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## Elite Insider Circle Monthly Handicap Improver November 2016

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Hello Fellow Golf Enthusiast,

This is Jacob Bowden.

### Last Month

To recap last month, our equipment expert Tom Wishon wrote about why fairway woods can sometimes go the same distance or even farther than the driver. More often than not, this happens when you don't have enough loft in your driver to be able to match your club head speed.

Working in-person with a knowledgeable club fitter and/or instructor can be useful in making sure that you have the appropriate driver for your individual swing.

Golf and nutrition expert Adam Young wrote about "Feedback" and the importance of getting quality feedback. In his measurements, roughly 50% of people completely mis-read where they think they have hit the club face with the ball.

As such, it's important to use various forms of quality feedback to better assess yourself...from face spray to video to launch monitors to in-person instruction.

We had a Long Drive Q&A with 2008 World Long Drive Championship runner-up, the South African Dewald Gouws. Some of the things I think that are worth pointing out about Dewald's Q&A are:

- He uses equipment that seems to be appropriate for helping him hit the driver the maximum distance.
- At least during 2008 when he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at the World Championships, he had sufficient club head speed to be competitive and have a chance to win.
- Rather than fight the conditions, he tries to work with them to hit his longest balls.
- He spends time in the gym working out.
- To help you hit it farther, he advises to improve technique and work on your flexibility.



I did a recap of the 2016 World Long Drive Championships, in which Joe Miller won his 2<sup>nd</sup> title in the open Division.



I went over the 2016 Speedgolf World Championships. Gretchen Johnson repeated as Ladies Champion shooting a Par-72 in only 57 minutes. Making a case for age being just a number, 52-year old amateur Jamie Young won the Pro/Elite Division thanks to a first round Par-72 in 50 minutes. I believe this brings the total number of golfers to shoot par in under an hour at the World Championships to 5. Maybe next year someone will be the first to break par at Worlds in under an hour!

I answered a question from a member.

We also included a CD of my interview with 2007 World Long Drive Champion Mike Dobbyn.

## **This Month**

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

- We've got a Long Drive Q&A with 8-time World Long Drive Championship Finalist Kyle Blakely. Kyle is only 185 lbs, which is small for a professional long driver. We'll learn a bit about how he hits it long.
- Expert Adam Young has something for us entitled "Detriments of Shaft Lean". He'll talk about shaft lean, potential costs involved, and whether or not it can really help you.
- I'll answer questions from our fellow Monthly Handicap Improver members.
- We'll have our usual "Member of the Month" and golf joke.

As part of your Monthly Handicap Improver Insider Circle, we've also included CD of my audio interview with Kyle Blakely. We'll expand on his included written Long Drive Q&A and hear from him on topics like spending time on weaknesses, whether or not to mimic a pro's swing, his unique and extremely strong grip, how to get distance out of a fade or slice, etc.

Okay...let's get going!

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### **Long Drive Q&A with Kyle Blakely**

Age: 28

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 185lbs

Driver Specs:

- Krank Formula 6 – 4-degree head
- Fujikura Groove 2X shaft

Sponsors:

- Krank Golf, HJ gloves
- Tornado Tee
- Champ Spikes
- Carolina Indoor Golf



Special Accomplishments:

- 8-time World Long Drive Championship Finalist
- 2010 Tennessee Shootout Champion
- 2012 Masters of Long Drive Champion
- 2012 LDA Tour Championship Finalist

What is your longest drive in competition?

447 yards

What were the conditions of the drive?

Perfect 😊 Downwind about 15-20mph

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

152 and 146



What lead you to choose your particular equipment specifications?

Choosing the best equipment is all about what works best for your swing, and my current setup gives me the best all around performance for drives of distance, therefore I use the Krank Formula 6 head with the Fujikura Groove shaft.

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

If I had to choose a particular shape, it would be straight, as straight balls go the furthest, but my comfort shot is a mid-flight block or a strong draw.

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



The only training aid I use is the Twitch Trainer. It's the only aid I need as it works on all the important performance techniques such as speed, strength, and timing.

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

I'm not the biggest guy in the sport, so for me to stay competitive, my flexibility is crucial, so I work on staying loose and flexible through stretching.

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

I think the most important thing to do, with all variables staying consistent, would be to get fitted for your clubs. Playing a club that is built specifically for your swing is one of the most importance factors to gain distance and control without changing a thing.

Working on fast twitch muscle gains, flexibility, and strength conditioning can only help more.



Where can people contact you or learn more about you?

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## Detriments of Shaft Lean

By Adam Young

For years, it seems as if leaning the shaft forwards at impact has been the holy grail of golf.

But how much can this really help you?

What might be the cost?

While I am not advocating getting the club to lean back at impact, having an excessive amount of shaft lean can certainly cause issues, especially in the average golfer. There are even many devices on the market aimed at increasing shaft lean – and while these may get some player into the ballpark of a normal amount, many players (like myself) may end up over doing it.

## **Reduce Bounce**

Your club has a certain amount of bounce – the sole of the club juts out and acts like a rudder to prevent the club digging too much. However, leaning the shaft forwards at impact reduces this, and can limit the beneficial effects of the club's bounce.

It is actually becoming more common to reduce shaft lean in the short game now, with notable short game experts such as James Ridyard, James Seickmann and Stan Utley opting for a more neutral shaft angle at address and impact.

## **Reduce Loft**

Leaning the shaft forwards at impact reduces the loft of the club at impact. While this might be beneficial for a tour player with a 100mph 7-iron, for the average golfer (often with less than 75mph clubhead speed for a 7-iron), it can cause the flight to be undesirably low, and even drop out of the air sooner.

For players with very little speed, this can be a disaster.

A recent study I did using Trackman showed this exactly. In the below picture, we see a series of shots with a neutral shaft angle at impact (purple) and with a more excessive forward leaning shaft (yellow).



The results below show that at 65mph clubhead speed, the neutral shaft lean actually flew further and much closer to an acceptable trajectory (60ft). On the other hand, the forward leaning shaft carried less, and came out like an exocet missile, only reaching a peak height of 28ft.

Analyze

	CLUB SPEED (mph)	SMASH FAC. D	ATTACK ANG. (deg)	CARRY (yds)	LAUNCH ANG (deg)	HEIGHT (ft)	SPIN RATE (rpm)	DYN. LOFT (deg)
7i, Premium								
1								
2	64.1	1.38	-5.9	103.9	13.0	29.4	5212	18.9
3	68.0	1.36	-5.7	110.2	12.2	30.6	5246	17.9
4	64.7	1.41		107.4	12.0	29.2	5459	18.0
5	64.7	1.33	-6.3	96.3	12.7	26.1	6005	19.6
6	61.6	1.44	-5.7	101.9	12.2	26.8	5102	18.0
	64.4	1.39	-6.1	104.0	12.4	28.3	5287	18.3
7i, Premium								
1	65.1	1.36	-0.6	113.9	24.1	66.0	6069	30.9
2	65.7	1.37	-0.2	116.7	23.8	67.3	5884	30.3
3	68.0	1.37	-0.9	121.3	21.0	63.3	6252	27.7
4	64.5	1.36	0.4	112.3	22.8	59.8	5828	29.4
5	62.4	1.37	-1.0	108.2	25.5	64.4	5932	32.4
6	63.7	1.37	1.3	111.1	22.2	56.6	5697	28.8
7	64.1	1.38	1.3	114.3	22.9	60.0	5053	28.7
8	63.5	1.39	-0.8	113.0	21.3	55.8	5594	27.7
	64.6	1.37	-0.1	113.9	22.9	61.7	5789	29.5



This is not to say that it will always carry further with less shaft lean, but this is likely to be the case if you are a slower speed player.

## Path Changes

Having shaft lean also tends to go hand in hand with shifting the low point of the swing further forwards. This can subsequently send the club path further right – causing hooks or even pushes (or push slices).

Players who come in with more shaft lean than normal also tend to have the clubface more open to the path (unless they counteract it with another variable).

While this may sound enticing to a slicer, be warned. Adding shaft lean while being a slicer may be one of the worst things you can do, as it tends to shift the lowest point of the swing forwards. From my extensive use of Trackman with average golfers, I have found that slicers tend to have a low point which is too far forwards in most cases.

## Topping

When we add shaft lean, we inevitably swing the clubhead higher through impact.

Don't take my word for it – try it.

Set up to the golf ball – now push your hands excessively forwards (without lowering your body to compensate). See how the clubhead raises up above the ball?





For many amateurs, this can result in more topped or thinned shots.

So how do the pro's do it?

If you watch pro golfers with lots of shaft lean, you will see that they tend to also drop in height with their body to compensate for this – ala Dustin Johnson or Tiger Woods under Sean Foley.

### **The Message**

I am in no way saying that shaft lean is to be avoided. I like to see a certain amount of shaft lean for most irons hit from the turf.

However, I hope this article has opened your eyes to potential hazards of overdoing it.

The theory is that, by adding shaft lean, you will start to strike the ball much more purely. There is an element of truth to this, but there are also so many other factors going into ball-turf contact.

### **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.

To learn more about how to strike the ball more crisply, gaining distance and accuracy/consistency, check on Adam's book as well as The Strike Plan at <http://tinyurl.com/adamyounggolf>.



## Your Questions Answered

### Member Question:

*I play the white tees because of my handicap but I consistently hit 300+ yard drives.*

*I have the biggest problem with my 1/4, 1/2 and 3/4 shots. On par 4's I usually hit a bomb in the fairway (or close to) have 60-75 yards left, hit the next one fat 20 yards, leave the next one short (or blade it) then putt from the fringe end up with double or sometimes triple bogey!*

*Is the short swing leg driven or more an arm swing?*

*Should you open your stance?*

*Would it be better to play from the blue tees?*

*Matt C*

### Jaacob's Answer:

You could certainly move to the blue tees but what is happening to you now also presents an opportunity to improve on partial shots and pitch shots.

Pitch shots and partial shots can be successfully played with an open, neutral, or closed stance. So I'd just keep it the same as what you normally do with full shots.

Similarly, they can be played with either a little more leg drive or also being more arm driven...although, I would say more players use more upper body than lower body.

Some general tips I would give would be:

- 1) Don't rotate the club face very much through impact. This helps with direction, although direction seems to be okay for you.
- 2) Be smooth and don't "hit" or "chop" at the ball. If you need to hit it farther, make a longer back swing or move up a club.

This is a nice little drill to take some of the tension out of your pitches (and all shots for that matter):

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

3) Try to pick or sweep the ball. People successfully pitch taking divots and not taking divots...but I would say as a generalization it's better to try to pick/sweep the ball.

Jack Nicklaus was known to take very little divot. Zack Johnson is another example. Steve Stricker as well (see how he picks it in this video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8IeK2KEFhY>).

This will help prevent those disastrous fat shots. It will also put a bit more spin on the ball from striking it slightly lower on the face (vertical gear effect).

Practice these things a bit on the range...and if you are by yourself on the golf course, hit an extra pitch or two to get in a little extra practice.

Minimize club face rotation. Be smooth. Sweep the ball.

#### Member Question:

*Hi Jaacob*

*1) Have you or members used a Pilates Cadillac or reformer and associated springs as a substitute for the bands?*

*2) Have you any experience with the Apple or Android apps for measuring swing speed as an alternative to buying radar?*

*Thanks*

*Jason*

#### Jaacob's Answer:

You are the first person to mention the Pilates Cadillac. Personally, I've seen pictures of it before but I've never tried it. The main goal of the isometrics is to increase the strength of your downswing muscles. I like bands because you can stack them, they travel well, and it's pretty easy to



track progress. But if you can do that with the Pilates Cadillac, I'd say go ahead.

Some members use apps for measuring swing speed. I prefer the Sports Sensors Swing Speed Radar because it's actual radar versus some sort of device with an accelerometer and blue tooth radio to connect to a smart phone app. That being said, a device like that is better than nothing because of the feedback you get...and a gain on one of those apps is a gain on the radar.

If you are interested in a Swing Speed Radar, we have them available on the website:

<http://www.swingmangolf.com/golf-swing-speed-radar.php>

Member Question:

*Hi Jaacob,*

*I've read your article "3 keys that took me from a 14-handicap to a pro" on GolfWRX.com and those three things are issues with my golf game right now, particularly trying to minimize the head movement as my strikes are inconsistent (lots of thins!).*

<http://www.golfwrx.com/71977/3-keys-that-took-me-from-a-14-handicap-to-a-pro/>

*Do you have any drills and/or that you could perhaps point me to look at?*

*Other than heading towards lessons.*

*Cheers,*

*Nick G*

Jaacob's Answer:

There's any number of things you can do.

What I usually did was record a swing then look at it immediately. I'd use a reference point in the background to see if my head was moving...and if so, where in the swing it was happening. Then I'd make a practice swing trying to feel what I needed to tweak. Then I'd record hitting a ball again...and

repeat until I had really minimized the movement (it doesn't need to be "perfectly" still).

It didn't take more than a few swings to really cut down on the movement.

Using the video I was able to feel what needed to change. Then I just practiced it by itself for a few sessions and rounds until it felt easy to repeat.

This was back in 2003, so I was using an old camcorder.

If you've got a modern smart phone and some sort of holder (like this <http://amzn.com/B009ZLZSQG>), you can take pretty good slow-motion video these days...especially with all the cool new apps that allow you to draw boxes, circles, and lines on the screen.

#### Member Question:

*I hope this email gets through to you sir. I have a dream of competing in Long Drive next year.*

*I am new to the game of golf, and right away I recognized that it seems as if everyone is always trying to hit the ball further. I started playing in November of last year (hooked instantly) and have never had any issues hitting the ball a long way. I always swing as hard as I could at the driving range to force myself in situations where I wasn't comfortable, little did I know I was training myself to hit it further.*

*I noticed my drives getting longer, and started playing local tournaments. I get compliments all the time about club head speed but I never really knew how precious that was. I was driving greens of about 325 yards pretty easily when something amazing happened. I was playing in a tournament last July and I was on the tee box waiting for my partners to hit. All three of them were safely on the fairway so they told me to let it rip and see how close I can get us. The hole was 384 yards, slightly downhill. I teed the ball up and swung as hard as I could like I do at the driving range. We all followed the ball as long as we could, until the guys on the green threw their arms up and started cheering. Funny thing about it is my dad was on the green when it happened. He said I hit 5 feet short of the green, bounced off the upslope before the green and rolled within 4 foot of the hole. Luckily for me the Marshal was parked by the green waiting for my Dad's group to putt. The Marshal met me halfway to the green to congratulate me. He said he's been working golf courses for 25 years and he's never seen anything*

*like that. Before I move past this story I have to tell you I made the eagle putt haha.*

*I am almost completely raw to the sport of golf, never had any type of lesson. Unfortunately, I suffered a fractured foot a couple weeks after that eagle at Kayak Point. I recently started playing again and forgot how amazing it felt to crush a drive. I came across Swing Man Golf online and I am very inspired by your story. Your results are astonishing and I can't help but wonder how far I can take myself in the sport of Long Drive utilizing Swing Man Golf as the foundation to my training.*

*I purchased Bodylastics Bands, TRX Rip trainer, Super Speed Golf training clubs, Swing Speed Radar, and I am looking into getting a Long Distance Driver.*

*Do you recommend anything else?*

*I've invested a pretty good chunk of money so far into this but it is my passion. I hope I get an opportunity to hear from you soon. I hope I didn't bore you talking about myself, I just want you to know that you wouldn't be wasting your time advising me.*

*Hope you are doing well and I hope to hear from you soon!*

*- Jay T, 23 years old, 4 handicap*

Jaacob's Answer:

That's a cool story. :-)

It sounds like you have a good amount of stuff for your training. I think the radar, Super Speed Golf training clubs, and Bodylastics bands will be most valuable to you. That way, you can check your speed with your driver and training aids...and use the bands to make your golf muscles stronger. If you have like to work out at the gym, there are weight training exercises you could implement as well. See the "Weight Training" page on the inside of the member area for more details.

If you want to set yourself a speed goal, the averages for the Final 8 competitors each year usually runs in the low 140's on a Trackman launch monitor. The record for one swing at the finals is 156 mph on a Trackman. A Sports Sensors radar also measures speeds with Doppler radar, but the readings are a bit faster than Trackman because the SSR measures the fastest moving part of the club (usually the toe) and a Trackman has an



algorithm to measure at the center of the face. In my observation, it's about 5-10% faster, depending on how you personally move the club through impact. So you should at least shoot for averaging 149 - 156 mph on your SSR. I know some of the top guys have topped at 160 or 161 mph on the SSR.

I don't know your current speed, but realize that it's doable to get to that speed if you're willing to put in the work on your body. When I last competed, I personally went from 118 mph to 155 mph on my SSR in 7 really hard weeks of busting my butt through swing speed training. So it's definitely doable.

You'll also need a long drive driver like you mentioned. Mostly the guys use between 46-48" shafts, the way the USGA measures, or 48"-50" the way the LDA measures. Sellinger's Power Golf (<http://sellingerspowergolf.com/index.php/long-drive.html>) has perhaps the greatest selection of long drive drivers (low lofted heads and long stiff shafts). Krank and Callaway heads are the most popular right now. Mutant Golf also has long drive heads, but they aren't available at Sellinger's yet.

To figure out what loft you'll need, you should hit about 10 balls on a local Trackman to get your average spin rate. Then have a club fitter measure the exact loft of the driver you have (they aren't always what they say). Based on that you can use some algebra to figure out what loft will get you to achieve your ideal spin rate. According to Trackman, at 142 mph on a Trackman, it's best to have about 2000 rpm spin for maximum carry (good for downwind or on a wet grid) or about 1300 rpm for maximum total distance (good for a hard dry grid). So you might actually get two drivers, one for carry and one for total distance. Based on the clubs other guys use, you'll probably need between 2-6 degrees of loft to achieve those spin numbers. Sellinger's doesn't have 2 or 3-degree drivers advertised on their site, but they will do custom pulls to the nearest 10th of a degree if you ask specifically.

As a general rule of thumb, you tee it up high and hit it as high as possible with drivers that get you in those spin range numbers.

Beyond that, I would also advise practicing on the range in 8 ball sets with a 3-minute timer...because that's roughly how the rounds work. You can also practice hitting in to a virtual grid to get used to having to hit the balls in play. If you can establish a comfortable rhythm that gets all 8 of your balls done in that time window and then practice it, you'll probably feel more comfortable and can better go on autopilot under the gun.

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## Member of the Month

“After several months with Sterling Irons single length irons, I put them to the test in our club championship last week.

I ended up with the lowest net score and third lowest gross – behind the state champion and a former pro who passed me by draining a hundred feet of putts in the last nine holes.

All of my playing partners over the three-day tournament remarked on the quality of my iron play.”

–Mitch B

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## Finishing Up With Fun



A "golf widow" concedes that if she is ever to see her husband she needs to learn the game. So she goes to the country club and signs up for lessons with the golf pro.

They get out to the course and the pro instructs her to hold the club as she would her husband's organ.

She hits the ball and the pro exclaims, "Beautiful!! Great shot, right down the center of the fairway!

Now, take the club out of your mouth and we'll go for distance."

**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!