE
SLINGSHOT HL

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 45

TECH TALK
The set has three hybrids (3, 4 and 5) and "slingshot" game-improvement irons that feature more offset in the middle irons than in the short irons. The middle irons have an elongated face to increase MOI. This helps improve ball speed on mis-hits. Nike worked with shaftmaker UST on a proprietary graphite-shaft option.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "These irons get up so high they might need a parachute for landing." ... **(M)** "Cool-looking and contemporary. Center hits feel soft; I wasn't expecting that." ... **(M)** "Provides a confident feel at address."

HOT
The sole design is a hallmark of Nike irons, and that attention to detail shows—not only in the variable width sole of the 6-iron through pitching wedge, but in the functional keel-sole design of the hybrids that cuts through lettuce-like rough.

NOT
High-handicappers might hit a few worm burners with the 19-degree 3-hybrid.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 29.5 mm | Topline 8.6 mm |
| Toe height 51.4 mm | Surface area 31 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 90 mm | Stock shaft weight 94 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- INNOVATION**
★★★★
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



NIKEGOLF.COM



TAYLORMADE
BURNER PLUS

STREET PRICE
\$800

LOFTS
6-iron: 28, PW: 45

TECH TALK
The oversize head has generous offset and a wide sole to help the strong-lofted irons get the ball airborne. A thin (2.4 millimeter) clubface combines with the company's inverted-cone technology to optimize ball speed on off-center hits. A longer, lightweight shaft is designed to further enhance distance. The CG is positioned to promote launch and spin (as much as 300 revolutions per minute). This allows the lofts to be strengthened by 1 degree.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "They pretty much have it all: good distance, solid impact, no slice and great feel." ... **(M)** "Whoa! Absolutely no need to lay up with these irons in the bag."

HOT
The large clubhead and thick topline help create a "can't miss" confidence. And for players who aren't able to hit a 3- or 4-iron, there's an option to grab a pair of Burner Rescue clubs for an extra \$100.

NOT
Burner Rescues should be standard.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) 31 mm | Topline 9.1 mm |
| Toe height 56 mm | Surface area 33 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 90.1 mm | Stock shaft weight 85 g |

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- DEMAND**
★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER **(M)** MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER **(L)** LOW-HANDICAPPER **(T)** TEACHER



SILVER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA

STREET PRICE
\$650

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
A 360-degree undercut channel improves perimeter weighting by moving the CG low and toward the back of the clubhead, providing stability and added forgiveness. There's a tip plug at the end of the shaft to dampen vibration.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "I hate the large flange on the hybrid 3-iron but, man, does it go." ... **(H)** "It's got a powerful sound and ball flight." ... **(M)** "It's just about impossible to slice or hook these." ... **(M)** "There's a comfort to the rounded toe on the middle and short irons."

HOT
Once the darling of super-choppers everywhere, Bertha has more than held her own as the competition in this category has grown fierce. Giving players the option of more traditional 3- through 5-irons instead of the hybrid-like irons was a heady move.

NOT
Wouldn't it be easier for all involved if they just made a traditional-looking hybrid for this set?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 26 mm | Topline 11 mm |
| Toe height 56 mm | Surface area 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 87 mm | Stock shaft weight 75 g |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★½ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★ | | |

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



SILVER

CALLAWAY FT I-BRID

STREET PRICE
\$1,500

LOFTS
6-iron: 28, PW: 44

TECH TALK
The multimaterial construction allows weight to be moved to the perimeter of the clubhead, and a lightweight titanium body allows for an oversize clubhead with more offset for optimum forgiveness. Tungsten-nickel weight ports in the sole are designed to improve MOI and stability.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "This is like Tiger's putt on the 17th at TPC Sawgrass; better than most." ... **(M)** "Going, going, gone! A home run!" ... **(M)** "A classic Callaway helper club that has it all. The feel is superb, and it seems like the ball stays on the face longer."

HOT
There's no denying that Callaway has found useful ways to bring Fusion technology to its clubs, including the FT i-Brid. The hybrids in this set are game-changers, and the oversize middle and short irons are like having training wheels on golf clubs.

NOT
For the \$1,500 price tag, you could buy a used car with actual wheels.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 31.4 mm | Topline 10.5 mm |
| Toe height 56.6 mm | Surface area 36 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 99.7 mm | Stock shaft weight 75 g |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★½ | | |

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



SILVER

NICKLAUS POLARITY HCT

STREET PRICE
\$700

LOFTS
6-iron: 28, PW: 44

TECH TALK
The sole on the hybrids has a center rail loaded with 50 grams of weight to lower the CG. Thin rails on each side of the clubhead are designed to reduce turf drag. The 5-, 6- and 7-irons use a thin, high-strength Carpenter steel sheet face that is plasma-welded to a cast stainless-steel body for a hotter face. Short irons have a narrower sole width for greater playability.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "The best 3-hybrid of all the sets." ... **(M)** "Jack is back! Terrific. Club is attractive, well-balanced and delivers great ball flight. They finally got it right." ... **(M)** "What an eye-opener. The hybrids are elegant and bomb it. Nice transition through the set."

HOT
The multitiered approach to the set makes perfect sense, and the 100-gram FST shaft is intriguing. Plus, it has the Nicklaus name. And we're not talking about Bill Nicklaus.

NOT
We doubt we'd ever catch the Golden Bear using a 44-degree pitching wedge.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 26.2 mm | Topline 9.3 mm |
| Toe height 57 mm | Surface area 34 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 91 mm | Stock shaft weight 82 g |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★½ | | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | | |
| | DEMAND ★★ | | |

NICKLAUSGOLF.COM



SILVER

PING
RAPTURE V2

STREET PRICE
\$1,200

LOFTS
6-iron: 29, PW: 45

TECH TALK
A technological treat made of multiple materials (a tungsten weight in the sole, a titanium face and a stainless-steel body) that place weight where it's most needed. A tuning port is designed to help stabilize the titanium face for improved feel and consistency.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "They make you feel and play like a big boy. Are the lofts jacked up on these?" ... (M) "Just effortless distance." ... (M) "You can't really see any of the crazy stuff, and that's good. The topline is a bit thick, but that's about it." ... (H) "Dynamite clubs. A great impact experience every time."

HOT
The ascending-weight shaft system (with lighter shafts in the long irons and heavier shafts in the short irons) shows smarts, but what really rocks is Ping's online Web-Fit program. For do-it-yourself fitting, this is as good as it gets.

NOT
Why even make a 3-iron?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron).....32.2 mm | Topline 9 mm |
| Toe height 54.3 mm | Surface area.....32.4 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 94.2 mm | Stock shaft weight 71 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



SILVER

WILSON
D19

STREET PRICE
\$550

LOFTS
6-iron: 28.5, PW: 42.5

TECH TALK
After Wilson's research revealed that more than 80 percent of iron strikes are from the center to the toe area, the company turned its focus to helping players with mis-hits on the toe by increasing the hosel length, using wide-tip shaft technology and moving weight to the toe. A wider sole and lower blade height than its predecessor help increase MOI as well.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(H) "A nice, clean look for such a forgiving set." ... (M) "Even the wide shaft seems to fit nicely with this set." ... (M) "I think it's safe to say anyone could play with these."

HOT
Padraig Harrington's major wins have given the company some visibility, and golfers would be wise to give this iron a look. The urethane badge offers a syrupy feel for a super game-improvement iron.

NOT
Calling a 42.5-degree club a pitching wedge is misleading. Calling an 18-degree club a 3-iron is dangerous.

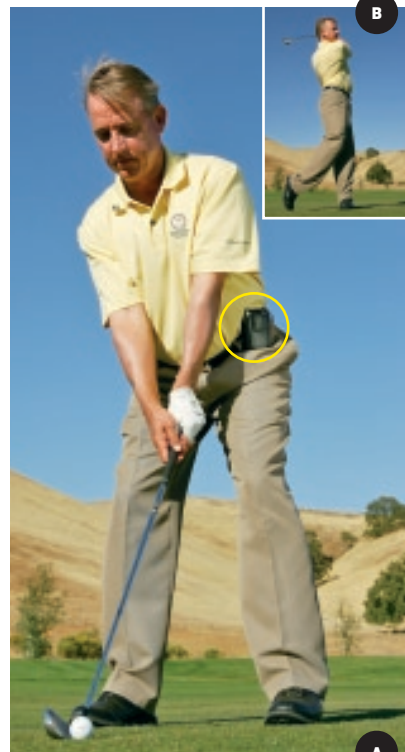
THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron).....25.6 mm | Topline 8 mm |
| Toe height 53 mm | Surface area..... 30 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 87 mm | Stock shaft weight 99 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★½



WILSON.COM



B

A

TODD KERSTING IMAGES CHARLES LABERGE

INSTRUCTION TIPS
HIDE YOUR CELL PHONE TO HIT SOLID IRONS



Considering the advancements in iron technology, especially in super game-improvement clubs, the time to trust the club to get the ball airborne is here. Yet I still see amateurs keeping their weight on their back foot and trying to scoop the ball into the air. This scooping motion often results in poor contact. I've never been a fan of cell phones on the course, but if you want to hit solid shots, I've found a good use for your mobile phone. Clip it to your left hip (A), and practice hitting shots trying to hide the phone from view. If you hang back, it'll still be visible. But if you shift your weight to your front foot and rotate around that leg, your hip turn will move the phone out of sight (B). **TODD KERSTING**



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CALLAWAY
X-22 TOUR

STREET PRICE
\$800 (set of eight, steel)

LOFTS
6-iron: 30 degrees, PW: 46 degrees

TECH TALK
To get the CG low and toward the center of the face (as opposed to some irons that have the CG high and toward the heel), Callaway thinned out the hosel and topline, lowered the blade height and redistributed weight in the undercut channel.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "Not the cleanest topline in the world, but it's a fine club." ... (L) "This one is for me!" ... (T) "The compact head and lack of offset make this a club that is classic and pure. A nice feel for cast, too."

HOT
Although it says X-22 Tour on the badge, this iron is less like its predecessor, the X-20 Tour, and more like the X-Tour, one of our favorites from the 2006 Hot List. It's a change we favor, along with the sole design that features a beveled trailing edge that narrows the sole. The X-20 Tour was a player's club for wannabes. This one is the real deal.

NOT
When it comes right down to it, the iron still emphasizes forgiveness over feel.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 16.4 mm | Topline 5.4 mm |
| Toe height 54 mm | Surface area 30.2 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 88 mm | Stock shaft weight 120 g |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★ | |

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM



MIZUNO
MP-52

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 31, PW: 47

TECH TALK
A pair of deep, crescent-shape pockets are milled into the back cavity, saving 14 grams of weight that has been moved lower. The sole design, with a rolled leading edge, cambered mid-sole and beveled trailing edge, is designed to improve turf interaction in a variety of conditions.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(T) "Excellent across the board. Forgiveness in longer irons was exceptional." ... (L) "I bought the MP-60s but could never adapt to them. These are much better than those." ... (T) "I like the fact that off-center hits still felt solid."

HOT
The sole is a bit beefier than you'd expect in an MP iron, but these are a fine option for the player who wants the sweet, forged feel of a Mizuno iron but doesn't have quite enough game to handle the MP-62.

NOT
Unfortunately, you can catch a glimpse of the pocket cavity at address on the 3- and 4-irons.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 20.5 mm | Topline 5.5 mm |
| Toe height 56.6 mm | Surface area 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 86.4 mm | Stock shaft weight 125 g |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★★ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★½ | |

MIZUNOUSA.COM



MIZUNO
MP-62

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 31, PW: 47

TECH TALK
The dual-muscle design blends two muscle pads—the outer pad allows Mizuno's engineers to precisely place the CG in each iron, and the inner pad puts mass behind the sweet spot for optimal feel. And, of course, the iron features the company's "grain-flow" forging process.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(T) "Surprisingly good workability in the short irons." ... (L) "The harder you hit these, the softer they feel. That's a pretty neat trick." ... (T) "Slightly lower trajectory and more responsive than the MP-52."

HOT
A Plain Jane that scores well in the talent portion of the competition. The sole glides through the turf, and the minimal offset helps move the ball anywhere you want it to go. If you've got game, you'd be a fool not to look at these.

NOT
Stronger players will gravitate to this club, so we'd like to see the stock shafts include the Project X 6.0, not just the 5.5.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron) ... 19 mm | Topline 6 mm |
| Toe height 54.3 mm | Surface area 29.3 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 84 mm | Stock shaft weight 125 g |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★ | |

MIZUNOUSA.COM



TAYLORMADE
TOUR PREFERRED

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 31, PW: 47

TECH TALK
The look of the TaylorMade player's iron has been streamlined. It features a thinner topline and incorporates a shorter blade length from heel to toe than the r7 TP. The inverted-cone technology helps to optimize distance on off-center hits, and the undercut cavity moves weight to the heel and toe, increasing MOI.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "There seems to be a bit more space out on the toe, but it looks good at address." ... (T) "Perhaps the most forgiving club in this category." ... (T) "As much confidence over the ball as I've ever had."

HOT
An effective mix of classic look and contemporary technology. The SelectFit fitting system is an idea that makes tremendous sense, especially when trying to sell to players at this level.

NOT
The inverted cone is not as large as the cosmetics lead you to believe. At least that's what we saw when we peeled off the badge.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 22 mm | Topline 6.7 mm |
| Toe height 56.5 mm | Surface area..... 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 89 mm | Stock shaft weight 124 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM

TITLEIST
AP2

STREET PRICE
\$1,000

LOFTS
6-iron: 31, PW: 47

TECH TALK
Although it has an elastomer cushion and a dual-cavity design similar to the AP1, there are distinct differences, starting with the club being forged from carbon steel instead of cast from stainless steel. The lofts are 2 degrees weaker than the AP1 in the 6-iron through pitching wedge, and the stock shaft is the Project X.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(T) "Workability and feel were there. Even the toe hits held on." ... (T) "A soft feeling that gives you feedback to help you tune your swing." ... (L) "This is a clear winner. Hit it the highest and longest of all."

HOT
When designing irons for better players, the challenge for engineers is how much game improvement is appropriate. This forged club strikes just the right balance, with more playability and better looks and feel than any of its predecessors.

NOT
The topline is a tad thicker than some in this category. So is the price tag.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)... 21.5 mm | Topline 6.6 mm |
| Toe height 54 mm | Surface area..... 32 cm ² |
| Heel to toe..... 83.3 mm | Stock shaft weight 120 g |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★★



TITLEIST.COM



CORALEE JORGENSEN IMAGES CHARLES LABERGE

INSTRUCTION TIPS
USE TWO TEES TO FIND THE SWEET SPOT



The reason the best golfers choose player's irons is that they offer great control, workability and distance—but only if you hit the ball on the sweet spot of the club. However,

if you've ever seen one of these irons up close, you know the sweet spot isn't very big. To hone a swing that delivers a center-face hit every time, try this tee drill: Place two tees in the ground about four inches apart, and put a ball between them. Now take one of the most unforgiving irons in the bag, say, the 4-iron, and practice hitting the ball without touching either tee. This drill will help you pure your irons consistently.

Coralee Jorgensen, Golf Digest's No. 1 teacher in South Dakota as voted by her peers, works at Westward Ho Country Club in Sioux Falls.



THE TEACHERS WE INVITE TO THE HOT LIST SUMMIT ARE TOP-RANKED, AND THEY HAVE A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE. GO TO GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO READ MORE TIPS.



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS IDEA PRO GOLD

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 30, PW: 46

TECH TALK
Two shallow Boxer hybrids complement six carbon-steel, forged cavity-back irons that have grooves with 14 percent more volume than the original Idea Pro. The mirror-chrome plating and the constant offset provide a traditional look.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "The finish on these is as pretty as anything I've seen." ... (L) "I'm not a fan of the hybrids, but I would play these irons any day." ... (T) "These are the perfect recommendation for a player who likes the look of a player's iron but doesn't have the skill to hit a player's 3- or 4-iron."

HOT
The shaft options (Project X for steel and Mitsubishi Javln FX for hybrids) are a nice surprise. This is the only player's iron to make our list that comes with hybrids standard, and the one that replaces the 3-iron is nothing short of cheating.

NOT
However, two hybrids in a player's set is one too many.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 20 mm | Top line 5.6 mm |
| Toe height 53.4 mm | Surface area 31 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 84 mm | Stock shaft weight ... 120 g |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★ |  |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★★ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★½ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★ | |

ADAMSGOLF.COM

CALLAWAY X-FORGED

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 31, PW: 47

TECH TALK
The short blade length and minimal offset appeal to the traditionalist, even if they are un-Callaway like. The CG is lower in the long irons and moves progressively—but subtly—higher through the set to create the proper ball flight with each club.


PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "Love the old-school look." ... (T) "You've got to be on your game to use these. A beautiful set, but definitely not for the weekend warrior." ... (T) "A terrific player's iron for a company long associated with game improvement."

HOT
It has the thinnest topline, narrowest sole, least offset and shortest blade length of any Callaway iron. This should appeal to those turned off by the more game-improvement X-22 Tour. Ernie Els and Annika Sorenstam used these irons during wins in 2008.

NOT
Ernie and Annika can hit these. But new endorser Justin Timberlake, like most 6-handicappers, would struggle.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Sole width (6-iron).... 17.2 mm | Top line 6.2 mm |
| Toe height 54.4 mm | Surface area 31.5 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 84 mm | Stock shaft weight ... 120 g |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ |  |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★★½ | |

CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

PING S57

STREET PRICE
\$900

LOFTS
6-iron: 30.5, PW: 47

TECH TALK
The dense tungsten toe weight, longer hosel and small cavity are designed to increase MOI for forgiveness. The dual-stabilizing bars in the cavity and urethane insert help improve feel. Ping's Web-Fit system will make sure you're correctly matched to one of the company's 12 color codes.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "This club produces shots with a nice, climbing trajectory." ... (L) "Quite workable. Everything you would want in a player's iron." ... (T) "Good, sharp feel coming off the head. Not the softest feel, but it's still a nice club."

HOT
This is a stellar upgrade from the S58 and S59 offerings, both in technology and appearance. With this clean-looking club and its game-improvement features, Ping continues to add the form to the function it has long been known for.

NOT
The cast feel remains noticeable in a mostly forged field.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sole width (6-iron)..... 19 mm | Top line 8 mm |
| Toe height 50.5 mm | Surface area 29 cm ² |
| Heel to toe 84.7 mm | Stock shaft weight ... 124 g |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★ |  |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★★½ | |

PINGGOLF.COM

WOMEN'S REPORT
YOUR GAME IS WORTH AN UPGRADE

Last March, during a fun-filled but hard-core women's golf retreat at Kiawah Island Golf Resort in South Carolina, I peeked inside the bags of the 75 women who each had paid at least \$1,400 to participate in the three-day event. What I found appalled me. Hidden inside designer golf bags and under chic headcovers were countless steel shafts, numerous 1980s-era blades, at least a dozen 3-irons and a few persimmon woods. (Yikes!) I could count on one hand the number of sets that had been purchased within the past two years, and the vast majority were at least 10 years old. When I asked the women—most of whom were avid golfers—why they were using such outdated gear, the typical reply was: "I'm not good enough to notice the difference."

As I told the women at Kiawah, I don't care how bad of a player you think you are. If you don't update your equipment, then you're never going to get better. (And by update, I don't mean buying a 1995 Great Big Bertha on eBay—I mean getting custom-fitted on a launch monitor and investing in a high-lofted 460-cubic-centimeter driver with high moment of inertia.) If you happen to use your husband's hand-me-downs, you might as well hang up your FootJoys and take up blind-folded cliff diving. You're just as likely to hurt yourself.

Today's women's equipment is significantly better than it was three years ago, and it will allow you to play better golf. Many of the clubs included in this year's Hot List are available in women's versions (indicated by "W" icons). But most female players—those with driver swing speeds of less than 65 miles per hour—should use women-specific "flow sets" that seamlessly integrate lightweight, high-launching woods, hybrids and short irons in a smaller set (eight to 13 clubs) with larger loft gaps. Clubs like the ones shown here are different from anything the guys play (weight, lofts, flexes, lengths) to optimize the performance of slower swingers. —SS



CLEVELAND
HIBORE BLOOM

STREET PRICE
 \$1,000 (eight clubs, bag)
 The set has a 15.5-degree high-launching HiBore Bloom HT driver (above) with a low center of gravity (CG), a HiBore 5-wood, five HiBore XLI irons, and a Classic II mid-mallet putter—all in a lightweight, women-specific design. (Each club is also sold separately.) Other options include an 11.5-degree driver; 3- and 7-woods; 3-, 4- and 5-hybrids; 3-iron through SW; a 42-degree Niblick chipper and a VP509 mallet putter.



PING
RHAPSODY

STREET PRICE
 Driver: \$300; fairway woods: \$220; hybrids: \$150; irons: \$113 (each)
 Ping doesn't believe in pre-packaged set configurations. Instead, the company encourages women to take advantage of its custom-fitting program to create the ideal set from an array of wide-soled, high-lofted Rhapsody drivers, irons, hybrids and fairway woods (all the way up to the 30-degree 9-wood shown here). Clubs are available in two shaft flexes and multiple lie and length options.



ADAMS
DESIGNER TECH

STREET PRICE
 \$1,500 (13 clubs, Keri Golf designer bag)
 This limited-edition set (only a thousand were made) includes women-specific versions of the Insight Tech a40S 460cc driver, 3- and 5-woods, six Idea Tech a40S hybrid irons (above), three wedges and a mallet putter. The woods and hybrids have the Adams Boxer technology to help increase stability on off-center hits. Each club comes with a lightweight Graphite Design Pershing shaft.



COBRA
TRANSITION-S

STREET PRICE
 \$700 (eight clubs)
 Cobra combines 4- and 5-utility woods, 6- and 7-hybrids (above) and wide-soled short irons (8-iron through sand wedge) to create optimal turf interaction and forgiveness on shots into greens. The lightweight Aldila Proto-HL shaft is designed to help launch the ball high and increase clubhead speed. The clubs can be matched to a Cobra Speed LD-M women's driver and fairway woods to complete the set.



MIZUNO
SORA

STREET PRICE
 \$800 (11 clubs, bag)
 With 4- to 5-degree loft gaps between clubs, this set features a 15-degree, 460cc titanium driver, two low-profile fairway woods, one hybrid, six extreme cavity-back middle and short irons (above) and a mallet putter with a soft polymer face. The result is consistent, noticeable yardage differences between clubs. The woods and irons come in regular or petite lengths to accommodate golfers of different sizes.



CALLAWAY
GEMS

STREET PRICE
 \$600 (eight clubs, bag)
 Designed for the beginning female player who needs a lot of help getting the ball airborne, the Gems set comes with a draw-bias, high-lofted titanium driver and stainless-steel fairway wood, one hybrid, three short, wide-soled i-Brid irons, a chipper and a women-specific 2-Ball putter (above). Each club is designed to launch the ball high, even at slower club-head speeds.



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

CLEVELAND
CG12/CG12 DSG

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK

DSG (dynamic sole grind) technology adds another element to the classic CG12 design. The leading portion of the sole is narrow and has a high bounce angle. The wider trailing edge has a low bounce angle. This allows a square face to deliver the performance of standard bounce yet lowers the leading edge when the face is open.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "These grooves are amazing—one, two hops, then ffffft." ... (L) "The way it nips the ball, there must be something to this DSG sole." ... (M) "It hits every ball crisply. Automatic out of the sand."

HOT

Cleveland continues to take its classic designs and make them more versatile. The finishes are appealing, and the grooves are effective without ripping up the cover of your golf ball. If you can't find what you need in the many lofts and bounce angles available, then you're beyond hope.

NOT

The DSG model might require care on especially tight lies.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: CG12: 46/8, 48/8, 50/10, 52/10, 54/8, 54/12, 54/14, 56/10, 56/14, 56/16, 58/8, 58/12, 58/14, 60/4, 60/10, 60/14, 64/12; DSG: 52/10, 54/12, 56/14, 58/10, 60/3, 64/3

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



CLEVELAND
CG14

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK

A light weight viscoelastic "gelback" material has been positioned behind the hitting area to improve perimeter weighting, diminish vibration on mis-hits and provide feedback. It features the same "zip groove" technology used in the Cleveland CG12. Zip grooves are designed to have the most volume and sharpest edges of any groove in company history. In addition, the CG14 has the familiar toe-and-heel sole grind for improved club-ground interaction.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "A perfect shape and a very stable head through any type of shot." ... (L) "You can feel this club more in your hands than others." ... (T) "Very forgiving. If you hit it fat, you'll still get it on the green."

HOT

The cavity gel enhances this classic design and improves the feel, something that any caliber player can appreciate. The "standard" and "low" bounce options are distinct and easily understood.

NOT

There are fewer options than the CG12.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 46/6, 48/6, 50/8, 52/10, 54/9, 54/12, 56/11, 56/14, 58/10, 58/12, 60/8, 60/12, 64/12

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



TITLEIST
VOKEY DESIGN SPIN MILLED

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK

The retooled Spin Milled line features grooves that are made using a small circular saw that produces deep, precision cuts with a tighter groove-edge radius. This increases the volume of the grooves to help retain spin from the rough. The groove angle is steep on higher lofts (for spin) but less extreme on lower lofts (to avoid excessive spin on full shots). The soft 8620 carbon-steel heads come in three finishes (tour chrome, oil can and black nickel).

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "An all-around terrific wedge. Whatever you need it to do, it does: bump-and-run, flop or spin. And it's perfection on the long shots." ... (L) "The face is neither too hard nor too soft, and it's easy to open the face or close it." ... (T) "It lives up to its name. It's very adaptable."

HOT

Sixteen majors have been won with Bob Vokey clubs. This updated set reflects everything he knows about wedges.

NOT

Left-handers don't have access to all of the 17 loft/bounce options.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 48/6, 50/8, 52/8, 54/8, 54/11, 54/14, 56/8, 56/11, 56/14, 58/4, 58/8, 58/12, 60/4, 60/7, 60/10, 62/7, 64/7

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★★



TITLEIST.COM



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



SILVER



SILVER



SILVER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ADAMS PUGLIELLI 418 TOUR

STREET PRICE
\$100

TECH TALK

The forged 8620 carbon-steel head features a high-density polymer weight chip in the back to dampen vibration. The chip is factory-adjustable, which helps keep the swingweight consistent after the grinding is done. Grooves are milled to USGA limits on width and depth. Sound and feel are controlled through an insert and a rear pocket cavity featuring multiple thicknesses. The head shape is angular like a traditional pitching wedge in the lower lofts and rounded in the higher lofts.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Might not look like you can hit delicate shots with it, but you can." ... **(M)** "Cuts through the sand nicely and is good in the rough. Works great on long shots." ... **(L)** "This is the club of the year for me. I love the feel, and it's great around the greens."

HOT

Through bending, this traditional-looking wedge accommodates 105 combinations of loft, bounce and offset.

NOT

Those who need 105 choices are not getting their equipment advice from this magazine.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 48/8, 50/8, 52/8, 52/10, 54/10, 56/10, 56/12, 56/14, 58/8, 58/10, 60/4, 60/6, 60/8

PERFORMANCE
★★★★½

INNOVATION
★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★½

DEMAND
★★★½



ADAMSGOLF.COM

BOBBY JONES PELZ WEDGE

STREET PRICE
\$150

TECH TALK

The face insert is made from Carpenter 440XH steel, a wear-resistant alloy typically used in industrial bearings and valve assemblies that permits the grooves to last for years instead of months, according to designer Jesse Ortiz. The hard insert is countered with a 3M structural-bonding membrane that is slightly spongy, giving it a shock-absorbing effect.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Rounded toe and leading edge set up well for all types of shots." ... **(L)** "Easy to use out of the thick stuff and from tight lies." ... **(L)** "From the sand this is outstanding, and it has great turf interaction. I would buy this sand wedge."

HOT

It's intriguing to imagine having the equivalent of new grooves even after years of use and abuse. With these you won't have to stockpile enough to get you through to 2024, the anticipated end of the grandfather period for clubs with old grooves.

NOT

It doesn't have the variety of loft and bounce options desired by better players.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 52/4, 56/10, 56/14, 60/4, 60/8, 64/4

PERFORMANCE
★★★★

INNOVATION
★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★

DEMAND
★★★



BOBBYJONESGOLF.COM

CALLAWAY X-FORGED

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK

The C-grind sole (in which material is removed from the heel and toe of the sole to improve playability) is a result of feedback from tour players, who wanted more versatility on a variety of lies and turf conditions. Other updates include a tighter angle on the leading-edge radius, and the "mack daddy" grooves, once available only in the higher lofts, have been added to three models (52, 54 and 56 degrees). The company's two traditional finishes (white chrome and vintage) have undergone some tweaking as well.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "I guess [designer] Roger Cleveland improved on a good thing." ... **(L)** "It has great turf interaction and feels super smooth on long shots. Doesn't dig, even on tight lies."

HOT

When Callaway's tour players speak, Roger Cleveland listens, and the consumer benefits.

NOT

The grooves might impart too much spin for players without the ability to control it.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 48/10, 50/12, 52/12, 54/14, 56/14, 58/9, 58/10, 60/9, 60/10, 62/9, 64/9

PERFORMANCE
★★★★½

INNOVATION
★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL
★★★★½

DEMAND
★★★★½



CALLAWAYGOLF.COM

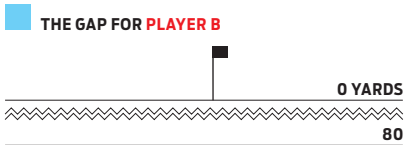
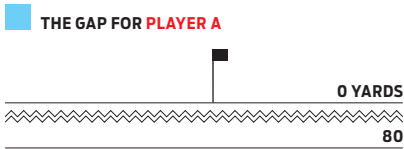


CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER **(M)** MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER **(L)** LOW-HANDICAPPER **(T)** TEACHER



TRACKMAN SAYS
MIND THE GAP

A set of new irons can solve one problem but create another: You might have to rethink your wedge situation. Because pitching wedges come in different lofts, the carry distance between them and your highest lofted wedge changes.

Our test player hit his 56-degree sand wedge an average of 88 yards and his 47-degree pitching wedge an average of 110 yards. This leaves a 22-yard gap to fill. If he finds a club that goes about 100 yards (likely a 52-degree wedge), he'll split that gap with about 10 yards on each side. And because it's easier to choke down or take a three-quarter swing rather than muscle a sand wedge, he'll learn to hit the gap wedge as short as 90 yards. However, if he buys a super game-improvement set with a 45-degree pitching wedge, which our tester hit 117 yards, he'll have a 29-yard gap to worry about. To get optimal spacing he might consider changing to 50-, 54- and 60-degree wedges, or maybe 52- and 58-degree wedges.

Golf Digest Top 50 teacher Jim Suttie suggests 4-degree gaps between your clubs, but if you're not sure, a number of fitting systems can determine how to fill out your new set. One example: Ping's nFlight fitting system can recommend a full-set makeup after just a few swings with three clubs. —MA



CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

MIZUNO
MP-T

STREET PRICE
\$100

TECH TALK
Mizuno uses its "grain-flow" forging process on a special billet of 1025E Pure Select mild carbon steel. Deep square grooves are computer-milled for maximum spin, and the C-grind sole helps improve playability. The teardrop head shape features minimal offset and a rolled leading edge to prevent digging.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Very much a piece of artwork. The heel and sole grinds are functional." ... (M) "Maybe not as much spin as the others, but I didn't miss it at all. Great feel." ... (L) "Out of the sand, I don't know how you get any better." ... (L) "This is how I like my wedges to look." ... (T) "It's got that forged feel that's so nice to have around the greens."

HOT
Nothing says forged like Mizuno. It has a classic shape and plenty of heft that's easy to like. We love the 51- and 53-degree lofts for the gap wedge, too.

NOT
It's a solid wedge, but its groove technology hasn't been updated since 2005. That's too long in this field.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 47/6, 51/6, 53/8, 56/10, 56/14, 58/10, 60/5, 60/8

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★½
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★



MIZUNOUSA.COM



NIKE
VR FORGED

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK
Made from 1025 forged carbon steel, the wedge was designed with significant input from Tiger Woods and with the careful grinding touch of the well-regarded and somewhat unknown master craftsman Mike Taylor. The heel grind allows for opening the clubface and hitting a variety of shots from different lies.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "This definitely would be an overperformer. Does everything you ask it to do, and it inspires a lot of confidence." ... (M) "Simple, elegant, yet performs fantastic out of the worst lies and the bunker." ... (M) "An exceptional wedge with great feel on good and bad hits." ... (L) "The setup blew me away."

HOT
A club blessed by Tiger deserves consideration. And the shot that set up the putt that got Tiger in the U.S. Open playoff at Torrey Pines (18th hole, 60-degree wedge to 12 feet) was executed with this model.

NOT
Will middle- to high-handicappers balk at its no-frills player's-club profile?

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 52/10, 54/12, 56/10, 56/14, 58/6, 58/10, 60/6, 60/10

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★½
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



NIKEGOLF.COM



PING TOUR-W

STREET PRICE
\$110

TECH TALK

The 17-4 cast stainless-steel head has a tungsten toe weight and a small cavity that's designed to increase the moment of inertia (MOI) and improve feel. A polymer insert in the cavity helps optimize swingweight, dampen vibration and push the center of gravity (CG) low and slightly forward to control clubhead rotation during the swing. The contoured sole helps with shots from a variety of lies. Available in a brushed-silver or black-nickel finish.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "It screams forgiveness." ...
(M) "The feel is fantastic, with plenty of spin." ... **(L)** "Terrific out of the sand. It almost felt like I was hitting a good drive." ...
(T) "Recessed area behind the hosel makes it really playable from all lies."

HOT

It has a sophisticated look and is smart. It's proof that wedges can facilitate new thinking and the use of different materials but not look like a metal detector.

NOT

Some will like the fact that these grooves won't scuff your ball. Others won't.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 47/10, 50/12, 52/12, 54/10, 54/14, 56/10, 56/14, 58/6, 58/8, 58/10, 60/6, 60/8, 60/10



PINGGOLF.COM

TAYLORMADE Z TP

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK

The milled "Z" grooves are named for the cutting tool that the company says is more advanced than the one used for its previous Y-cutter grooves. The result is a 10 percent increase in groove volume that helps channel debris and maintain maximum spin. The C-grind sole available on some lofts increases the club's versatility. Its smoked PVD finish helps diminish glare.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "You can fly it to the hole and it stops, even from the rough, which is fun." ... **(M)** "That dark-brown finish is easy on the eyes." ...
(T) "The leading edge stays down when you open it, so you know you'll hit it crisp."

HOT

It features the qualities (grooves, sole, look) better players seek in a wedge. That nice, soft feel is the result of the channeled area on the backside, an innovation that isn't new but remains effective.

NOT

Its loft and bounce options are limited. Just one finish probably won't satisfy everyone. The lack of a C-grind sole on the 60-degree model is curious.

THE OPTIONS

Loft/bounce: 52/8, 54/10, 56/12, 58/8, 60/6



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



TODD KERSTING IMAGES CHARLES LABERGE

INSTRUCTION TIPS

COME FACE TO FACE WITH YOUR WEDGE



You probably know that the bounce on the bottom of your sand wedge is there to help you get out of a bunker. You can also use it to hit effortless pitch shots, particularly from tight lies. I see

many amateurs chunking shots around the green as a result of the clubface sticking into the ground. That's because the shaft is leaning too far forward at impact, and the leading edge gets stuck. This chunk can be avoided. A good swing thought to help you use the bounce: Try to finish the swing with the face of the wedge looking back at you. To achieve this finish position, you have to allow the club's bounce to glide across the ground (the shaft will be nearly vertical through impact). You'll feel and hear more of a thump through the grass, and the ball will fly high and land softly. This face-to-face image also helps to get you to accelerate through impact. **TODD KERSTING**



CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHICH CLUBS YOU'D LIKE THE MOST? TAKE THE PLAYER-PROFILE QUIZ, AND WE'LL SUGGEST ONES THAT FIT YOUR NEEDS. VISIT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST.



CATEGORY LEADER



ALSO IN WOMEN'S

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER **(M)** MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER **(L)** LOW-HANDICAPPER **(T)** TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



GOLD

ODYSSEY
BLACK SERIES #1 #6

STREET PRICE
\$270

TECH TALK

The fusion of a milled 1025 carbon-steel body to a dense tungsten flange moves the center of gravity (CG) low and deep for a better roll. Two head weights are used to accommodate different shaft lengths, and the dual-layer face insert comprises a resilient elastomer back and a urethane outer surface that's thin but firm. The finish is black nickel. Also available in #1 (Anser-style) and #9 (mid-mallet).

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Such clean, beautiful lines. The best-looking putter they make." ... **(L)** "Sound and feel are fabulous, very quiet and distinct." ... **(T)** "A perfect putter for someone who focuses on path." ... **(T)** "If you're an instinctual putter, this is your instrument because it has just that single dot."

HOT

The sleek application of extra weight to the flange encourages this classic shape to swing close to the ground.

NOT

The soft "click" might not provide enough audio feedback for some.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 111 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back 29 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... 3° | custom |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★ | |

ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



GOLD

TAYLORMADE
DAYTONA TP-KIA MA

STREET PRICE
\$300

TECH TALK

There are five models available in this introductory series from in-house craftsman Kia Ma (three blades, one mallet and one mid-mallet). Each is milled from soft 1020 carbon steel. Six five-gram tungsten weights in the heel and toe help lower and deepen the CG, as well as provide a crisp feel. The toe hang across the three blade models ranges from 40 degrees to 54 degrees.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "The detail in this is unbelievable. The head weight is perfect. It feels like a true piece of art." ... **(L)** "The white alignment aid really pops nicely off the black head." ... **(T)** "It's fast off the face. This allows you to shorten your putting motion, which translates into more control."

HOT

The midnight-black finish and skinny, eight-millimeter topline are darn sexy.

NOT

The plain milled face. If this is TaylorMade's most expensive putter line, why isn't the technorific Rossa groove face insert, which the company touts, an option?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 111 mm | Shaft lengths..... 34 in |
| Front to back 29 mm | 35 in |
| Loft..... 3.5° | |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| | DEMAND ★★½ | |

TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



GOLD

TITLEIST
CAMERON STUDIO SELECT

STREET PRICE
\$300

TECH TALK

All three blades in the line—the Newport 2.6 (near center-shaft), 2.7 (double-bend shaft with offset) and the traditional Newport 2—are milled from forged 303 stainless steel. The topline curves slightly up from heel to toe. The purpose is to raise the toe to reduce the tendency of aiming left. Screw weights of 10, 15 and 20 grams in the sole allow the swingweight to match different shaft lengths and player preferences. A single white line is the aiming feature.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(L) "It feels exactly like a blade should." ... **(L)** "Doesn't feel or sound like a metal face, yet here I am looking at one." ... **(M)** "This has a cool neck—different, but I like it. All of the Newports just set up perfectly." ... **(T)** "I tried hard not to like this, but, man, the Cameron putters always feel like butter."

HOT

For starters, it's the Performance and Look/Sound/Feel winner. The custom weighting is an exceptional addition.

NOT

How can the modern icon of puttermaking not offer a lefty 2.6 or 2.7?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 115 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back 32 mm | 34 in |
| Loft..... 4° | 35 in |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|--|
| | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| | INNOVATION ★★★ | |
| | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★ | |
| | DEMAND ★★★★★ | |

TITLEIST.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



GOLD

YES!
TRACY III PLUS

STREET PRICE
\$300

TECH TALK

During the fitting process, golfers can choose from four interchangeable hosel designs. Not only does this provide a variety of aesthetic options, but it affects the putter's balance (from face-balanced to 60 degrees of toe hang). Hosel switches are quickly made with a wrench that fits a small locking fixture on the sole of the putter. The company's face technology is another interesting story: The concentric grooves, milled in 20-degree upward slants, are designed to grab the ball at impact and impart forward roll.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "One of the coolest things I've seen this year. I could definitely see myself fiddling around with looks in the shop." ... (L) "Quiet sounding." ... (L) "Nice roll. Ball seemed to really hug its line."

HOT

This is a breakthrough for adjustability in the category, and rumor has it a mallet version will be along soon.

NOT

The strong 2.5-degree loft has potential to get stubby on slow greens.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Face width.....108 mm | Shaft lengths.....32, 33 in |
| Front to back.....30 mm |34, 35 in |
| Loft.....2.5° |36, 37 in |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★ | |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★★½ | |

YESGOLF.COM



SILVER

COUOUR
DORNOCH

STREET PRICE
\$250

TECH TALK

The head is milled from hot-rolled A36 carbon steel and features a traditional plumber's neck with one-quarter-inch of offset. You cannot purchase a putter from this company, even online, without being fitted. Its Tri-Fit Method employs the Pythagorean Theorem in which a^2 (the distance from the hands to the feet) plus b^2 (the distance from the feet to the ball) combine to solve the dimensions for c^2 (your appropriate shaft length and lie angle).

PLAYER COMMENTS

(T) "It's a great fitting idea. With this system you could buy a putter like you'd buy a suit." ... (T) "Felt like I could get right into my stance." ... (L) "Impact was loud for my liking, more like a 'knock' than a 'click.'"

HOT

Having three head weights (335, 350 and 365 grams) to match different shaft lengths exemplifies the company's commitment to fitting.

NOT

The matte-nickel finish and sharp corners at almost every edge make for a somewhat militaristic aesthetic.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Face width.....112 mm | Shaft lengths..... custom |
| Front to back.....29 mm | |
| Loft.....4° | |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★★ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★ | |

COUOURGOLF.COM



SILVER

TP MILLS
TRADITION II XL

STREET PRICE
\$360

TECH TALK

The first one-piece forged plumber's neck in the 40-year history of the company is available in 1030 carbon steel and 304 stainless steel. Instead of cutting loft into the face, the "parallel-pocket" design ensures that the distance between the front and back walls of the face is a constant thickness. The milling process is specifically engineered to avoid creating faces that appear closed in the address position.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "It's got a sweet, pitched sound." ... (T) "I enjoyed solid hits everywhere on the face, and no wavering on off-center strikes. Classy." ... (L) "The face is softer than the gunmetal finish would indicate." ... (T) "The grip is great, too. It fits nicely across the palm and sets in easy."

HOT

Each putter is hand-milled by David Mills, who learned from his father, legendary founder Truett P. Mills.

NOT

Availability is limited. Mills isn't running off 10,000 of these at a time from his shop in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Face width.....113 mm | Shaft lengths.....34 in |
| Front to back.....29 mm |35 in |
| Loft.....3° | custom |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| ★ | PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ | |
| ★ | INNOVATION ★★★ | |
| ★ | LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★★ | |
| ★ | DEMAND ★★★ | |

TPMILLSPUTTERS.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

PANELISTS / TESTERS



TOM BEATTIE
Morgan Hill, Calif., 20-hdcp.
The retiree uses game-improvement irons but is considering the switch to super game-improvement irons.



LEEANN FAIRLIE
Oklahoma City, 1
"Technology is making golf easier," says the stay-at-home mom. "What a terrific bonus!"



MATT HORTON
Los Gatos, Calif., 20
"I never knew there were clubs designed to negate bad swing habits," says the auto-repair business owner.



KEVIN LITTLEJOHN
San Antonio, 2
The IT analyst is surprised by "how good little-known and unendorsed golf clubs perform."



RICKY BROWN
Fort Worth, 0
"The difference between a good and a great club is minute," says the business teacher.



BOB GREIG
Los Angeles, 0
CPA and nine-time club champ at Riviera says "all golfers should look at a game-improvement iron."



JIM JONES
Park City, Utah, 9
"Performance and quality is so high that feel is essential in club selection," says the retired pilot.



JOHN KEELER
West Sand Lake, N.Y., 9
The sales engineer says technology helps him have more fun: "Companies should be praised."

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



GOLD

ODYSSEY
WHITE HOT TOUR #1

STREET PRICE
\$150

TECH TALK

The elastomer-core face insert addresses feel and stability. Its surface is infused with urethane to augment sound, and the weighting scheme of the insert has been shifted toward the perimeter to increase moment of inertia (MOI). The rationale behind using a 355-gram head for 33- and 34-inch shafts and a 340-gram head for 35-inch shafts is to keep the torsional balance—or how heavy the putter feels in a player's hands—constant.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(T) "This insert could make a Pinnacle feel soft." ... (L) "Roll was end over end, and this alignment line seemed really simple yet effective." ... (T) "I could putt with my eyes closed, and I would still know this putter was for me. Something about its weighting just felt so right."

HOT

The burnt tour finish provides a regal appearance and won't reflect glare even in the brightest sunlight.

NOT

Some panelists complained of distance-control issues with the soft insert.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 111 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 30 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... 3° | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★



ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



GOLD

PING
I-SERIES ANSER

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK

The heel-toe-balanced, 17-4 stainless-steel body is investment cast and then heat-treated. The machined face has an insert that combines a thick, urethane piece with a softer central layer. The taper-tip shaft is stepless, and the grip is Winn AVS. The company's online Web-Fit program calculates the proper length, lie and grip size based on static measurements provided by the consumer.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(T) "I was very impressed with the feedback on off-center hits. It lets you make stroke corrections quickly." ... (M) "If you like the Anser style, you'll love this." ... (L) "I actually liked this insert, and I'm not a guy who normally likes inserts."

HOT

An example of product evolution that would make Darwin proud. The company that invented the Anser has made it better. The insert is a sign that the metallic sound that gave Ping its name has been bred out.

NOT

It would've been nice to have heavier head-weights for the shorter shafts.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Face width..... 111 mm | Shaft lengths..... 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... 30 mm | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... 3° | 35, 36, 37 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★



PINGGOLF.COM

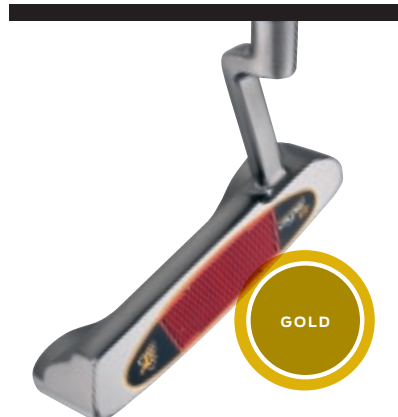
PANELISTS/TESTERS CHARLES LABERGE

THE 13-DAY HOT LIST SUMMIT TOOK PLACE AT CORDEVILLE, IN SAN MARTIN, CALIF. VISIT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO SEE BEHIND-THE-SCENE PHOTOS.



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



PING
IWI ANSER

STREET PRICE
\$170

TECH TALK
The 17-4 stainless-steel body features a two-piece face insert (machined 304 stainless steel encased in elastomer) and housings for adjustable weights in the heel and toe. It comes standard with two 12-gram weights, but an optional wrench kit with 20- and 28-gram weights permits nine custom options. In addition to total weight, by altering the putter's toe-hang balance, one can influence how it might rotate open and closed for a particular stroke.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "A classic with just the right amount of technological tweaks." ... **(L)** "I'm a tinkerer, so I love the ability to change the weights." ... **(L)** "I like the softness. Sounds and feels like a putter should."

HOT
Packs about as much innovation as is possible within the confines of a blade head, yet it's deftly hidden where you can't see it: right in the sole.

NOT
Charging an extra \$70 for the weight kit. Automatic access to what makes a product unique should be part of the deal.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------|
| Face width..... | 111 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... | 30 mm | | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35, 36, 37 in |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★½
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



PINGGOLF.COM

TAYLORMADE
DAYTONA

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK
The 304 stainless-steel construction is finished in Tuscan nickel. This model employs the company's AGSI+ (Anti-skid Groove System Insert) technology, designed to minimize backspin at impact to reduce initial skidding. The 14 computer-milled, polymer-filled grooves are designed to grab the cover of the ball, increasing face friction and imparting forward spin. Lighter material choices for the insert enable saved weight to be distributed lower to improve CG and roll.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "Insert feels soft yet there's some authority to it. It really put a good roll on the ball for me." ... **(L)** "Wow! I dig the jazz of the matte-red and matte-black colors. Plus, it lined up perfectly." ... **(T)** "Ball came off the face slow and soft." ... **(M)** "Even my bad putts felt pretty good."

HOT
The face insert feels so uniform you'll never know if you've mis-hit it.

NOT
The face insert feels so uniform you'll never know if you've mis-hit it.

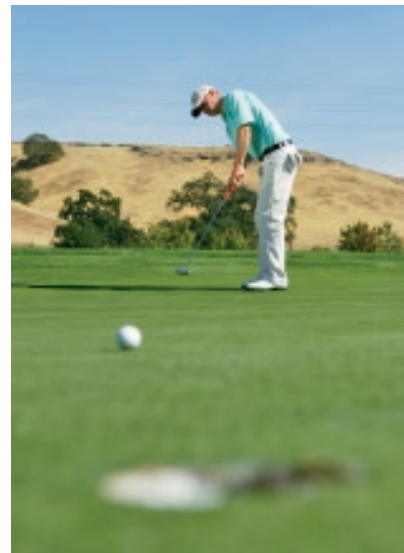
THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 113 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 30 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3.5° | | 35 in |

- ★ **PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★
- ★ **INNOVATION**
★★★★★
- ★ **LOOK/SOUND/FEEL**
★★★★★
- ★ **DEMAND**
★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



JASON GUSS IMAGES CHARLES LABERGE

INSTRUCTION TIPS
LET THE SHAFT DICTATE YOUR PUTTING PATH



Whether you prefer a mallet putter or a blade like the ones on this page, your putting path does not have to change. However, if you prefer a straight-back, straight-through path over an

arc path, a center-shafted putter (above) could help you. Why? When the shaft is positioned in the center of the putter, instead of near the heel, the amount the putterface opens or closes during the stroke is reduced. If you putt on a straight line, you don't want the face to open or close at all. Not sure if you putt this way? Lay a shaft on the ground, and make a few practice strokes with your putter on top of it. If your putter doesn't trace the shaft and moves closer to your body, you're probably more of an arc putter. **JASON GUSS**



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



SILVER

HEAVY PUTTER

K4

STREET PRICE

\$170

TECH TALK

At 750 grams, this toe-droop design is about 50 percent heavier than a conventional blade. However, because this is the introductory piece of the company's Mid-Weight series, it has been scaled back from the usual model weight of 850 grams. The idea behind a weighty putter is to engage the larger muscles in the body to create a better pendulum stroke.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(L) "Releases automatically. The block to the right is no more."... (T) "Great on short putts, but distance control could be an issue on long ones."... (M) "Much sleeker than the company's past models. A little bit of a hollow feel, but I like the simplicity of its alignment."

HOT

Keeps your stroke smooth even after the second cup of coffee. The thin topline and slightly reduced weight will make the company's concept more palatable to a wider pool of golfers.

NOT

A beefier shaft might eliminate the faint wobbly feel.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------|
| Face width..... | 115 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 32 in |
| Front to back..... | 35 mm | | 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35, 36 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★½



HEAVYPUTTER.COM



SILVER

PING

KARSTEN SERIES ANSER

STREET PRICE

\$90

TECH TALK

This current model of the time-honored style might look no-frills, but it has one: an elastomer insert behind the 17-4 stainless-steel face designed to improve the sound and feel. Much of the head's total 340-gram weight is pushed to the heel and toe to increase forgiveness on off-center strikes. A white line across the split-level flange provides the alignment feature.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Just what you'd expect: nothing fancy but very effective. Ping does this shape better than anybody."... (T) "Love the simple contrast of the gunsmoke finish against the white line."... (L) "Produces a nice 'pop' at impact. It's definitely got that metal feel, but it doesn't deafen."

HOT

Everything you need and nothing you don't for less than \$100. Plus, the company lets you go online to customize length, lie, loft and grip size for free.

NOT

Don't expect this putter's beauty to pull you out of a three-putt funk. The look is about as exciting as eggs on toast.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------|
| Face width..... | 110 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... | 30 mm | | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35, 36, 37 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



SILVER

SNAKE EYES

TOUR PLATINUM

STREET PRICE

\$180

TECH TALK

The face of the 304 stainless-steel head features what the company calls ARC (Advanced Roll Control), which is a pattern of semicircular scales milled at an upward angle of 44 degrees. The width of each scale is 0.4 centimeters and is designed to consistently enter the space of a traditional 0.5-centimeter-wide dimple to grip the ball's cover. The design objective is less skidding with quicker forward roll.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Just an incredibly solid look at address and well-balanced."... (L) "I like the gunmetal finish. Whatever's going on with the face sure gave it a nice feel."... (L) "The way the hosel flows straight into the head is an example of great design."

HOT

The Tour Platinum series is available in four body styles with three neck designs, so even the pickiest players should find something that fits the eye.

NOT

If you like a strong alignment feature, the single gray line doesn't provide much contrast against the rest of the head.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Face width..... | 109 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 30 mm | | 35 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★



GOLFSMITH.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



MACGREGOR
DCT SERIES

STREET PRICE
\$130

TECH TALK

The cast, 17-4 stainless-steel head features "distance control technology," which is a polybutadiene insert with a blend of five responsiveness zones. The farther a strike occurs from the center of the face, the livelier that portion of the insert will be. The purpose of this design is to get mis-hits to roll out the same distance as center strikes.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Looks cheap but doesn't play like it. Deadly accurate." ... (M) "Has a cushy impact." ... (L) "I'm not a soft-face guy, but I like this. The roll is fabulous." ... (L) "I love the diamond as an alignment aid. Original." ... (T) "No hops, baby. Love that true roll."

HOT

Enlivening the outskirts of the face is one of the most inventive putter technologies to emerge in recent years. Usually there's a premium to be paid for such innovation, but this is a great value.

NOT

The ultra-soft face doesn't let you know if you've mis-hit it. Some golfers will want more feedback.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 94 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 34 in |
| Front to back..... | 50 mm | | 35 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★½



MACGREGORGOLF.COM



ODYSSEY
WHITE HOT XG 330

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK

The design is based on Odyssey's popular 330 Dual Force model from 1998. This revamped version has the "hi-def alignment system" of two white bars bordered with three thin black lines on the flange and the soft, textured two-piece face insert shared by all XG models. The hosel is a traditional plumber's neck.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Sets up perfectly square without manipulation. It's just ready to go and has predictable distance control." ... (M) "It's a very good-looking, effective alignment system." ... (L) "This is the first mid-mallet that has truly fit my eye. I've been waiting for this." ... (T) "The insert gives great feedback and good roll."

HOT

Achieves the perfect middle ground that defines this category. After a while the slender body starts to feel and look like a blade, but the forgiveness never leaves.

NOT

A lot of alignment features are crammed into a small space, which will be a deterrent to some players.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------|
| Face width..... | 100 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 50 mm | | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★★



ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



TITLEIST
CAMERON FASTBACK

STREET PRICE
\$300

TECH TALK

Like the Titleist Newport blade line, the Fastback (shown) and Switchback models are milled from forged 303 stainless steel, and each features a topline that curves slightly upward from heel to toe. The idea is to discourage the user from lifting the toe and inadvertently aiming left. The Fastback has a rounded flange, and the Squareback's is square. Both models are near face-balanced and have double-bend shafts with a half-shaft's width of offset.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "[Designer] Scotty Cameron knows what he's doing." ... (T) "The face has that Cameron 'click.'" ... (L) "You get the stability of a big mallet in a compact package, which is awesome." ... (T) "I find the short heel-toe length refreshing."

HOT

You can expect to see a lot of these in play on professional tours next year. Money players rely on Cameron, and so can you.

NOT

What was the rationale behind having a lefty version for the Squareback, but not the Fastback?

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 91 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 48 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 4° | | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★½



TITLEIST.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



SILVER

CLEVELAND CLASSIC #2

STREET PRICE
\$70

TECH TALK

First, the heel-shafted head is cast from 17-4 stainless steel, and then the face is computer-milled. The gooseneck hosel flows forward to provide a full shaft's width of offset. For alignment, a white line extends to the back of the rounded flange and is framed by a shallow rectangular cavity. The hand-polished satin finish is designed to be durable and reduce glare.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "There's something very familiar about this. It's comfortable and has a squeaky clean look." ... (L) "I liked that I didn't have to jiggle it. It just sat there on the ground on its own." ... (M) "Back to basics. Had good control of the stroke." ... (M) "This thing's not entirely milled? You're kidding."

HOT

Just about any putter for \$70 is a steal, let alone one that still has the shrinkwrap on it and performs as well as this one. They've taken a classic design and manufactured it efficiently.

NOT

Fitting is limited to three lengths, and the weight might be too light for some.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 101 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 44 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★½



CLEVELANDGOLF.COM



SILVER

PING IWI 1/2 CRAZ-E

STREET PRICE
\$170

TECH TALK

This center-shafted version has the same construction as the blade and mallet models: a 17-4 stainless-steel body and a machined 304 stainless-steel insert with an elastomer back for feel. It comes face-balanced with two 12-gram weights, but total weight and toe hang can be customized nine ways with a kit of 20- and 28-gram tungsten weights for the heel and toe.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Easy to align. Plus, distance control is easier with this versus the full mallet." ... (L) "I felt like I was putting with a blade, but it still offered the forgiveness of a mallet." ... (T) "The center of the face feels harder than it should." ... (T) "It has enough weight where it'll swing itself, which is uncharacteristic of a putter this small."

HOT

If you've never liked center-shafted putters, this might change your mind.

NOT

We said it once; we'll say it again: Dinging us an extra \$70 for the weight kit just ain't right. Some putters sell for that amount.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------|
| Face width..... | 103 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... | 44 mm | | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35, 36, 37 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★½



PINGGOLF.COM



SILVER

RIFE ABACO

STREET PRICE
\$180

TECH TALK

This computer-milled 304 stainless-steel head is reminiscent of the flange-blade styles of the middle 20th century. The T-shape alignment aid is formed by the intersection of two white lines. A small notch on the topline allows you to check if your eye and hand positions are correct. Like every model in the company's line, the face has horizontal grooves designed to grip the cover of the ball at impact, lift it out of its depression and impart forward roll.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "It has a true roll, and it sure seems like these grooves really do what they're supposed to." ... (T) "The solid weight tunes your tempo." ... (T) "The notch might not be so great for players who hang their hands low."

HOT

The lines of the square toe and square heel want to flow straight back, but the gooseneck hosel and rounded flange keep the overall look soft.

NOT

Two degrees of loft as standard isn't enough for even mildly shaggy greens.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-----------|
| Face width..... | 97 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 47 mm | | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... | 2° | | uncut |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★★



RIFEPUTTERS.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



SILVER

SEEMORE
FGP2 STAINLESS

STREET PRICE
\$185

TECH TALK

The distinctive asset of this milled 303 stainless-steel head is the company's "rifle-scope" technology. The bottom portion of the shaft is painted black to conceal a red dot located between two white aiming lines on the heel. Seeing the dot indicates that the setup is incorrect or the head is not releasing properly during the stroke. A new option is the "whistle" offset shaft that permits golfers with forward presses to utilize the red-dot system.

PLAYER COMMENTS

- (M) "Their technology works for me." ...
- (M) "Unless you're custom-fit, I think the alignment system could be a distraction." ...
- (T) "Might be one of the ugliest putters out here, but the roll was excellent." ...
- (T) "It's simply a great-rolling putter."

HOT

The new whistle offset shaft cleverly addresses (pun intended) what used to be a problem: The Zach Johnson "hands-back" style was a prerequisite. It no longer is.

NOT

The nickel-satin finish reduces glare, but looks an awful lot like Civil War gray.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|--------|
| Face width..... | 90 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 35 in |
| Front to back..... | 51 mm | | custom |
| Loft..... | 3.5° | | |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★½

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★



SEEMORE.COM



SILVER

TAYLORMADE
SUZUKA

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK

The 304 stainless-steel head has a plumber's-neck hosel and an aiming line framed by a slight cavity in the flange. The Anti-skid Groove System Insert, common to all putters in the basic Rossa line, has 14 polymer-filled grooves designed to grab the cover of the ball at impact and impart forward spin. Light materials, such as aluminum, are used for the insert, and the saved weight is redistributed throughout the head to increase MOI.

PLAYER COMMENTS

- (T) "I like the soft edging around the perimeter. Not so robotic-looking." ...
- (L) "Great touch on downhillers. The ball comes off the face real nice." ...
- (T) "Seems like the perfect size for this category. It's easy to see the line with this offset hosel." ...
- (M) "Sweet feeling."

HOT

The Tuscan nickel finish over the softly milled curves produces an artful mix of shade and reflection.

NOT

No versions for southpaws is unfair to 10 percent of the golfing population.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 97 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 50 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3.5° | | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★★



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM

PANELISTS / TESTERS



RONN LOEWENTHAL
Tiburon, Calif., 15-hdcp.
"Using so many clubs at once really made me realize how many options golfers have," says the investor.



DONNIE LUPER,
Bridgeton, N.C., 1
The endodontist learned that "an R-flex shaft helps me decrease spin and hit it 15 yards farther."



BOB MACDONALD
Los Angeles, 20
"Golfer-friendly clubs make the sport more enjoyable," says the investor. "You actually believe you're good!"



LARRY MCCOY
Newtown, Conn., 6
The rewards-company COO now knows to be "open-minded about brands and specs."



STERLING PRICE
Nashville, 12
The actuary is excited that "companies are using R&D dollars to make great clubs for mid-level players."



RYAN SAKOWSKI
Toledo, Ohio, 10
"The best club might not be the prettiest," says the computer-app builder. "The options stun me."



JASON SHIPLEY
Towson, Md., 5
"Underexposed clubs work as great as the popular ones," says the realtor. "No hype, but solid principles."



TODD STEWARDSON
Danville, Calif., 10
The consultant changed his thinking about flex: "Shafts that fit your swing speed make a big difference."



CHOOSING THE HOT LIST PLAYER
PANELISTS ISN'T A MATTER OF RANDOM SELECTION. VISIT GOLFDIGEST.COM/GO/HOTLIST TO HEAR THE HOT LIST JUDGES EXPLAIN THE PROCESS.

PANELISTS/TESTERS CHARLES LABERGE



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



GOLD

ODYSSEY
BLACK SERIES I 2-BALL

STREET PRICE
\$270

TECH TALK

The head is constructed of multiple materials and includes a urethane bridge between the top and sole. It has a 58-gram tungsten plug that pulls the CG deep. According to Odyssey, in a comparison of mass properties against the White Hot XG 2-Ball, this putter's MOI is 25 percent higher at 4,580, and the CG is 28 percent deeper at 1.58 inches back from the face. It features the line's two-piece elastomer face insert.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(T) "Couple this with a soft ball and you can really control your putts." ... **(L)** "It's one of the more conservative-looking mallets." ... **(M)** "It's the best 2-Ball they've made. Refined. The heavier head feels very solid, and the metal finish is handsome without being reflective." ... **(T)** "The 2-Ball has become a classic look."

HOT

This isn't just a cosmetic tweak. The landmark optical innovation of the last decade has been retooled for the better.

NOT

If you want a mallet with ultimate forgiveness, other putters have higher MOI.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-----------|
| Face width..... | 88 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 87 mm | | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★★



ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



GOLD

PING
IWI CRAZE-E

STREET PRICE
\$200

TECH TALK

The shape places weight along the perimeter to increase MOI. An elastomer backing is designed to improve the feel of a machined 304 stainless-steel face insert. The black-white-yellow alignment aid is raised to sit even with the topline to avoid the two-dimensional look of the original model. Two ports in the heel and toe accommodate 12-, 20- and 28-gram weights, allowing for nine customized possibilities.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(L) "Impact was very responsive. The distance the ball rolled was true to how it felt." ... **(T)** "Love the subtlety. The features are easy to line up, but then mentally you can get away from the lines and think about making your stroke." ... **(M)** "Ping keeps making a good thing better."

HOT

Ping is already one of the best when it comes to offering stock length and lie options. The iWi takes fitting a leap further.

NOT

Still charging an extra \$70 for the weight kit? Seriously, without that upcharge this space would be blank.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|---------------|
| Face width..... | 98 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... | 88 mm | | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... | 3° | | 35, 36, 37 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★★



PINGGOLF.COM



GOLD

TAYLORMADE
ITSY BITSY SPIDER

STREET PRICE
\$200

TECH TALK

The 303 stainless-steel frame and lightweight aluminum core save weight, which is concentrated into heavy screws in the rear cartridges. The screws are movable so total weight and face balance can be customized. At first glance it appears to be a shrunken version of its older sibling, but the black wings have been pulled inward, and the white alignment decal has been abbreviated for a simpler look. With an MOI of 5,500, it still has 82 percent of the stability of the previous (and bigger) version. The face has the Rossa AGSI+ groove insert.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(L) "Still looks like a spaceship with two engines, but I'm OK with that." ... **(M)** "The way the Spider should've been made in the first place." ... **(L)** "Heavier than it looks, which is good. Rolls beautifully."

HOT

A symphony of function over form. The two hosel options—plumber's neck or double-bend—nicely anticipate different tastes.

NOT

Even 82 percent of the world's fattest man is still a lot to look at.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 82 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 86 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 2.5° | | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER

CLUBS LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



SILVER

NIKE
IC

STREET PRICE
\$140

TECH TALK

The monochromatic head (20-20A shown), shaft and grip are designed to optically blend into the putting green so the white alignment stripes stand out. The most significant change from last year's introductory mallet is that the open spaces in the head have been filled in, creating a solid green shape. The benefit of the large, square design is a high MOI that mitigates twisting on off-center strikes.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(L) "Sometimes I have trouble setting up closed, but this corrected that problem." ... (T) "The green-white concept really does help, but I found the face profile a smidge high." ... (T) "You could leave this on the putting green and never find it again." ... (M) "Good touch on short ones; great feedback on long ones."

HOT

Free your mind and free your stroke. When you can't see the putter, all you can (and will) think about is speed.

NOT

The extra-large sole has the potential to get scuffy if you're not stroking it well.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width.....105 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 88 mm | 34 in |
| Loft.....3° | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★



NIKEGOLF.COM



SILVER

ODYSSEY
WHITE HOT XG 2-BALL F7

STREET PRICE
\$170

TECH TALK

What we have here is a fusion of the company's two most popular alignment systems, the 2-Ball and the parallel "fangs" of #7. With 120 grams repositioned in the fangs, this model has an MOI of 4,800, which is 40 percent more than the original 2-Ball. As with most mallets in the XG line, it includes a double-bend shaft with a shaft's width of offset as well as the two-piece elastomer-based face insert with a textured sweet spot.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Center hits and off-center hits all go the same. I could get used to this." ... (T) "Looks like it can balance itself. I think I could set this putter up, walk away, and it would still be lined up at the hole when I got back." ... (L) "One of the softest inserts." ... (T) "A lot of features, yet it's simple."

HOT

For anyone struggling with alignment issues, this could be the best cure around. The combination of bars and balls is as effective as it is bold.

NOT

It looks like the Millennium Falcon.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 87 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 88 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft.....3° | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★½

DEMAND

★★★★★



ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



SILVER

ODYSSEY
WHITE HOT XG SABERTOOTH

STREET PRICE
\$170

TECH TALK

Two dense, semicircular fangs account for 132 grams, which spread 37 percent of the head's total weight away from the CG location to increase stability on off-center hits. The soft, elastomer-backed face insert is designed to complement multilayer balls and features a textured sweet spot to enhance feel. Parallel bars and two stacked aiming dots assist with setup.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(M) "Real easy to rotate the clubface through the ball." ... (L) "I'm looking for a 'click' that is not tinny, and this provides that. It's easy to set down square, perhaps the easiest putter ever to align." ... (T) "Good stuff. How can a putter be solid and soft at the same time?" ... (L) "Nice contrasting colors." ... (T) "Good for Generation X. Too flashy for Baby Boomers."

HOT

The optical bonus of the round shape is that it corresponds perfectly with the dimensions of a cup.

NOT

Shaft-length options (three) and hosel choices (one) seem parsimonious.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 87 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 86 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft.....3° | custom |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★½

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★★



ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



ODYSSEY
WHITE HOT XG TERON

STREET PRICE
\$170

TECH TALK
The design is similar to Odyssey's Sabertooth, especially the idea of pushing weight toward the perimeter to improve stability on off-center hits. The outer wings occupy 147 grams, or 41 percent of the head's total weight, helping it achieve an MOI of 5,750. The face has the XG line's soft and textured elastomer-backed insert. Alignment features borrow the Marxman's white bars.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "A no-brainer to align. If you can't get this pointed at the hole, just give up." ... (T) "Busy-looking, but it draws your eyes right to the center spot." ... (L) "I love scooping up balls with it." ... (M) "The more putts you make with it, the prettier it looks."

HOT
Having the highest MOI of any putter in the Odyssey line makes for serious bragging rights. Its stability can help win nassaus, then the wings can help pop the tops to the free beers at the clubhouse.

NOT
Forget to put the headcover on, and the sharp ends can give a nasty scratch.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 87 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 92 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... 3° | custom |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★ | |
| ★ INNOVATION ★★★★ | |
| ★ LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★½ | |
| ★ DEMAND ★★★★ | |

ODYSSEYGOLF.COM



PING
KARSTEN SERIES CRAZ-E

STREET PRICE
\$120

TECH TALK
A lightweight elastomer insert in the cavity behind the face is designed for double duty: reduce vibration and redistribute weight to the perimeter for a high MOI. The body is investment cast from 17-4 stainless steel and is face-balanced. Two tones of blue accentuate the multiple-level alignment feature.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(L) "I like that it doesn't have an insert on the face. Just the solid feel of steel." ... (M) "Feels like it just glides across the grass. This one's impossible to miss with from short range." ... (T) "Fairly heavy, so it promotes the use of the big muscles in the stroke." ... (M) "If you read the putt right, it's going to go in."

HOT
If you prefer the traditional sound of steel but want a modern shape, Ping has played matchmaker with this model. And the price tag makes it a cheap wedding.

NOT
Gunmetal gray and muted blues will be a welcome subtlety to some but will feel industrial and boring to others.

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Face width..... 93 mm | Shaft lengths..... 30, 31 in |
| Front to back..... 91 mm | 32, 33, 34 in |
| Loft..... 3° | 35, 36, 37 in |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| ★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | |
| ★ INNOVATION ★★★★½ | |
| ★ LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | |
| ★ DEMAND ★★★★½ | |

PINGGOLF.COM



RIFE
BARBADOS TOUR MALLET

STREET PRICE
\$180

TECH TALK
The computer-milled 304 stainless-steel head has a notch cut into the back of the topline directly above the sweetspot. When the central white aiming line appears in the notch, you know your eyes are over the ball. Because the horizontal grooves are designed to grip the cover of the ball and lift it from its depression on the green, the face has a strong loft of 2 degrees. The shaft features a half-degree of kickback, meaning it leans slightly toward the right eye.

PLAYER COMMENTS
(M) "Very balanced. Doesn't wobble at all when you set it down." ... (L) "It makes sense visually." ... (T) "Three prominent lines make alignment a cinch, but they'll distract some players during the stroke." ... (L) "Ball comes off syrupy. One of the most consistent rollers out here."

HOT
The two-tone look of the tour-black finish and polished grooves puts it high in the running for most attractive mallet on our list.

NOT
If the putt on 18 must drop, do you want to worry about an alignment notch?

THE NUMBERS

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Face width..... 84 mm | Shaft lengths..... 33 in |
| Front to back..... 77 mm | 34, 35 in |
| Loft..... 2° | uncut |

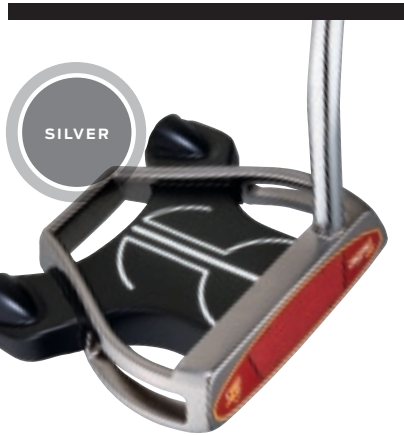
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|----------------------------------|--|
| ★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★½ | |
| ★ INNOVATION ★★★ | |
| ★ LOOK/SOUND/FEEL ★★★★ | |
| ★ DEMAND ★★★ | |

RIFEPUTTERS.COM



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER



SILVER

TAYLORMADE MONZA SPIDER

STREET PRICE
\$200

TECH TALK

The combination of a large steel frame and a light aluminum core allows more weight to be pushed rearward. The purpose is a CG depth that is 40.5 millimeters back from the center of the face. Because the movable weight cartridges extend farther from the heel and toe, 60 percent of the head's total weight lies outside the center portion, as defined by the outskirts of the white alignment graphic. As a result, the MOI is 6,750.

PLAYER COMMENTS

(T) "The adjustable weights really give you the chance to get it the way you want it."... (M) "Within six feet, it's deadly."... (M) "A lot going on visually, but not too distracting. Loved the roll of the insert."... (T) "Real easy to line up; the ball feels like part of the putter."... (T) "Last year I was like 'whoa,' but now I like the look."

HOT

One of last year's hottest-selling mallets. About 50,000 Americans can't be wrong.

NOT

Full-court-press alignment graphics could upset the stomachs of some golfers.

THE NUMBERS

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
| Face width..... | 92 mm | Shaft lengths..... | 33 in |
| Front to back..... | 96 mm | | 34 in |
| Loft..... | 2.5° | | 35 in |

PERFORMANCE

★★★★

INNOVATION

★★★★

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL

★★★★

DEMAND

★★★★½



TAYLORMADEGOLF.COM

BEST VALUES

HOW ABOUT A FULL SET FOR LESS THAN \$1,000?

We know that \$500 drivers, \$370 fairway woods and \$1,500 iron sets might be difficult to afford in today's economic climate. We also know that you can get quality clubs for a lot less. Here are two options to consider: First, there's the exceptional value of a used set of clubs

(preferably former Hot List selections). Visit sites such as valueguide.pga.com, callawaygolfpreowned.com or golfexchange.com to find good deals. Or you can try this list of our favorite new-club values. This set of 14-clubs will cost you \$980 (\$1,040 with bag).

DRIVER, \$220

Tour Edge's GeoMax 2 has a 20 percent larger face and a 22 percent deeper center of gravity (CG) than last year's model because of four internal weight pads deep in the sole (lofts: 9, 10.5, 12, 15; touredge.com).

FAIRWAY WOOD, \$150

A good enough club to be used by Padraig Harrington (winner of two majors last year), **Wilson's Fybird** has heel and toe sole scallops that create a railed sole (lofts: 15, 18; wilson.com).

HYBRID, \$150

A fresh idea on the hybrid, the **Snike Eyes Q4-U** features a concave sole that's designed to reduce ground contact. Four weight ports on the rear perimeter help push weight low and deep (lofts: 15, 19, 23, 27, 31; golfsmith.com).

IRONS, \$200

The **Hireko Acer XK** series of irons comes in three versions (Standard, HT and Pro), but each set of eight irons has an undercut cavity for optimal forgiveness and a low CG. On the Pro version, the sole on the cast 431 stainless-steel head gets narrower, and the blade length gets shorter (hireko.com).

PUTTER, \$100

The lightweight polymer face insert and three-pointed mallet shape on the **Nike Oz 6** push weight to the extreme heel and toe for optimal stability (nikegolf.com).

WEDGE, \$80

Weight has been redistributed to the flange on the **Lynx LXW** to lower the CG. The grooves cover nearly 6 percent more area than previous models (golfsmith.com).

BAG, \$60

The **Sunday X-Strap** from **Sun Mountain** weighs just two pounds, including a dual-strap system with hip padding, four pockets and a vinyl-reinforced bottom (sunmountain.com).



CATEGORY LEADER

(H) HIGH-HANDICAPPER (M) MIDDLE-HANDICAPPER (L) LOW-HANDICAPPER (T) TEACHER