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## Elite Insider Circle Monthly Handicap Improver October 2015

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Hello Fellow Golf Enthusiast,

This is **Jaacob Bowden**.

To recap last month, we included a CD of my interview with **2-time RE/MAX World Long Drive Champion, Jamie Sadlowski**. Jamie and I talked about a lot of things but one of them in particular was about mobility.

I mentioned that one of my **favorite self massage tools to help with mobility is the Thera Cane Massager**, which you can find here:

<http://amzn.to/1KjZ1hs>

We had a **Long Drive Q&A** with **Jeff “The Critter” Crittenden**. At **44 years old**, Jeff has **multiple wins** in the sport of long drive and he finished as the **runner-up** in last year’s **RE/MAX World Long Drive Championships**.

Some things from Jeff’s Q&A that I think are **worth pointing out** are:

- **Performance relative to age** is at least **partially a state of mind**. Jeff is in his mid 40s and through training (which anyone can do) he has achieved a maximum **club head speed of 141 mph** on Trackman.

- He has **custom fit equipment** to achieve a certain launch angle and spin rate that maximizes his driving distance.
- He **practices swinging** fast and does **workouts in the gym** to help with flexibility, strength and explosiveness.
- He **works on his driving mechanics**.
- He recommends **being careful of having too much tension** in your golf swing.

Interestingly, the member question I answered last month was also about tension. If you missed it, here is a **video** again about **how you can monitor yourself for tension** and also **a drill to help fix it**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBqDJcPkA2Q>

**Putting expert Geoff Mangum** wrote a lengthy piece about **how to get rid of the pull stroke** in putting.

I also spoke a little bit about **Jordan Spieth's two missed cuts** in a row. Jordan had **switched irons** and missed the first cut.

He then **decided to switch back and finished with a T-13** at the BMW Championships thanks to good play from tee to green, especially in the first 2 rounds. He then **won the TOUR Championship primarily due to good putting** (he actually lost strokes to the field on approach shots).

So although he may have had some general fatigue from the season or perhaps some other factor that we aren't aware of that caused his poor play, unless it was required by Titleist in his contract, it just **didn't seem smart to me for him to change equipment** during the playoffs after the solid season he had.

For you at home...**please be careful about making equipment changes** as they may do more harm than good.

### **This Month**

Anyway, **this month**, here's what's coming up for you.

- We've got a **Long Drive Q&A** with **Jeff Flag**, the reigning **RE/MAX World Long Drive Champion**.
- **Expert Adam Young** writes about **internal vs external focus** and how a shift in your thinking can affect your performance.

- **Equipment expert Tom Wishon** has a piece about **whether or not iron technology is really improving** or if golf manufacturers are simply faking that improvement by strengthening the iron lofts to get more distance.
- **I'm going to answer numerous member questions.**
- 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 extended audio interview with...Ryan Steenberg.**

**Ryan won the 2013 Master's of Long Drive, is a 3-time World Long Drive Championship finalist, has 409-yard drive in competition, and a max swing speed of 148 MPH on a Trackman and 161 MPH on an SSR. He is a professional strength coach who also has a brand new 16,000 square foot golf facility in Rochester, NY.**

Among other topics, we talk about how Ryan uses a **sledge hammer slam to increase his distance**, how he uses a **wiggly PVC pipe during squat swings in order to increase speed from his lower body**, and many more unique training topics.

Let's get started!

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## Long Drive Q&A with Jeff Flagg



Age: 29      Height: 6'6"      Weight: 230 lbs

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Swing Man Golf | <http://www.SwingManGolf.com> | [info@swingmangolf.com](mailto:info@swingmangolf.com)

Driver Specs: Callaway XR 5 degrees, UST LD4 3x 48" shaft

Sponsors: Callaway Golf

Special Accomplishments:

- 2014 World Long Drive Champion
- 3x Minor League Baseball All-Star

What is your longest drive in competition?

463 yards

What were the conditions of the drive?

20 mph dead downwind at  
Mesquite, NV



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

147 mph on Trackman

What lead you to choose your particular equipment specifications?

I love the durability/shape/adjustability of the Callaway equipment. I also love to have such an established company supporting the sport of long drive.

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

I prefer to hit the ball dead straight in competition, and if it does anything it will work from left to right (fade).

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

I don't use any training aids for my swing, just hard training in the gym (REPS Golf) to develop speed/power, and work on efficient golf swing mechanics when I'm hitting balls.

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

REPS Golf is the fitness program I'm putting together that builds athleticism and rotational power in the training environment. It's still under construction at the moment but we'll be putting out content soon.

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

Advice – club head speed is dictated by the speed of the arms. If the body beats the arms down to the ball, the club head can drag through impact. Improving the speed of the arms in the swing will increase club head speed and swing efficiency.

Where can people contact you or learn more about you?

Twitter: @jeff\_flagg  
<http://www.REPSGolf.com>

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## **A Change of Mind**

By Adam Young

There are no quick fixes in golf that will make you hit the ball perfectly every time, right?

While I constantly urge people to take a more realistic and long-term outlook on their golf, there are some things we can do (which are very easy to implement) to create much better results instantly.

This can involve a simple shift in your thinking.



## **An Example**

Last week, a player came to me wanting to improve, ready for their tournament on the weekend. I watched them hit a few shots, and used Trackman to measure all of the ball flight data.



Next, I asked them what they are typically thinking of during a shot - to which he responded “shoulder turn”. I then asked him to hit 20 shots for me with the same club, but this time focusing either on the target, or on brushing the ground in the right place. We alternated between the focuses, and I recorded the results for each on.

At the end of the 20 shots, we had a look at the results. When this player focused on the target, they had a significant decline in performance - their distance control became much worse. However, the focus of brushing the grass correctly produced a significant improvement in their distance control, accuracy and consistency of shot pattern.

And this was significantly better than their own preferred focus (shoulder turn).

## **Performance Coaching**

In golf instruction, we call this ‘performance coaching’, and it is very different to how most people traditionally see a golf lesson. We are essentially taking your individual swing, and without changing it, we are seeing which thought process allows this swing to perform better - it’s similar to tuning a car.

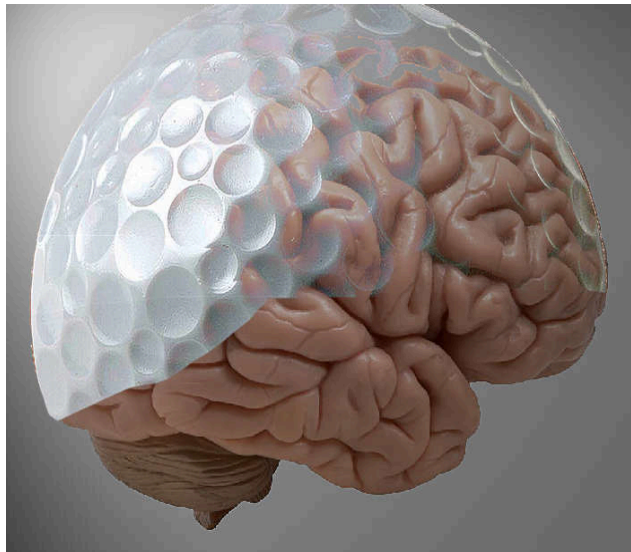
This can allow players to make some significant leaps in performance without having to change their swing dramatically. I use the science of motor learning and coaching experience with players of all levels to be able to hone in on thought processes that will yield better results.

## **Types of Focus**

Generally, in the science, we split types of focus into two categories - internal or external.

Internal thoughts are things relating to your body movement, such as shoulder turn, or arm position etc.

External thoughts are outside of your body, such as divot position or target.



In general, the vast bulk of research has shown external swing thoughts to be better for learning and retaining information. However, each person is individual and may respond to information in wildly different ways.

By doing your own scientific testing on yourself, you will start to see which type of focuses improve your performance more consistently over time. As a coach, I can test not just 2, but 5 different types of focus categories which I have seen yield massively different results with players.

## About Adam

Adam Young is author of “The Practice Manual – The Ultimate Guide for Golfers”, a best seller on Amazon.com in both the UK and the US. You can learn more about his book by visiting this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/adamyounggolf>

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## Is Iron Technology Really Improving or are the Manufacturers Just Making the Loft Angles Lower as Their Way to Offer Better Iron Designs



By Tom Wishon

There is no question that of all the clubheads in the set, the one that has always received the lion's share of attention when it comes to new design technology is the Driver.

And why not?

After all, the Driver is the “big stick”...the club that seems to get the most attention. The one that the companies are telling you that every new version is going to hit the ball even farther than ever before.

But a close second behind the driver in terms of the attention lavished on new

club designs are the irons. But instead of marketing on behalf of distance, new iron design marketing has camped on the promise of more accuracy.

After all, what is the priority when we pull an iron out of the bag to hit a shot? Yes for sure, to hit the ball on the green as close to the hole as possible.

Yet here's a really interesting fact about clubhead design. You can design more distance and more off-center hit forgiveness into a clubhead, but you cannot do one thing in the technical design of a clubhead to improve the accuracy.

Better accuracy is a product of proper FITTING for the golfer, not the domain of the head's technology on its own. If you want better accuracy from your clubs, being fit as accurately as possible for the lengths, lie angles, shaft weight, shaft flex, total weight, swingweight and the grip size and feel is how that is achieved. Not from anything that has anything to do with the head's design technology.

Huh?

Well, if that's the case, then what have club designers been doing with their new iron head creations?

Are today's iron designs better than those of 10, 20, 40, even 60 years ago?

Please let me assure you that the resounding answer to that question is YES. But chiefly in areas related to off-center hit forgiveness with a little bit more in distance performance to go with that.

You say you already know you hit your 5 or 10 year old irons longer than the irons you bought in the 70s, 80s, or 90s? I'm sure you do, but not for the reasons I am talking about with regard to very modern iron design for more distance.

Ever since the 1980s, the golf companies have been gradually and continually lowering the loft angles on the iron designs. So much that with most companies' iron designs of today, your current 5-iron has the same loft as your 3-iron did in the sets made and sold in the 1980s.

Why?

Well let me tell you the reason has nothing to do with any scientific technology reason, but has everything to do with selling more sets and making more money by preying on that old marketing adage, "Distance Sells!"



But please let me throw in a little bit of kindness and consideration in the face of pretty much accusing the big golf companies of greed as a major motivation in their new iron development.

Tour players hit the ball tons farther today than their predecessors of the 80s and 90s did, chiefly because the average tour player today is a far better athlete with a much higher clubhead speed than the pros of the not so distant past.

Prior to 25 years ago, the average 5-iron clubhead speed of a tour pro was 84-85 mph. Today it is closer to 92-93 mph because today's pros work out and train like madmen to build their bodies to swing the club faster and hit the ball much longer.

Sure, lower lofts on irons and higher COR titanium drivers helped a bit, but 75% of the distance increase seen on the tour today compared to 25 years ago comes from the pros being better golf athletes with much higher clubhead speed.

So let's be nice and cut the companies some slack by telling you that a reason they kept lowering the lofts of their irons was to help regular golfers not fall so far behind tour pros in iron distance!!

Seriously, how are today's iron designs better than those of the past, low lofts not included?

### **Off-Center Hit Forgiveness**

There is no question when cavity back irons were first invented in the 1970s and became the rage by the 80s, off center hit forgiveness took a quantum leap forward.

Anytime you put a large cavity in the back of an iron and position as much weight around the perimeter of the head, you do increase the MOI of the head which reduces twisting of the head from an off center hit to reduce distance loss.

While modern iron designs have eeked out a little bit higher MOI from more precise placement of the weight around the perimeter, the big thing that has come about in the past few years are changes in the face design itself which has allowed the face to flex inward more from off center hits to provide better ball speed for even less distance loss when the ball is hit off center.

There are two primary ways companies have achieved this.

First, through what is called a “variable thickness face” in which the center area of the face is a few tenths of a millimeter thicker than the areas all around the center of the face.

Second, by putting cut through slots on the sides of the face. Both methods of iron face design can increase off center hit flexing of the face to provide the absolute highest level of off center-hit forgiveness.

This means you can hit the ball  $\frac{3}{4}$ ” off center and the shot will still get to the green.

### **High COR Face Design for More Distance**

The most significant advance in iron design is the creation of iron models with a high COR face.

Whether by slots in the face or through the use of very thin faces made from high strength alloys, a handful of companies have been able to engineer the faces of irons to achieve a COR that is as high as the COR of titanium Drivers.

High COR face irons are a super game improvement design achievement aimed more at the players who need more distance due to either a lack of athletic ability or to a loss of clubhead speed from the effects of aging.

However, they are a technology that some companies are attaching to more traditionally shaped iron shapes so that better players can be attracted to the designs.

### **Better Sole Designs**

Over the past 10 years in particular, more and more companies are incorporating a better sole design on their iron models. In the past, little attention was paid to the radius or shape of the sole in the direction from back to front.

But now, all sorts of different combinations of sole radius and sole grind shapes are being created to help irons travel more smoothly through the turf, to offer less chance for the sole to “dig” too deep, and to reduce sole to rough contact enough to turn a poor shot into a “decent miss” to achieve better results.

As always, no new head design can begin to offer an improvement in performance unless all the specifications of the full club are correctly fit to the golfer. Getting

the lengths, lofts, lies, shaft, total weight, swingweight and grip size correct to match to each golfer's swing characteristics and sense of preferred feel will mean the difference between any new clubhead design being able to deliver its full benefits for the golfer or not.

To find a good clubfitter near you with whom you can work to find your absolute best combination of head design and fitting specifications, we welcome you to search these resources:

The AGCP (Association of Golf Clubfitting Professionals) -

<http://www.agcpgolf.com/locator/>

The ICG (International Clubmakers' Guild) -

<http://www.clubmakersguild.com/index.php/membership-directory/guild-google-map>

The TWGT Clubmaker Locator at - <http://wishongolf.com/find-a-clubfitter/>

Best wishes in this great game!

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## Your Questions Answered

### Member Question:

*Hi Jaacob,*

*So my questions are:*

*What upper body lifts translate well to clubhead speed?*

*What lower body lifts translate well to clubhead speed?*

*Which exercise has the most correlation to clubhead speed?*

*Which strength exercise improves clubhead speed the fastest?*

*Thanks very much!*

*Michael K*

### Jaacob's Answer:

- What upper body lifts translate well to clubhead speed?

My favorite ones for upper body are probably cable wood chops (downswing), decline cable flyes or decline bench dumbbell flyes (downswing), one-arm cross body lat pull downs (downswing), decline cable triceps extensions (downswing), and incline cable chest flyes (through swing).

Secondary ones would be hammer curls (back swing and follow through), dumbbell or cable side lat raises (back swing and follow through), and then forearm exercises like curls, reverse curls, hammer curls, reverse hammer curls, and things for pronation and supination as well.

- What lower body lifts translate well to clubhead speed?

The two main ones are probably rack pulls and half squats.

Depending on how you use your legs I might also put in half leg extensions, half leg curls, abduction and adduction exercises, and something for hip rotation (which is hard to train).

- Which exercise has the most correlation to clubhead speed?

Practicing swinging fast a couple times per week using a radar for feedback is important. You see a little about this in the industry with all the heavy and light club work. Wind resistance training aids fall in this category too. But the important thing is that you are just working on swinging faster. You probably won't get faster unless you try to faster.

Band swing isometrics are simple but very good for working on downswing strength.

<http://www.golfwrx.com/316950/isometric-golf-exercises-for-more-distance/>

Wood chops help a lot too.

- Which strength exercise improves clubhead speed the fastest?

Strength exercise-wise, the band swing isometrics or the wood chops are probably my favorite ones for adding basic golf swing strength.

In all cases with the weights and isometrics, try to mimic your golf swing as much as possible. Some trainers rag on that a bit but from a club head speed building standpoint, I find it to be important.

Go heavy and do low reps, like a power lifter. For example, in a series of half squats you might go 3 sets of 2 reps or 6 sets of 1 rep. On the last set of 2 or for the final set of 2 in the 6 set series, try to break your previous max. Do that once or twice a week...and each workout try to do just a little more weight. Over time, the additional weight adds up and you gradually build strength over a month, several months, etc.

Be explosive too (but under control).

Member Question:

*I am pretty accurate and have a good short game. My iron game doesn't seem to be as short. I hit a 7 iron 165 carry. It's the driver that all the other good players hit past me by 20 to 40 yds.*

*Any reason why?*

*- Shane L, 43 years old, 1 handicap*

Jaacob's Answer:

I don't know for sure without seeing you in person but oftentimes when someone hits their irons far for their swing speed and their driver short, you'll find they hit down on the ball quite a bit and have a good amount of forward shaft lean at impact. This is fine for your irons provided the bounce on your irons is fit to you and you aren't missing fat a lot. But with the driver, this can cause some distance loss.

There are many tests that have been done that show that a positive angle of attack with the driver will yield more carry and total distance than a negative angle of attack. Going from -5 to +5 can mean 30 yards...even at the same speed. Professional long drivers often even hit up +8 to +12. The highest I've ever done while experimenting is +15.

The best angle of attack for you will be based on whatever gets you your best launch angle and spin rates, though. At 100 mph, I would try to launch it between 12-15 degrees and 1900-2500 spin rate depending on if you are optimizing for total distance (first numbers) or carry distance.



When you get up to 113 mph through swing speed training, it will change slightly to 11-13 degrees and 1700-2400.

To measure all this, you'll need a launch monitor though.

In lieu of not having one, it might be worth experimenting teeing the ball up higher and more forward in your stance. You should be able to visually see a bit more distance this way, provided you hit it solid.

But practice both your old way and your new way so that you can still go out and play with the old way on the course and put up scores until your new way gets comfortable.

Member Question:

*What do you recommend for arthritis AND back surgery to increase speed?*

*-Greg L, Texas*

Jaacob's Answer:

For specifically increasing club head speed, the Mike Austin swing takes a bit of pressure off the back because you use your legs a bit more. Plus, the concept of throwing the club from the top (provided you pivot quickly enough to stay ahead of the throw) can sometimes pick up another 5 mph or so. Have a look at my video about the Austin swing here:

<http://swingmangolf.com/learn-the-mike-austin-golf-swing.php>

Beyond that, from an equipment standpoint, you could work with a club fitter to see if a lighter shaft will net you a few extra MPHs. Oversize grips won't necessarily help with your speed per say, but from an arthritis standpoint it could help with some extra shock absorption.

Technically, for your arthritis, you might try to sweep the ball versus taking a divot (if you take a divot). Many great players are sweepers of the ball (Jack Nicklaus, Zach Johnson, Count Yogi, etc). Not hitting the ground as much with the club will likely be easier on your joints.

With swing speed training, you could certainly try it. But just pay attention to your body, be careful, and don't do anything that you don't think your body could handle.

Member Question:

*Initial thoughts (curiosities)*

*1. What are the technique boundaries for all of the leaps - it seems 120 leap to 140 is a big one but common - I think I gained ten miles an hour in a day just trying the speed thing so now I'm trying to get 110 up to 120*

*Curious about the different speed jumps - what did it for each one?*

*2. Then, how is control maintained - for each new speed control must be considered to be a new phenomenon*

*Cool stuff man*

*-Tyler M, Ontario, 43 years old, 5 handicap*

Jaacob's Answer:

Nice work on the 10 mph. That's not entirely uncommon to do that. Sometimes just a simple workout like you did is enough to turn on some speed in your body.

The speed gains vary from person to person. The bursts can come at any time. As a generalization, from what I've seen over the years it is a zigzagging trend upwards, provided you are doing everything well. So you probably won't be faster every single workout, but you should see an upward trend when plotting things over time.

The two main keys are just practicing swinging fast and making your golf swing muscles stronger, in particular the ones you use on the downswing. But there's seems to be a synergistic effect when you combine all the different little variables together and cross-train your swing.

Maintaining control can simply be a matter of focusing on it. Swing and be as explosive as you can while still maintaining control and keeping good balance/fundamentals. Like anything, you get better at new skills with practice. So if you push yourself to go faster and also focus on doing it under control, the body will learn and adjust.

Glad you are enjoying things thus far!

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## Member of the Month

*"I have been following your basic swing speed training program (and have been bombing some drives, so I know I'm getting faster)."*

-Ed D, Virginia

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## Finishing Up With Fun



Michael and David, both of equal ability, decide to have a round together and "play it as it lays" on all shots. Both hit their tee shots on the par-5 No.1 hole down the middle and about 230. They drive up for the second shot, and Michael hits his shot down the middle for an easy approach. But David slices his over the trees and it ends up in the cart path of the adjoining hole.

"Guess I get a free drop from the cart path," he says. "Oh no," says Michael, "We agreed. Play it as it lays." So David drives Michael up to his ball in front of the green, drops him off and drives over to his ball on the cart path. Michael watches in amusement as sparks shower down from the practice swings of his opponent, then, in amazement as a perfectly struck shot lands on the green and roles to within 3 ft. of the pin. David drives back to the green.

Michael says, "Great shot back there! What club did you use?" David responds, "Your six iron."

### We hope you enjoyed the Monthly Handicap Improver...

- Do you have a **golf joke** you want to share with your fellow members?
- **Anything you want our experts to write about?**
- Any **other questions or comments?**

Let us know at [info@swingmangolf.com](mailto:info@swingmangolf.com) with the subject "FEEDBACK"!

Have a great month!