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## Elite Insider Circle Monthly Handicap Improver September 2016

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Hello Fellow Golf Enthusiast,

This is Jacob Bowden.

### Last Month

To recap last month, we had a piece from golf expert Adam Young called “Take Control of Your Game” in which he talked about his teaching process and how he helps students learn how to rectify problems without him even being there.

We had a Long Drive Q&A with 4-time World Long Drive Champion Sandra Carlborg of Sweden. Some of the things I think that are worth pointing out about Sandra’s Q&A are:

- She tests drivers using a Flightscope launch monitor to help dial in her equipment for maximum distance.
- She has swung 117.5 mph in the World Championships. To remind you and give you some perspective on that...male amateurs and



LPGA players average around 93 mph and PGA TOUR players average around 113 mph. So as you can see, club head speed is very important for distance.

- She spends time in the gym to improve her body's ability to swing. We see this over and over in these Long Drive Q&A's. No long hitter of this caliber swings this fast naturally. They all work on their bodies. Fortunately, this is something you can do too at any age or skill level.

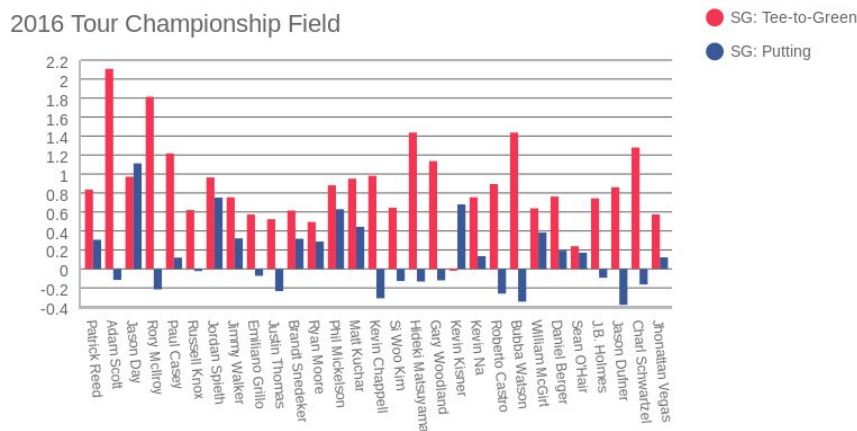
I talked about my in-person experiences and observations attending this year's PGA Championship at Baltusrol in New Jersey.

From a handicap improving standpoint, a couple of the key things that I was reminded of are:

- Lots of different swing styles and techniques can be effective on a global level, even if they aren't the most optimal.
- Long and high ball hitters will always have an advantage in the long haul.

In fact, Columbia University Professor (and previous Swing Man Golf Monthly Handicap Improver interviewee) recently pointed out that winners are the best putters out of the best ball strikers...and the best ball strikers made the TOUR Championship.

Check out this graphic from GolfWeek's David Dusek that he posted on his Twitter account. In it, you can see that only Kevin Kisner has a negative strokes gained statistic from tee to green. However, 14 of the 30 players have a negative strokes gained putting average.



Again...as I just said above, becoming a longer hitter is something that anyone can develop with motivation and a bit of hard work.

On a related note, I wrote about Jim Furyk's 12-under par 58. One of the key things he was doing was hitting his approach shots almost 15 feet closer to the hole than the rest of the field.

That's why I believe so strongly in swing speed training. It helps you hit your drives longer without changing your technique. That's also why I don't recommend rotating the club face through impact, similar to Jim. Further, single length irons like my Sterling Irons® help you hit it closer to the hole.

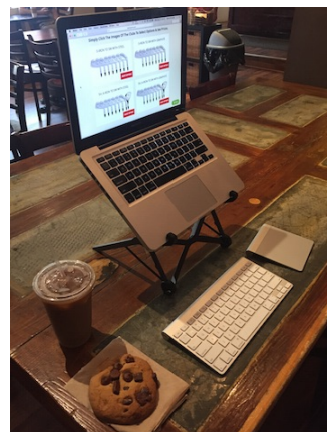
Hit it long. Hit it close. Make your putts.

Speaking of Sterling Irons®, I gave you a bunch of links to some good press and testimonials that were coming in from Plugged in Golf, Today's Golfer, and the Jefferson County Leader. Feel free to check those out if you missed them.

I mentioned "The Roost", which is a great thing to have if you work on a laptop a lot in that it helps you sit with better posture. You can get one of those here:

<http://amzn.to/2b61YN6>.

I wrote briefly about my first tournament back in action in several years. Although I missed the cut, I was reminded of some things I had previously done to play well in tournaments and I shot -1 on the final 9 holes. So I'm hoping that carries over to future tournament play.



We included a CD interview of my interview with professional long driver Jeff Crittenden, PGA. While in his 40s, Jeff finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the World Long Drive Championships...which just is another example of performance and age being partially just a state of mind. If you work at it, a lot of your physical capabilities can be maintained or even improved.

## **This Month**

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

- We've got a Long Drive Q&A with 2007 World Long Drive Champion Mike Dobbyn.

- Expert Adam Young has something for us entitled “Importance of Ground Contact”.
- We’ll have our usual “Member of the Month” and golf joke.

As part of your Monthly Handicap Improver Insider Circle, as a follow-up to her Long Drive Q&A, we’ve included a CD of my audio interview with 4-time World Long Drive Champion Sandra Carlborg.

### **The Barclays**

I’ve been to the US Open, two PGA Championships, as well as a number of other various PGA TOUR events. Recently, I got to attend another one, The Barclays which was held about an hour from my home at Bethpage Black.

This tournament, in particular, was one of special interest to me. One of the bad things about living where I do in New York City is that golf course access is not really convenient. There are a couple basic city courses within 25-30 minutes. But mostly it takes about an hour to get far enough away from the city where you have enough land to have bigger golf courses.

One of these happens to be Bethpage. As it’s part of a state park, the rates are quite reasonable, especially for New York state residents. So I figure if I have to drive an hour, I might as well go to an awesome place like Bethpage. The most famous course in the park is the Black course. However, there are actually 4 other courses of varying difficulty. The Red course is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most difficult and it hosts other events like US Open qualifying. The Blue is next most challenging. There they have high school and junior events. The Yellow and Green courses are much more friendly.

I’ve played Bethpage Black enough that I actually consider it my home course. That makes it extra special when a big tour event comes in to town because I can make direct comparisons to how I play the course versus other tour players.

Here are a couple of my observations from going to The Barclays:

- Once again, power is incredibly important. Every single person in the Top 5 had above average club head speed.

One of the things that makes Bethpage Black so difficult is the rough. It isn’t always that long but oftentimes if you hit in the rough, the ball nestles deep down and it makes it very hard to get it out and control your distance.

If shorter hitters miss the fairway, it may not be possible to get an approach shot on the green because they'd need a high lofted club just to get it out of the rough. Even if they hit the fairway with their tee shot, it's still also a longer iron in to firm greens. With the rough being basically a penalty, the job becomes just getting it on the middle of the green.

On the other hand, if a long hitter misses the fairway, they may still be able to advance it to the green...and if they are in the fairway, they can be much more aggressive with their approach shots.

Furthermore, the course is just designed that way. On the 18<sup>th</sup> hole, for example, the fairway narrows where the average PGA TOUR player would land his drive. This forces him and short hitters to lay up and have a mid-iron to the green.



However, longer hitters can just fly the narrow gap and have a short pitch in to the green. It's a tremendous advantage at Bethpage Black to be long.

- I was also reminded how long and high tour players hit the ball. If you've never been to a tour event, I highly suggest you do it and that you stand right behind the players as they tee off so you can see their ball flight.

It's probably much higher than you think. It may also even be much farther than you think. Jim Furyk isn't known for being a long hitter on the PGA TOUR, but his yard 280.8-yard average drive would still be over 50 yards past the average amateur who hits it 225 yards/drive.

That distance should be taken with a grain of salt too. There is a big difference between a sea level drive hit in cold wet weather versus one in the summer at high elevation on a firm fairway. Jim averages that 280+ of a drive across all conditions. The murmurs at a tour event, even around a guy like Jim Furyk, include a lot of oooh's and ahhh's.

### **My Trip to Colorado**

In early September, I made the flight from New York to Durango, Colorado to visit club-design icon Tom Wishon.

You know Tom as one of our contributing Monthly Handicap Improver experts on equipment-related matters, but he's also the co-creator of mine and his Sterling Irons® single length irons.



Now that we've had the launch of the clubs, I wanted to fly out to visit Tom for several reasons.

First, it was good to celebrate. To go from the white board to official launch, it was a 2.5-year process. Some celebration was definitely deserved!

Second, we wanted to discuss future developments for Sterling Irons® and just how things would change. You see, Tom recently announced his semi-retirement. He's basically turning over the use of his Wishon Golf designs to a company called Diamond Golf in the UK.

In his semi-retirement, he wants to contribute more to various industry publications, continue work on Sterling Irons®, and honestly just do some other non-golf related things like traveling.

Regarding Sterling Irons®, I can tell you that we decided on several things:

- We'll be releasing a 19-degree 4-iron. I actually tested the 4 prototype and it worked exactly how we wanted.
- A 60-degree lob wedge is also coming. Tom had me hit a lob wedge that we made out of a sand wedge with some lead tape and careful grinding. Testing with the lob wedge went well...which means those should be ready some time this winter.
- We decided to move forward with a left-handed set. Sadly for left-handers, lefty sets typically never make up more than 8% of club sales. Thus it comes down to a simple business decision as to whether or not to move forward with them. Fortunately, initial sales have shown that right-handed sales have been great enough for us to invest in the tooling to build a minimum order of left-handed clubs. We're guessing those will be ready around spring time. Yay lefties!
- We also were playing around with the idea of adding in complimentary wood/hybrids and a driver. We did some initial testing on Tom's Trackman and I think we're going to move forward with it, but the 4-iron, LW, and left-handed sets will be first up. Perhaps we'll have something ready with woods/hybrids/driver for next summer.



### **My Set Makeup**

While I was out in Colorado, I also wanted to work a little bit on my own set. My fairway wood and hybrid were simply assembled from various components without ever being properly fit. This was showing out on the course as I struggled with them subtly.

Furthermore, my club head speed is down. In 2007, I had trained to get myself up in to the low 140s before deciding not to compete. Last year I was mostly in the low 120s on the course with a 133 mph for my season max. This year, I haven't done much of anything workout-wise since February, which meant my speed dropped to between 105-110 on the course and around 116 mph max.

That's still fast for the average golfer, but it's a big enough drop that the equipment that I had wasn't performing as well anymore. Basically, I had a 12-degree 2-wood that was not a problem for me to hit high from the fairway when I was swinging in the 120s. But dropping down so much basically made that club hard for me to get any height on my shots. I needed something that would perform better for me when my speeds are down.

So aside from adjusting the swing weight on my 2-hybrid, we also put a lighter shaft in that I could swing easier. Since I hadn't been practicing as much, my ball-striking was suffering a bit as well. As such, we shortened up the club.

For the fairway wood, I went up in loft to a 14.5-degree club...also with a lighter and shorter shaft.

Both of these better fit clubs immediately performed much better for me.

In case you are curious, I updated my "What's in the Bag" page. Check it out if you like at <http://jaacobbowden.com/WhatsInTheBag.html>.

If you haven't analyzed your golf bag to ensure it helps you play your best given your current skill, speed, practice levels, etc, I highly recommend it.

Perhaps you need a 5-hybrid instead of a 5-iron. Maybe you could pick up 20 yards simply by getting a higher-lofted lighter-weight driver. If your wedge is hit fat a lot, more sole bounce might help. It may not be a good idea for you to have a 3-wood. Heck, you may not even need 14 clubs. My father-in-law really only needs 11 clubs to cover his distances appropriately.

It's worth it to have it done!

Okay...let's get going!

## Long Drive Q&A with Mike Dobbyn

Age: 37

Height: 6'8"

Weight: 295 lbs

### Driver Specs:

- Mutant Brute 2.0 - 2 and 3 degree heads
- XPHLEXXX shaft by Veylix playing at a 4X-5X stiffness
- Pure Grips



### Sponsors:

- Mutant/Brute Golf
- XPHLEXXX
- Pure Grips
- Tornado Tee
- Perfect Release
- High 5 Gear
- 2 UNDR
- Rockwell Time

### Special Accomplishments:

- 2007 World Long Drive Champion
- 4 Top 10 finishes at the World Championships
- Multiple LDA (Long Drivers of America) Tour Titles
- 2004 LDA Tour Rookie of the Year
- Record Holder for the Longest Drive in a Professional Golf Tournament at 551 yards

### What is your longest drive in competition?

- 463 yards in Long Drive Competition
- 551 yards in a Pro Golf Tournament

What were the conditions of the drive?



For the 551-yard drive, I was playing on Butch Harmon's Pro Tour in Las Vegas, NV. In the middle of summer in Vegas the ball goes a long way because of the heat and dry air. The drive was hit on the 18th hole of Dragon Ridge CC which is a gradual downhill Par-5 measuring 553 yards. It was about 112 degrees outside with a 10-12 mph left to right helping wind. I hit the ball over a bunker that sat at 430 yards off the tee, and it landed on a firm

downslope and took off running. The ball ended up pin-high about 40 yards right of the green (this hole has a lot of space that it covers). The shaft also broke across my back on the follow through.

I hit the drive with a Geek Golf Dot Com This 7.5-degree head on an Accuflex Tantrum shaft set at 47 inches.

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

163 mph on swing speed radar and 154 mph on TrackMan

What lead you to choose your particular equipment specifications?

Hitting a lot of balls and figuring out which setup works best for me.

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

I try to hit whatever shot shape I feel will work the best that day. I always try to work with the wind instead of against it.

Do you use any training aids to work on your speed and power?

I use the Perfect Release, Twitch Trainer, Kallassy Swing Magic, Momentum Power Hitter, Super Speed Golf.

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

I am in the gym 5-6 days a week, but I also do plyometrics, sprints, swimming, and flexibility and mobility training.

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

First - you can not be afraid to hit the ball off line. Many amateurs have slow swing speeds because they try to guide the ball down the fairway. When you're looking for maximum distance, sometimes the ball is not going to go perfectly straight.

Second - get your swing and body analyzed and have your clubs built by a professional club fitter to your ideal specs.

Third - Practice! You must hit the ball in the center of the club consistently to get maximum distance.

Fourth - Learn to love working out. If you can make yourself stronger, faster, and more flexible you will hit the ball farther.

Where can people contact you or learn more about you?

You can find me on:

Facebook: [facebook.com/mikedobbyn551](https://www.facebook.com/mikedobbyn551)

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# **The Importance of Ground Contact**

By Adam Young

Very few things can have such a positive impact on a golfer's game as an improvement in ground contact.

While almost every amateur golfer I see is contacting the ground in a poor location (mostly behind the ball), the professionals are consistently striking the ball, followed by the turf (with shots where the ball is resting on the ground).

This is the key to:

- More accuracy (due to clubhead deflection from the turf)
- More consistent distances
- Longer shots

## **Consistency myth**

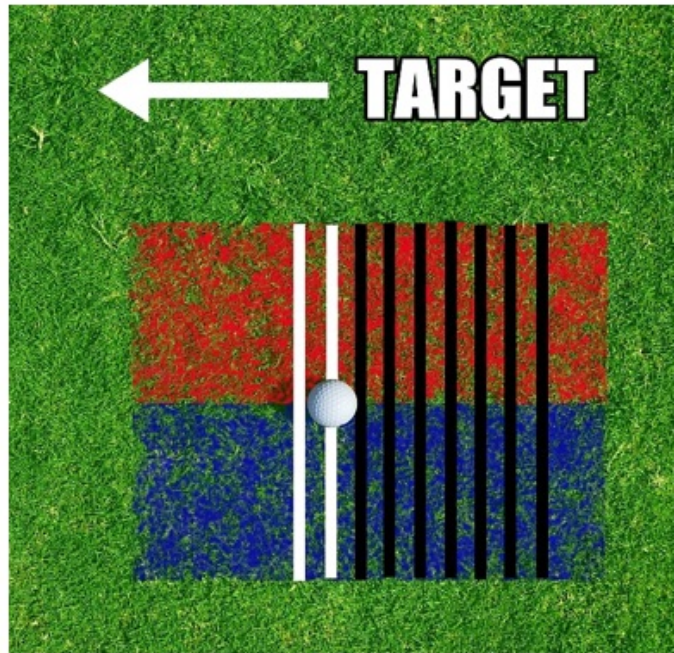
While many amateurs believe they are not making a consistent movement, this is due to what they see with the (inconsistent) results. However, the movement pattern a player is making is usually highly consistent.

Take, for example, an average 16 handicapper. They may be first contacting the ground between 2 and 4 inches behind the ball – variance of 2 inches. Similarly, a professional golfer may have a ground-contact variance of 2 inches.

The difference?

The professional is contacting between 1 inch in front of the ball, and one inch behind.

See the following image.



(Image Courtesy “The Strike Plan”)

A pro will typically strike the ground between the white lines – whereas amateurs are striking the black lines more often.

The consistency of movement/ground contact is the same, the pro is just contacting the ground in a better location.

### **How to improve ground contact**

There are so many ways to achieve an effective ground contact. Lots of movement variables with millions of different combinations can be employed, although the professionals usually settle on similar combinations due to other factors (path, face, speed creation etc.).

However, with all of the variables, there are some common rules which can be applied across the board. For example, in general:

- More weight shift (especially the lead shoulder being more forwards) will move the low point of the swing further forwards
- A later release of the clubhead will also tend to move the lowest point of the swing further forwards
- A swing direction which is more left will tend to put the lowest point of the swing further forwards, and vice versa for a rightward swing direction.

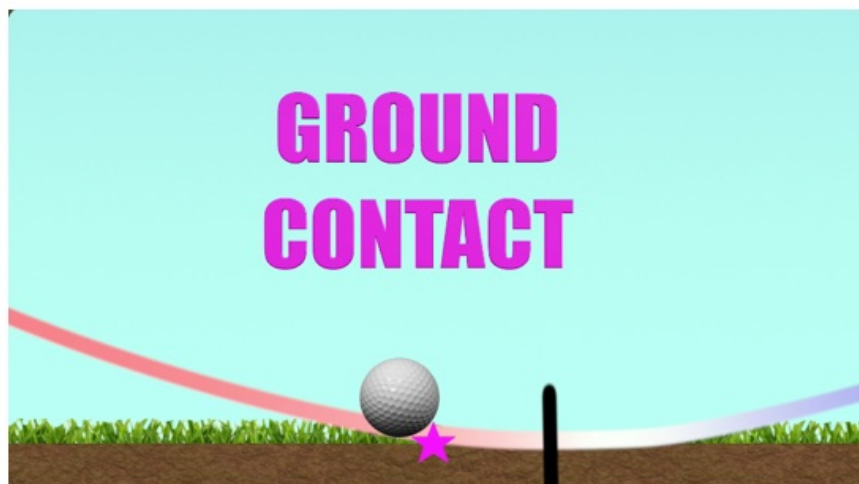


Image Courtesy “The Strike Plan”

For effective ground contact, the lowest point of the swing (the black line) needs to be in front of the ball.

### **Arc height**

Another factor we have to take into account is the height/depth that we swing the club – think deeper or shallower divot.

The general rule of thumb here is that, for a given low-point position:

- The deeper we swing into the ground, the further behind the ball we will contact
- The shallower we swing the club, the closer we will contact the ground to where the low point is



Image Courtesy “The Strike Plan”

In the above picture, we see that the lowest point of the swing circle remains the same (the black line), but the ground contact (purple stars) change depending upon the depth that the swing arc comes in.

## Exercise

The research in motor learning suggests that we make a subtly different movement every single time, even if the resultant ground contact is similar. For that reason it is suggested that we focus less on the technique (although technical elements can help), and instead focus more on the task, while receiving quality feedback.

One of the best drills you can do to achieve great feedback is to hit shots from a fairway bunker. We can draw a line into the sand, hit our shot, and the sand will give us feedback as to both where our divot started (the first point of contact with the sand), as well as where our low point position was (roughly the middle of the divot).

From there, we can tweak variables in order to achieve a quality ball-turf strike.

## Summary

We have 2 main elements which dictate quality of ground contact – low point position and swing arc height/depth. These combine to create a desired ground contact, which helps us with consistency, distance and even direction.

## 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 “The Strike Plan” by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/adamyounggolf>.



## Member of the Month



"My 2nd tournament with the [Sterling Irons](#)®. Win. Last win with "normal" irons, 3+ years ago. Just saying.

The "Been done before and failed", "gimmick", "won't last" haters can fill up my winning cup with their crybaby tears."

—Adam Bray

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## Finishing Up With Fun



Hey, George, did you hear the awful news about John?"  
The two golfers were talking over a drink in the club bar.

"No what happened to him."

"Well he had a great round on Wednesday - under seventy I heard - anyway he finished early and drove home, and found his wife in bed with another man! No questions asked... he just shot 'em both! Isn't it terrible?"

"Could have been worse," George commented.

"How?"

"If he'd finished early on Tuesday, he would have shot me!"

**We hope you enjoyed the Monthly Handicap Improver...feel free to contact us at [info@swingmangolf.com](mailto:info@swingmangolf.com) with questions, comments, suggestions, etc!**

Have a great month!