



Elite Insider Circle Monthly Handicap Improver June 2017



Hello Fellow Golf Enthusiast,

This is Jaacob Bowden.

Last Month

To recap last month, I shared with you a baseball video of home run hitter Barry Bonds that I felt had some take-a-ways for golfers looking for more power...like hand snap, a flying elbow, a narrower stance, and collapsed trail arm. Interestingly, some of these things are frowned upon in the golf world!

We had a Speedgolf Q&A with 2014 World Champion Eri Crum. Although not all of us will ever play speedgolf, there are things that speedgolfers do that can help us in the rest of our regular golf game. For example, Eri talked about going with your gut and not over-analyzing shots. I know I've been guilty of not trusting myself and thinking too much about a certain shot.



Golf equipment guru Tom Wishon wrote about “The Facts of Life About Fitting”. This included answering questions about who benefits the most from fitting, whether or not you can be properly fit in a retail golf store, what a good clubfitting should cost, and how to find a good, knowledgeable, and experienced clubfitter.

Golf expert Adam Young wrote about the value of and how to A/B test your golf game.

I mentioned a few side notes like the new 90-day money back guarantee we have on our single length irons at SterlingIrons.com, the left-handed sets and updated wedges soon being available, the mention we got in Golf Digest magazine, and my US Open qualifier.

We also included a CD of my audio interview with one of the original golf instructor stars of YouTube named Shawn Clement. Shawn has over 67,000 subscribers to his channel and is the founder of WisdomInGolf.com.



This Month

This month, here's what's coming up for you.

- We'll do a Long Drive Q&A with 49-year-old Jeff Gavin, who is the 2014 World Long Drive Champion in the Masters division and has swung as high as 152 mph on Trackman.
- Golf expert Adam Young will come at us with a piece about the stages of learning and how you might become a better learner.
- Equipment expert Tom Wishon will tell us his thoughts on when to think about using graphite shafts in your irons.
- We'll have our usual “Member of the Month” and golf joke.

And as part of your Monthly Handicap Improver Insider Circle, we've included a CD of my audio interview with Trackman founder Fredrik Tuxen. Trackman, as you probably know, is one of the most popular (and expensive) launch monitors in golf that is used by both the PGA TOUR for many of their stats as well as the World Long Drive Championships. Listen in to find more about the creator of the little orange box (including why it is orange!).

Side Notes

A few side notes...

- 1) For those of you that have been asking, the new Sterling Irons left-handed sets as well as the new LW are both available. You can get them at <http://www.sterlingirons.com>.



- 2) I got a chance to caddy for my friend Andre Bossert at the Senior PGA Championship last month.



André Bossert
@BossyGolf

May 25

Live from the course: us and the Potomac...

@seniorpgachamp @ChampionsTour
@EuroSeniorTour @JaacobBowden



Although demanding in that you could be at the course for 12 hours and walk 6-8 miles with a big heavy staff bag for 6 or 7 days in a row (it really gets tough when it rains – which it did!), of course, it's a great experience.

We started out meeting up on Monday to check out the course and get acclimated with the environment.

If you've never seen one before, here's what a tour yardage book looks like with a brief explanation of how it works:

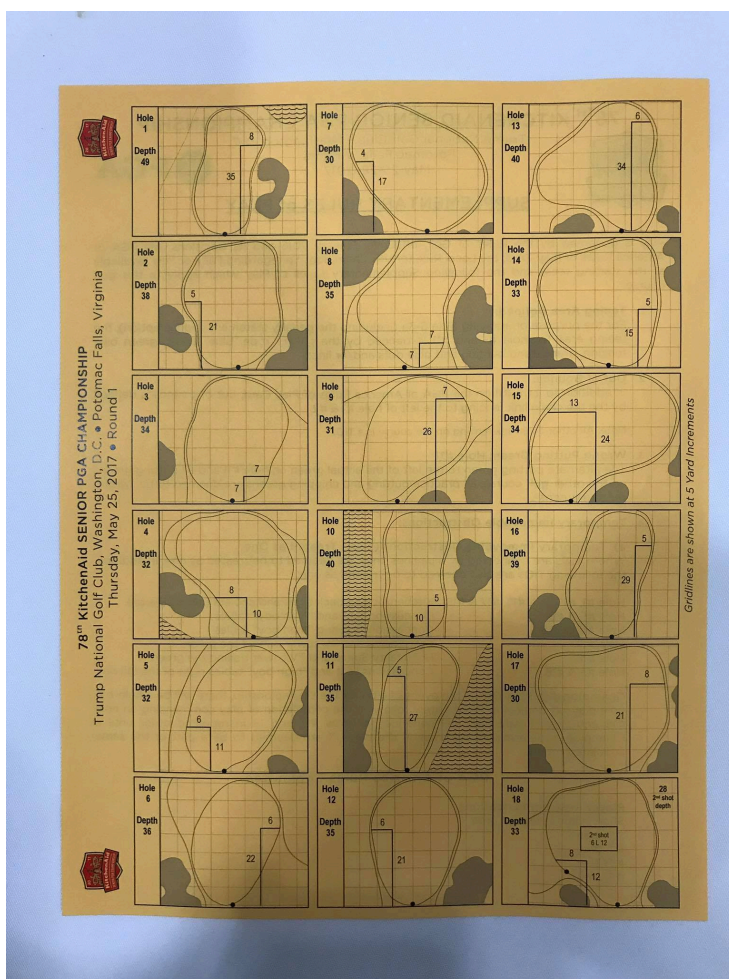
<https://twitter.com/JacobBowden/status/867756442299883520>

The above-mentioned Twitter video was from before anything was written in the book, but you can write whatever you like in it.

Andre is a very technical player, so since it's a new course and you must figure it out quickly, he'll write down things like the start lines for tee shots, where he hit his approach shots from, what the wind was doing, how far the ball went, what the break on the greens will be based on where the holes might be expected, and more. There's really no correct things to write in there, it's more just whatever you want.

Each day, since lasers and GPS are not allowed in the actual tournament, you get a pin sheet, which shows precisely where the pin is located.

The caddies had their own special area where food and drinks were



provided, but our badges also allowed us access to the player locker room, which is fun because you get to hang around all the greats like Tom Watson, Bernhard Langer, Tom Lehman, Fred Funk, Tom Kite, and many more.

Andre normally had me arrive in the locker room with the bag ready two hours before he wanted to go out on the course. We would go in to the fitness and physio trailer where he would go through a variety of things to warm himself up.



Then we'd head to the short game area for a bit, the range, and then to the first tee.

On Thursday and Friday we were paired with a couple guys who I hadn't heard of...but Andre made the cut and we were paired with Kevin Sutherland and Joey Sindelar on Saturday. Kevin was nice but I definitely became a Joey Sindelar fan. What a pleasure he was to be around.



On Sunday, we were with John Daly, who you might imagine is just a laid back good old boy.

You don't have too much time to chat because sometimes you are on different parts of the hole and you don't want to distract the player, but like a lot of fathers, he loves to talk up his kid.

He's a feel player who plays a cut on almost all shots. He doesn't walk fast but he hits his shots fast. I really had to pay attention to not move when he was getting ready to hit because he didn't waste any time.

He's not as long as he used to be, but relative to his peer age group on the senior tour, he's still as long as anyone out there.



I was reminded again how important distance is in golf. Andre is not a particularly long hitter in his peer group. Many times he had to hit a wood or hybrid in to the greens. I remember on one hole, we had 5-iron in to the green...Daly had wedge.

The game sure is a lot easier with distance. So get on that swing speed training!

- 3) I don't have too much to say about the Brooks Koepka's win at the US Open. Although, for fun I plugged in his scores in to a handicap differential calculator using the course and slope rating for Erin Hills. His four rounds turned out to be +8.5, +6.2, +7.7, and +8.5.

Imagine the scores those would be on your local course!

- 4) Similarly, the PGA Professional Championship was won by Omar Uresti. The play for that tournament isn't quite as good, but Omar's average differential for the tournament was +4.1.

Still amazing golf!

Okay...let's get going!

Stages of Learning

By Adam Young

Understanding this really simple principle might be the trigger to learning not just golf, but **everything** better.

The vast majority of my students leave the lesson tee hitting the ball better. Whilst it is often the case that the result is instantly better, even in those cases it requires repetition until the new movement/concept/skill becomes ingrained so you do it without thought – this is called **practice**.

Whilst this idea is second nature to myself and most good golfers, it seems to be the major thing holding back most poor golfers from getting better. In fact, I could say,

The single most important difference between a good golfer and a poor golfer, is their ability to practice and learn effectively.

Learning takes time. We may change one thing, but it will have a knock-on effect to lots of other areas. We need to get all the cogs turning together before the machine fully functions. This means that you need to understand the art of **HOW** to learn, equally as much as the **WHAT**.

You may hold a new piece to the puzzle, but it will take practice to make that piece fit neatly with all the other parts you possess.

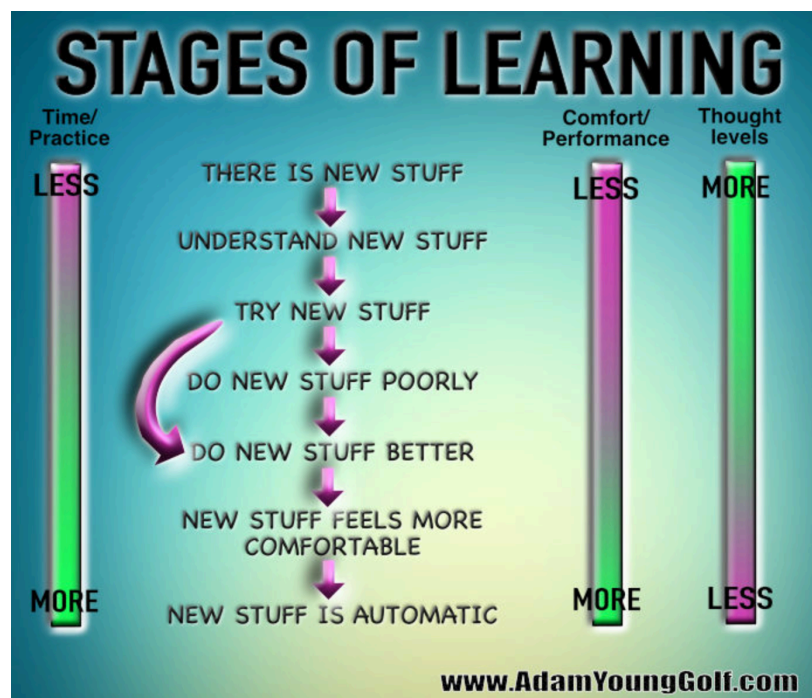
Famous Words

Tiger Woods once said (regarding his swing changes), “First I understand what I need to do, then it looks better, then it feels better, then it performs better in practice, then on the course, then finally in a tournament.”

This is a good representation of the stages of learning.

Sports psychologists call them cognitive, associative, autonomous etc. and I have also seen terms such as conscious competence, subconscious competence, etc. But these terms are less important than what they mean.

Below is a summary of the stages of learning.



So in a lesson, we learn what it is we should do - for example, a grip change. We learn and understand that we should see two and a half knuckles on the left hand, and 2 knuckles on the right hand (perhaps).

Next, we try the grip but it feels very new and strange. We probably top a lot of shots whilst our body is getting accustomed to it. We have success, but it is low - our body is still figuring it out. Occasionally, we can bypass this stage, but this should not be your expectation.

The 'do new stuff better' stage usually occurs within an hour or less. Repeating it makes it feel a little better, but our performance can still be erratic.

The 'new stuff feels more comfortable' stage usually takes at least a day, if not a week (depending on how much the person practices it).

The 'new stuff is automatic' stage can take months in some cases. I have also heard quotes such as it taking 3,000 repetitions for it to become natural, although I find it varies wildly depending upon what you are working on.

They say it takes 10,000 hours to truly master something. This statement has been taken out of context and is largely overblown hype. You certainly can get good at something with much less practice, and simply doing 10,000 hours doesn't guarantee you will master it.

Stay safe

It is important to take time to get comfortable with something in a safe environment, such as a driving range. But make sure to take steps in improving transference of that skill to the course.

Whilst a better technique usually brings about better results immediately, it really depends. If the technique is very new, or highly uncomfortable, then it can take a little longer and we must be patient. Also, if there were a whole host of compensatory issues, it may take a while for them all to unfold.

On the other hand, if the old technique was very poor, a new position may offer instant gratification and become more comfortable faster - this is where we can skip the 'Do new stuff poorly' stage.



*A brand new car will take time to get used to, even if it is better than your old one.
You need to figure out how all the controls work and how it handles.*

Expect Reality

If we look at the above model (model of learning) and have **that** as our expectation, we can become more competent learners.

Learning falls apart when people think they are going to go to the last stage too quickly. I often see this in a lesson where someone comes back the next day doing the old mistakes, even though they could do the new move perfectly yesterday.

Obviously, they believe that working on something for one hour should be enough to ingrain it – clearly not.

Practice makes...

The worst mistake I see is when someone gets to 'do stuff poorly' and then quits because performance is poor.

Patience is a virtue here, no one has ever learned anything the first time they tried it. You didn't learn to walk the first time you tried - but luckily you continued to practice.



Be patient - it took a lot of repetitions to learn to walk effectively. Muscles had to strengthen; ligaments and tendons too. You wobbled at first, fell down a lot. But look at you now. You can even do it without thinking.

The prescription here is more practice, more repetitions and less result orientation.

Take away the ball and make more practice swings until it feels comfortable and you are thinking about it less. Top pro's sometimes only hit 20 balls in an hour, using mirrors, video and other feedback devices to get it in the practice swing first.

Closing your eyes can give you heightened body awareness, making slow motion swings can also help you learn the move in more detail before you gradually increase the speed.

A side note

The 'Stages of Learning' model is only one model of learning. There are other models which can be more implicit learning which bypass the consciously identifying and understanding stages.

I like to use a lot of task led lessons to change techniques. Through task led changes, the player does not necessarily have to understand consciously how to do it, leading to a more natural and less analytical approach to learning. However,

some people need a conscious ‘nudge’, to which I will give it to them if deemed appropriate.

There are also examples of cases where changes can be automatically more comfortable and even become quickly automatic. For example, if you relate the skill to be learned to something already learned, we can greatly speed up learning.

Cliff notes

So stay patient, accept that learning take time in most cases, and practice with an end goal in mind. Eventually, anything that feels strange will become natural if repeated enough.

Just make sure to see your professional golf teacher so that you are working on learning the CORRECT things. All professional golfers understand this process, and it is why they became good at the sport.

About Adam

Adam Young wrote about these ideas and more in his “The Practice Manual – The Ultimate Guide for Golfers”, a best seller on Amazon.com in both the US, UK, Canada, Germany, and France...and has been featured as a must-have book on Golf Channel.

You can read more about his theories in his book at

<http://tinyurl.com/adamyounggolf> as

well as The Strike Plan - a video series looking in depth at the concepts, skill-building drills and techniques which create crisper strikes for better distance control and accuracy.



When to Think About Graphite Shafts For Your Irons

By Tom Wishon

There is a truly fascinating statistic that pertains to the type of shaft installed in golf clubs sold today.



Presently, 99.9% of all drivers, fairway woods and hybrid clubs are made with a graphite shaft. Yet when it comes to the irons, 75% of all irons sold today are made with steel shafts.

What makes this even more interesting is the fact that over the past decade, the cost of graphite shafts for drivers and woods has literally skyrocketed through the stratosphere.

It is very common in today's golf equipment industry for a single graphite shaft made for installation in a driver or wood to cost as much as \$200 to \$300! But not so with the irons. A high percentage of quality graphite shafts for irons cost no more today than they did 20 years ago, well under \$30 per shaft!

The questions that follow this information are, "why the big difference in graphite vs steel shaft market share between drivers/woods and irons", and "when should a golfer think about changing from steel to graphite shafts in the irons"?

For many years after the introduction of graphite shafts, when you ask the majority of golfers "what is it you hope to accomplish by using graphite shafts", there is no question the vast majority would respond with a simple answer... "MORE DISTANCE."

No question, when graphite shafts came into the game the major marketing point behind their promotion was that the lighter weight of graphite shafts would enable golfers to swing the club faster and achieve more distance.

And for what club in the bag do most people think Distance First and Foremost?

Indeed, that would be the driver with the fairway woods close behind.

As such, graphite market share jumped quickly through the 80s and 90s to the point that by the mid to late 90s, graphite shafts were in well over 95% of all drivers and fairway woods sold to golfers.

Even on the world's professional tours where most of the players are the strongest, fastest swinging golfers you'll ever see, there is not a single steel shaft to be found in a tour player's driver or fairway woods. If there is, you can be fairly sure it is a

mentally unstable starving tour player who is desperate for improvement and willing to try anything!

With the irons, golfers do not think of MORE DISTANCE as the primary goal of shot improvement. Accuracy reigns supreme with the irons.

In addition, while the last 2-3 years has seen a handful of tour pros change to graphite shafts in their irons, the percentage who continue to play steel shafts in the irons remains well over 90%. Market experts believe it is the huge predominance of steel shafts in professional players' irons that continues to keep the market share of steel shafts sold in iron sets at 3 of every 4 sets sold.

Should more golfers think about switching from steel to graphite shafts in their irons?

What are the characteristics to watch for that regular golfers should think about before considering graphite over steel for the shafts in your next set of irons?

1. Could a lighter total weight in the irons help you gain more consistency, more control or more distance?

While graphite shafts for irons are made in every possible weight from 50 grams up to over 120 grams, the vast majority of graphite iron shafts are made in a weight range from 55g to 85g.

And while there are steel iron shafts that weigh as little as 75 grams, the vast majority of steel iron shafts weigh between 100g and 125g.

The weight of the shaft is the #1 element that controls the total weight of a golf club.

If you are coming to a point where your steel shaft irons feel a little heavy at the end of a bucket of balls or on the back nine of a round of golf, that's a hint to tell you it's probably time to change to a lighter weight graphite shaft.

Father Time is undefeated. At some point age makes all of us lose strength and flexibility. When that time approaches, that is when moving to a lighter weight graphite shaft will be better for your golf game.

2. Graphite shafts to help relieve joint pain and discomfort

Graphite as a material is a far better dampener of vibrations from the shock of impact with the golf ball than is steel. Even with a vibration dampener insert placed inside a steel shaft, a graphite shaft is always going to reduce the stress and pain of hitting shots on arthritic or painful finger, hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder joints.

3. The possibility of hitting one less club into the green

While the loft of the iron head and the COR of the face of the iron head are the two most predominant ways to increase distance with the irons, switching to a properly fit, lighter weight graphite shaft can also increase distance.

If you are currently playing steel shafts which weigh over 100 grams, switching to a graphite shaft of the proper flex and bend profile for your swing which weighs 60 to 70 grams can add as much as 2 to 3 mph to your swing speed - just because of the effect of the lighter weight on your swing.

However, the key to more distance from graphite shafts is to be properly fit for the flex, the bend profile (tip stiffness/flexibility), and very importantly for the right swing weight (head weight feel) to best match your strength and your swing tempo.

Even stronger golfers can play a light graphite shaft as long as there is enough head weight to prevent them from feeling that the clubs swing with too little head weight feel.

So that's it.

In reality, the market share of graphite shafts in irons should be well over 50% and even approaching 2/3's of all golfers. Graphite shaft quality is superb these days so if your hesitation in considering a switch to graphite in the irons is because you believe steel shafts are more consistent or better in some way, then think again.

What IS critical for success is to be properly fit for the right weight, flex, bend profile and swing weight when you are thinking about going from steel to graphite.

And to do that, we recommend you find a good clubmaker through either the AGCP (Association of Golf Clubfitting Professionals) or the ICG (International Clubmakers' Guild).

Thanks very much for your interest in the tools of the trade!!

Member of the Month

"Have enjoyed playing the Sterling Irons almost one year now and have to say these have exceeded my expectations in terms of both performance and build quality. You have managed to create tremendous value for your customers with this design"

-Tomas R

Finishing Up With Fun



A hack golfer spends a day at a plush country club, playing golf, enjoying the luxury of a complimentary caddy. Being a hack golfer, he plays poorly all day.

Round about the 18th hole, he spots a lake off to the left of the fairway.

He looks at the caddy and says, "I've played so poorly all day; I think I'm going to go drown myself in that lake."

The caddy looks back at him and says, "I don't think you could keep your head down that long."

We hope you enjoyed the Monthly Handicap Improver...feel free to contact us at info@swingmangolf.com with questions, comments, suggestions, etc!

Have a great month!