



Elite Insider Circle Monthly Handicap Improver July 2016



Hello Fellow Golf Enthusiast,

This is **Jaacob Bowden**.

The **3rd major** of the year has wrapped up and what a final day battle it was between **Henrik Stenson and Phil Mickelson**. Phil was **11 shots ahead of the 3rd place golfer JB Holmes**...and **Henrik was 3 shots better than Phil shooting an Open record -20!** It was a total blowout by the two golfers. I'm happy for Stenson but sad that Phil had to have another heartbreaking **2nd place** finish at a major.

One major to go for the season with the **PGA Championship at Baltusrol**...which is about an hour from my home. I don't know if I'll be there every day, but **I'm planning on attending** at least one of the days.

Last Month

To **recap last month**, we had a piece from golf expert **Adam Young** talking about **horizontal gear effect** with some high-speed photos of what happens to the club head and shot on off-center hits. Adam recommended **spraying some foot powder spray on your driver face to see your impact pattern**. With greater

awareness of your strike pattern, you can better calibrate yourself to hit a higher percentage of them around the sweet spot.

We had something from **equipment expert Tom Wishon**, in which Tom discussed **why a 3-wood or 5-wood can sometimes go as far as a driver**. Perhaps this has happened to you or a golfing friend of yours.

We had a **Long Drive Q&A with 2013 World Long Drive Champion Heather LeMaster**. Some of the things I think that are worth pointing out about Heather's Q&A are:

- She **uses drivers that maximize her launch conditions**
- At **118 mph**, she has swung faster than the PGA TOUR average of 113 mph.
- She **works on her body** to help improve her power and speed
- She talked about the **importance of good ball contact and speed for more distance**.



We included a **CD interview** with **Doug Emma**, a **club fitting specialist** at **True Spec Golf** at the **Manhattan** location.

I also let you know that:

- We got **approved for our Sterling Irons®** single length irons **trademark**



- I was a guest again on **Danielle Tucker's Golf Club Radio Show** in Hawaii - <http://www.hernco.com/golfclub/ac62516.htm>
- I was a returning guest with **Bob Bigonette** on **Michael Breed's "A New Breed of Golf"** on **Sirius XM PGA TOUR radio**
- **Four great reviews** came out about **Sterling Irons®**:
 - **Christo Garcia Video 1** - <https://youtu.be/QvLsJdcqHII>

- Christo Garcia Video 2 - <https://youtu.be/MGxqveaPWYM>
- Mark Crossfield Video - https://youtu.be/WU_332Cj2Ng
- Jeff Richmond Text Review - <http://www.consistentgolf.com/sterling-single-length-iron-review/>

This Month

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

- We've got a **Long Drive Q&A** with **5-time World Long Drive Championship finalist Kari Hyokki**. Kari has hit a **462-yard drive** in competition and finished at high as **9th in the World Championships**.
- **Expert Adam Young** provided something for us entitled **"Performance Versus Learning"** and discusses the pros and cons of **blocked and random practice**.
- **Equipment icon Tom Wishon** has something for us about the **12 key clubfitting elements**. Tom will tell you **which one he feels is the most important** as well as giving us some **guidelines on a set makeup** that will help get the most out of our games.
- We'll have our usual **"Member of the Month"** and golf joke.



As part of your Monthly Handicap Improver Insider Circle, we've included a CD of my interview as a guest with...Tony Wright.

Tony is a **Level 10 Certified Professional Clubfitter** through the AGCP, the author of **"The Fit is It!! How Custom Club Fitting Matters to YOUR Golfing Dreams"**, and he runs the **Golf Improvement Podcast** out of **Tennessee**. In the interview, Tony interviews Jaacob about **making dramatic improvements quickly**, **Sterling Irons®**, and more.

PGA Member

In other golf news, **I got elected to membership in the PGA of America** on July 1st.

I've had professional status since 2003 and had done just



PGA™

Jaacob Bowden, PGA

fine in my career without being a PGA of America member. I had considered going through the process of getting the membership over 10 years ago in 2005, but **at the time I decided to pass** on it because of the **cost** (it's about **\$10,000** to complete the program), **living in Switzerland from 2007 to 2014**, and the **relevance**. **The program just didn't seem related to what I wanted to do** with my career.

To give you an idea of what you have to go through, here's a **current overview of the PGA PGM (Professional Golf Management) program**.

1) Qualifying Level

You must pass a **36-hole PAT (Playing Ability Test)** on a course with minimum rating 68.0 with yardage between 6,350 – 6,700 and shoot lower than 2 times the USGA course rating + 15 strokes. Basically, you have to shoot in the mid to high 70s twice in a row under tournament like conditions with the ball played down. For some, this is the hardest part of the entire program. The majority of the players at each PAT do not pass.

You also have to **read 4 books and pass 4 tests** on:

- **Intro to the PGM and Golf Profession**
- **PGM and the Golf Profession**
- **PGA History and Constitution**
- **Rules of Golf**

2) Level 1

In Level 1, you have to attend **1-week seminar** in Port St. Lucie, Florida, prepare a **work experience portfolio (mine was 49 pages)** and get it approved, as well as **read 4 books and and pass 4 tests** on:

- **Business Planning**
- **Customer Relations**
- **Introduction to Teaching/Club Performance & Tournament Operations**
- **Golf Car Fleet Management**

3) Level 2

In Level 2, you have to attend **1-week seminar** in Port St. Lucie, Florida, prepare another **work experience portfolio (mine was 58 pages)** and get it approved, in addition to **reading 4 books and passing 4 tests** on:

- **Golf Operations**
- **Intermediate Teaching/Club Alteration,**
- **Merchandising and Inventory Management**
- **Turfgrass Management**

4) **Level 3**

In the final level, you must attend another **1-week seminar** in Port St. Luvie, Florida, prepare a final **work experience portfolio (mine was 43 pages)** and get it approved, as well as **read 5 more books and pass 5 more tests** on:

- **Advanced Teaching/Golf Club Fitting**
- **Player Development/Teaching Business**
- **Supervising and Delegating**
- **Food and Beverage**
- **Human Resources and Career Enhancement**

To top it off, you also need **36 work experience credits**. There are various ways you can get credits, but mostly 1 credit equates to 1 month of full-time work at a PGA Recognized facility. That means **3 years of work experience** is necessary.

As you can see, **it's a lot of work**... basically the equivalent of getting a degree. In fact, it's actually tied in with degree programs at various universities around the United States. For most people, it takes several years to complete. The majority of people that start the program never finish.

You can also see that **most of the program is NOT about teaching**. Rather, it's about **skills one needs to run a golf operation** at some sort of golf facility. As you recall, that was one of the reasons I decided not to do it. I didn't really want to work at a golf course for the long term. Aside from playing tournaments, I was more interested in the teaching side of it.

That being said, now that I've been through the program, although I may never use some of those subjects, I must admit it has given me a **greater appreciation for PGA of America Professionals, how golf facilities operate**, and it gave me some **ideas of how to better operate my own businesses** as an entrepreneur.

Speaking of which, after getting elected, I also applied to get **my company listed as PGA Recognized...and it was approved!**

What does that mean going forward?

Being a PGA of America member has its **perks**. One of which is getting **Masters tickets** and otherwise having **complimentary access to tour events**.

It also get me access to things I wouldn't have been able to otherwise. For example, I'll now be able to **write for PGA Magazine** (which is a magazine geared towards the 27,000 PGA of America professionals). I'm also looking in to **writing for PGA.com**. We'll see how those things go.

Additionally, one of the main reasons I decided to go through the membership process is so that I can do **qualifying for the PGA Championship**. In the United States, there are 41 PGA Sections. Every year, each one has a Sectional Professional Championship. The top players advance out of the Section Championship to the Professional National Championship. The **top 20** players from that **get in to the PGA Championship**.

Effectively, this means that **I can now compete in qualifiers for 3 of the 4 majors**. The last several years I haven't played or practiced much, instead focusing on getting this certification as well as several other golf business ventures. Now **I'm thinking of returning more focus back to my own game**.

In fact, **my section, the Metropolitan NY Section**, is having it's **Professional Championship** coming up in **early August**. A couple weeks ago **I started practicing** and dusting off my game.

It's been fun to get back at it a bit, but gosh am I **out of golf shape**! My hands have softened up over the last 3 years, so right away I got a **big blister** from hitting balls. I've been dealing with **constant soreness** too (plus a **cough/cold** this past week) and my speed is down. But...**I can already feel my stamina coming back**! For the most part, I can handle **1.5-2 hours of practice again**.

So I think this will be a fun thing going forward. I'll be able to work on my game again (**applying things I've learned like swing speed training** as well as using my **Sterling Irons® single length irons**)...and I can **use the Monthly Handicap Improver to share with you some of my experiences** along the way that hopefully **you can use for your own game** as well.

I'm still thinking about what I want to do going forward. But this winter I'm considering going to **Q-School for the PGA TOUR Latinoamerica**. I've been to Mexico and Nicaragua, but not much elsewhere in Central or South America. I figure that might be a cool way for me to see the region. Plus, the tour could do well for **getting me ready for major qualifying next spring/summer**. We'll see how it goes...okay, let's get going!



Long Drive Q&A with Kari Hyokki

Age: 39

Height: 6'6", 199 cm

Weight: 231 pounds, 105 kg

Driver Specs: Hitting Krank Golf heads with House of Forged shafts, Lofts 3-5

Sponsors: MTR Express and Lundqvist El.

Special Accomplishments:

Five-time World Long Drive Championship finalist, best result 9th (2015). Won a few big events in Europe over the years.

What is your longest drive in competition?

462 yards (422 meters)

What were the conditions of the drive?

Tailwind and hot, made at Söderby gk in Sweden 2010

What are the fastest swing speeds you've recorded on a Swing Speed Radar and/or Trackman?

Trackman - 147 mph and 218 mph ball speed

GC2 – 150 mph and 220 mph ball speed

What lead you to choose your particular equipment specifications?

Feel, low spin, high ball speed, the guys representing those companies treat me well so I feel like I want to hit their equipment. They make the best stuff, simple as that.

Do you favor a particular shot shape to hit it long?

I try to hit them as straight as I can but the shape doesn't really matter as long as I hit them with low spin.



Do you do any other types of training to drive it further?

No training aids, just basic lifting and athletic training at the gym and hitting balls on a range or in a simulator with some good music on.

Is there any particular bit of advice you would give the regular amateur for him or her to hit the ball longer?

Basically just work on your weaknesses and make the machine ☺ body stronger and more powerful. Keep it simple, make the machine more powerful and have fun training.

Where can people contact you or learn more about you?

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Performance Versus Learning

By Adam Young

In 1997, Pollock and Lee studied the effects of training styles on learning. 48 people (24 seven year olds and 24 university students) practiced a task (ballistic aiming) under two different conditions:



- Blocked practice (same thing over and over) and
- Random practice (mixing it up)

They performed 90 ‘learning’ trials, followed by 20 transfer and 20 retention trials. Basically, they gave them a lot of practice and then tested how well they retained skill from that practice.

What happened to the adults?

The adults performed the task much better when using blocked practice during the practice sessions. Random practicers performed the task WORSE.

To put this into golfing terms, the block practicers looked like Rory McIlroy on the range – flighing beautiful shots neatly onto their target – while their “random practicing” counterparts were chopping around like a scene from the Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

But (and it’s a big but)

When the two groups were tested for both transfer and retention, random practicers outperformed the block practicers.

To put this into golfing terms:

- The players who were hitting great shots on the range lost on the course
- The players who performed awful on the range won on the course

Not only that, but the random practice group had greater retention of learning – meaning that, when they were retested after time, they maintained more of that performance increase.

Performance and Learning

One of the biggest misconceptions in learning a skill is that you are learning it faster if you are doing it well. This study shows that it can be the complete reverse.

“You can be performing something poorly in practice, but learning it quicker. Alternatively, you could be performing something great in practice, but learning nothing.”

Think about this example.

What is 8X7?

Ok – got the answer? Good. Now another question.

What is 8x7?

What is 8x7?

What is 8x7?

What is 8x7?

What is 8x7?

Ok I will stop. No, I haven't gone mad; I am demonstrating block practice.

The first time I asked the question to you, you had to think about it and compute the answer. But what about the second and third and fourth time of the same question? How do you think people would perform in that test?

It is likely that, after the first time the question is asked, speed of answering correctly was increased and performance would have been great. But how much are you really learning doing this?

What about this?

What is 8x4?

What is 6x9?

What is 7x7?

What is 8x8?

What is 7x6?

What is 9x9?

Same number of questions, same difficulty. But if you were to give this test to someone, it is likely that they would take much longer to answer the questions and would also make more mistakes. Performance is poor.

However, what do you think would happen to learning?

Because this person is having to go through the cognition and construction of an answer each time, their learning is dramatically increased. This is random practice.

The irony is that, when tested later in the future, the random practicer will not only be able to answer a wider variety of questions quickly and accurately, but they

would also be able to answer the question “What is 8x7?” more quickly and accurately than the person who practiced that exact question more.

What happened to the kids?

The kids also improved their ability to transfer their skills better with random practice. Also, like the adults, they retained more of the information with random practice compared to the block practice group.

One slight difference – during the learning stage, kids performed equally as well with random and block.

Effects on confidence

It gets worse – performing something too well in practice can even sabotage your success. How?

What do you think would happen to you if started performing well in practice? It is likely that:

- Confidence would increase
- Expectation levels would increase
- Your strategy would get more aggressive
- Your perception of a shot would be warped – an average shot would now be deemed as less than satisfactory, as you were expecting something much better

So, by practicing in a way which makes you over-confident (through fake results), you start to expect more from your game. As a result, on the course you may take on shots that you don't actually have the skill for – such as that pin tucked tight left next to the water. And remember, when we do block practice, most of our skills leave us the moment we step off the range.

This combination of taking on dangerous shots and a loss of actual skill means we are doomed for failure and frustration. Not only that, but if we hit an average shot for our skill level, we deem it as poor because it wasn't as good as what how we were performing on the range earlier, under block practice conditions. Normally, when a player hits a shot below their expectations, it takes a knock to their confidence. Then they start questioning themselves and might even start tinkering with their swing.

This spells disaster.

The random practicer has the opposite happen; as their practice was more difficult, their confidence is lower/more balanced. This way, they are more likely to play safer shots and not expect too much. Even an average shot is now perceived as pretty good – which sets off an improvement in confidence levels.

What does this mean for you?

If you want to look like a golfing god on the range, go ahead and do block practice. Stand there with a 7-iron hitting shot after shot to the same target. But, when you get out on the course, the rug will be whipped from under your feet, and all of your hard work will disappear before your eyes.

Conversely, if you want to improve your ability to play better on the course, practice randomly. Sure, it may be more difficult to change clubs, targets, shot type, etc (deal with it, put your ego aside), but your on-course performance will benefit more.

Just remember:

“Performing well on the range does not mean performing well on the course.”

Confidence building is important, but as a player we also have to manage our expectations or we can set off a vicious spiral into chaos. By utilizing random practice over block, we can not only improve our retention of skills (and improve them to a greater degree), but it also sets us up mentally for success.

About Adam

Adam Young is author of “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 learn more from Adam about effective practice and technique development for golf by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/adamyounggolf>.



What are the Most Important Fitting Element in Golf Clubs?

By Tom Wishon

OK, I admit, it is a bit of a loaded question. But just for fun, let me give you a list of the 12 key clubfitting elements for golf clubs and you take a moment to think about it and cast your vote for which one is the most important for the widest range of different golfers.



Here's the list of the 12 Key Clubfitting Elements:

- Length
- Loft
- Lie Angle
- Face Angle
- Shaft Flex
- Shaft Bend Profile
- Shaft Weight
- Total Weight
- Swingweight
- Set Makeup
- Clubhead Design/Model
- Grip Size/Type

Before reading further...which do you think are the most important?

No question, for the majority of golfers, all of them are very important to pinpoint in a custom fitting analysis so their combined effect will allow each golfer to play to the very best of their individual, given ability.

Length? Absolutely – the old adage of clubfitting that goes “the longer the length, the more difficult to hit” rules strongly for ALL golfers, especially with the driver and the fairway woods.

In short (if you note that clever use of the term), shorter with the driver and woods is much better for control and consistency, and even distance because of the improvement a shorter length brings in your on-center hit percentage.

Loft? It's critically important in the driver to know what loft offers the most distance for your clubhead speed and angle of attack. The slower the clubhead speed + more downward the angle of attack, the higher the driver loft has to be to maximize distance. And vice versa for the higher speed players.

Lie Angle? The higher the loft of the club, the more critical proper lie fitting is for accuracy. In other words, if you haven't had your irons and wedges dynamically fit for lie and you wonder why you miss greens when you think you made a decent swing, here's your answer.

Face Angle? If you're like many and slice the ball, getting a driver and woods with a more closed face angle is going to be one of the most helpful things you will ever do. And your golf ball budget will thank you as well.

Shaft? OK, let's lump the shaft elements together.

Shaft weight? Very important for every golfer to ensure the most consistent swing tempo and timing.

Shaft Flex/bend Profile? No one wants to hit shots with clubs that feel too dead, stiff and boardy. But performance wise, the higher the clubhead speed AND the later the wrist-cock release, the more important the flex and bend profile are going to be for performance.

Total Weight / Swingweight? The two "weights" of each golf club are forever intertwined together and form a very big reason why some golfers have clubs which they hit much more consistently than others. The stronger and more aggressive the player and their swing, the heavier the total weight and swingweight would typically be to ensure decent swing tempo, timing and rhythm. And the vice versa is definitely in play here as well.

Clubhead Design/Model? Yup. No need to write a book about this one.

Grip Size/Type? Without a shadow of a doubt because comfort in holding on to the club is a big key to swing and impact consistency.

But the one that gets my vote if you have to pick just one is the SET MAKEUP.

Thanks to the fact companies have continually shrunk the lofts on clubheads to a point of almost ludicrousness today, a lot of golfers who buy the typical set make up of “Driver/3w/5w + 3 iron to PW + SW” are finding themselves with 5 clubs that hardly ever get used and live their life in the golf bag in utter boredom.

You see, the USGA tells us we can only use a maximum of 14 clubs. Fortunately, they don’t tell us WHAT 14 clubs we have to use.

For so many golfers, being fit with the right set makeup can automatically drop multiple shots from your average score simply by replacing hard to hit clubs with clubs that are a little to a lot easier to hit high to fly their max distance for YOUR clubhead speed and swing characteristics.

If the great golf god of the game ruled that custom fitting was not allowed, I would lobby him to simply allow average golfers to use a set makeup like this:

- Higher loft, shorter length driver
- No 3-wood
- Woods to be a 4-wood and 7-wood – or 5-wood and 9-wood for slow swingers
- Hybrids in #4, 5 which are the same length and loft as your current #4 and 5 IRONS. For those with a 5-iron speed under 70 mph and a handicap of >18, go 6-hybrid as well.
- Irons with the highest MOI possible in either a #6 to gap wedge or for those with a 5-iron speed under 70 mph and a handicap of >18, a 7-iron to gap wedge.
- A Sand Wedge with a sole design that fits your sand swing – the steeper the swing, the wider the sole and greater the bounce sole angle.
- A putter with the highest MOI possible that you love the look of, which is easy for your eyes to align to the target, and properly fit for length, lie and grip comfort.

And with that, I leave you in peace to keep enjoying this great game!!

Member of the Month

“Club head speed up 8 mph (116 mph) in 30 days with your basic swing speed training techniques!”

-Scott Dawley, Professional Golfer & Speedgolfer, Houston, <http://scottdawley.com>



Finishing Up With Fun



Jesus and Dustin Johnson were playing golf at Oakmont.

It's DJ's turn to tee off, and he does so on a long par five. It's a great drive straight up the fairway, and he's only a seven iron away the green.

"Not bad," Jesus says.

Jesus then steps up to tee off, and He too hits a great shot, but it's not anywhere near as close as DJ's first shot.

Just as the ball comes to a stop, a gopher pops out of its hole, grabs Jesus' ball in its mouth and starts to run up the fairway. Before it can get even twenty feet yards, an eagle swoops down out of the heavens and grabs the gopher in its mouth and flies off towards the green. Just as the ball, eagle, and gopher get above the hole, a lightning bolt strikes out of a cloudless sky and vaporizes both the eagle and the gopher.

The ball drops straight down into the hole for a hole-in-one.

Jesus looks up and says, "Dad! Please! I'd rather do it myself!"

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!