

## Golf Club Design & Fitting Lecture/Demonstration - Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2010

This event was held at 18.00 in Rob Haste's Golf Galore premises in Martlesham Heath.

Rob hosted the event, and had arranged for Neil Cooke, the Technical Director of Golfsmith Europe, and his assistant Rob Mallet, to come down from their London base to give a lecture and demonstration.

Neil gave a very informative talk that covered the development of golf club design, covering the head, shaft and grip elements. He noted how lofts had "strengthened" over the years so that manufacturers could claim their 7 iron went further than their rivals – and this contributed to the difficulty current players had with the long irons today. Very few amateurs have 2, 3 or even 4 irons in their bag. He also stressed the vital importance of the shaft, and its selection proves difficult because there are no standard measures of flex or kick-points. The case for custom fitting according to a player's individual swing characteristics was persuasively made. Neil suggested that players ask their club pros to give their clubs a yearly "MOT" to check that the lofts and lies had not changed, and stressed the importance of having good grips. Cleaning grips regularly really helps! Some interesting stories were told about club fitting sessions, both for amateurs and tour pros.

He covered the importance of the modern ball, and its spin rates, and that maximum driver carry required a particular launch angle. He considered that many players would be longer if they had more, not less, loft on their driver.

Neil's assistant, Rob, then set up a Launch Monitor so that data could be gathered from some sample swings.

Prior to the event I had asked for some "guinea pigs" to bring along their drivers and hit a couple of shots so that their swing types and current equipment can be assessed. This was not to give them a club fitting session, but to show how different swings show up in terms of club head speed, spin rates, trajectory, etc. In response many eager attendees had brought along their driver, ready to expose their swings to the attentive audience, and to the Launch Monitor technology.

I went up first, and luckily managed to hit some half decent shots into the net. The Monitor showed carry & total distance, launch angle and spin rates. The conclusion here was that the spin rate was quite low (around 1500) which would affect trajectory and hence carry. Rob Haste provided a club with a different shaft that managed to double the spin rate and give around 10 yards extra distance. Interesting, as I tend to use low spin rate balls to minimize (I thought) sideways deflections – but a higher spin rate ball could give extra distance, as would a shaft more in tune with my swing.

Next up was Jon Hopkins who repeatedly demonstrated his specialty shot – a singular low launch angle hook. This attracted much interest from Neil and the audience, and some technique tips were offered. The audience entered into the spirit by (game show style) urging Jon to get it Higher, Higher!

Some other, but not all, Guinea Pigs took the stage and discussed the Launch Monitor output with Rob, whilst Neil held an informal question and answer session.

Rob Haste offered his Launch Monitor facilities to all present, if they wished to visit Golf Galore at a later date.

The session over-ran, ending at about 20.30, and a vote of thanks was given to Neil and Rob, and to Rob Haste, for what had proved to be a very informative session.

A possible follow up session next year could be a Lunch Monitor session for people to hit a variety of golf ball types with their driver, and see the difference in spin rates, trajectory and projected distance? We can then determine whether a different type of ball does make a difference to our individual swings.

The event was attended by 11 BTRGS members. No charge was made to members, the BTRGS Committee deciding that the educational value for this event warranted a full subsidy of the (modest) costs.

For anyone wishing to look further into club design, and custom fitting, I would recommend the highly opinionated but informative book:

[The Search for the Perfect Golf Club](#) by Tom W. Wishon, and Tom Grundner

Richard Wyndham