

Clubfitting Is a Must for Game Improvement

An interview with Pete Makowski and Woody Lashen of Pete's Golf

Golfing Magazine: Clubfitting for a golfer at any level is critical. If someone is not getting fit, how has technology changed that would convince them to do so?

Pete Makowski: The first thing is we now have interchangeable golf clubs. Shafts could be ro-tated, weights could be moved and face angles can be changed. Years ago this was not possi-ble. Back then you would have to pick a club that had the features that person needed. You no longer have to do that. Now clubs can be dialed in. There is a lot that can be moved on a club to do that.

Woody Lashen: I think the biggest thing today is that there are different clubs for different play-ers. At Pete's Golf we test clubs. We are able to see the characteristics of the clubs. We could build the exact golf club that is going to fit that specific person. That will give the golfer the best opportunity to hit the best shots they can.

PM: Size fitting is very important and performance fitting is also important. When you are build-ing golf clubs, the typical game improvement golf club has a big perimeter weighted head, a low center of gravity, and a flexible easy-to-hit shaft. But there is so much more that goes into it to-day. There are several different segments that go into building a club — there is the cavity back and at the other end of the spectrum, there is the blade. There is quite a bit of diversity in the product lines today.

As an example, if a golfer is a 12 handicap, there is a club for that golfer. If the golfer is a 9 handicap, there is a club for that golfer. Nowadays you can get very specific.

GM: Let's break it up into several categories — the beginner, the golfer who is a 15 handicap or higher, the golfer who purchases a set of clubs off the shelf, and the golfer who already has a set of clubs. Four

categories. How does all of that fit into Pete's Golf model of clubfitting?

WL: I think what sets us apart is our experience. When a golfer comes in, we sit and talk with them — we're asking a lot of questions. We know where to go before they even hit a ball. There are a lot of variables with every player.

Part of clubfitting is to make sure the golfer ends up with clubs that will last for a long period of time. Clubs are not supposed to be changed every season. They are something that should last for a long time. That is our goal at Pete's Golf.

GM: That leads me to this question — if clubs are to last for a long time, what about refitting? A golfer gets fit, uses the clubs for a sea-



son or two, gets better and then things have changed. They plateau. They're not getting better and/or the clubs are not performing the way they were when that golfer first got fit. Is this golfer getting refit with the clubs they have?

PM: This happens and yes, the clubs will need to be modified. They will be modified for better performance for the level that golfer has reached.

GM: Let me bring this around full circle. Why should a golfer get fit and what are some of the misconceptions of getting fit?

PM: One misconception is if a golfer says, "I'm not good enough to get fit." The problem with that is you may not ever get good enough to get fit because of the clubs you are playing with. Getting fit early takes out some of the difficulties and jumpstarts your game to better perform-ance. Clubs could be too long, too short, too light, too heavy. They could have the wrong shaft. All have something to do with performance. The equipment, as well-engineered as it is, still does not compensate for those issues.

WL: Another misconception of getting fit is the fact the people think they are going to get fit to be sold golf clubs. It's just not true. The reason you get fit is because you want to play better golf. It is not for someone to sell you golf clubs. You could go anywhere and someone will be happy to sell you golf clubs. A professional club fitting is not about someone selling you golf clubs, it's about helping you play better golf.

PM: It's all about solving problems. There are a hundred different reasons for getting fit, and there could be different reasons for different people. Getting fit is a complete assessment of your equipment, your swing, your game, and your results. The bottom line is this: no one should go out and get golf clubs without getting fit — at the very least, getting checked out.

WL: Every person is unique and every clubfitting is unique. Clubfitting is for every golfer. We work with every type of player — from the 40 handicapper to the tour player. Golf is the hardest sport you are ever going to play, and you want to give yourself the best possible chance to play it as well as you can. Get fit!

Q&A with Master Clubfitter WOODY LASHEN

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Golfing Magazine:

Let's say we've been fitted for the driver and our irons. Now it's time to fill in with those fairways and hybrids. How do we go about doing that? What choices do we have, and how do you determine what's best for the individual golfer?

Woody Lashen:

First, we need to determine what the player needs in fairway woods. We need to answer these questions: Do they frequently use their first fairway wood off the tee instead of a driver? Do they use their 3-wood on long par 4's ... or for shorter hitters, is the 3-wood the club they hit for most of their 2nd shots from the fairway?

For example, let's say a player uses their 3-wood off the tee a lot because they need to keep the ball in play. In that case, we might go with a lower-lofted club head. For the player who uses it for mostly 2nd shots and has a high-loft driver, we may need to skip a 3-wood and go for a more lofted fairway of 17-20 degrees. This is due to the player's lower speed and greater need for lift to get maximum distance. There are even cases where a player should not have a fairway wood at all. While this is rare, it does happen.

Then we need to bridge the gap between the longest playable iron and the longest fairway wood. We can do this by using fairway woods only, or only hybrids. But for most golfers, it would be a combination of fairways and hybrids. Let's say a player has a hard time getting the ball in the air and often plays a course with forced carries. We might go with a 7-wood instead of a 3 or 4- hybrid. It's all about understanding what the individual player needs for their game.

Woody Lashen is the co-owner of Pete's Golf Shop in Mineola. He has been a professional clubmaker and clubfitter for over 25 years.

