



Why Middle and Higher Handicap Players Need Custom Fitting *MORE* than Low Handicap Golfers

A Publication of Tom Wishon Golf Technology

The Wishon Series 9 Beta Ti Driver & Steel Woods

Combining loft and extreme rear-positioning of center of gravity to deliver optimum launch conditions.



One of the most common misconceptions about custom fitting of golf clubs is that middle and high handicap golfers are convinced they are “not good enough to be custom fit.” Last year I had the chance to read a survey on custom clubfitting conducted by the leading golf information clearinghouse in the golf industry. One of the bits of information that just made me shake my head in disbelief was that the vast majority of middle to higher handicap respondents said, “as soon as I improve my swing a little more, I’ll think about being custom fit.”

The reason that average to higher handicap golfers seem to cling to this myth is because they feel they are not consistent enough in their swing to be able to gain benefit from custom fitting. What’s interesting about that mistaken belief is that one of the reasons they are inconsistent is because the standard made, “off-the-rack” golf clubs they bought and use are built to specs that make it much more difficult for them to become consistent!

Here’s an absolute fact about custom fitting – the less skilled the golfer, the more they need to be accurately fit to play to the best of their ability.

Low handicap golfers achieve their better playing ability because of two reasons – one, they were taught proper swing fundamentals and put in the time to practice and ingrain those swing skills, and two, they are good athletes blessed with good hand-eye coordination and solid control over their kinetic body motions, which enables them to train their body to develop the proper swing fundamentals. Because of their superior athletic and kinetic skills, low handicap golfers could play almost as well with quite a wide variety of different golf club specifications. Most don’t because in the process of becoming a good player, they develop a more acute sense of feel and ball flight perception that leads them to custom fitting to ensure greater consistency.

On the other hand, most middle and high handicap golfers do not have the same level of athletic coordination or control over their body motions. Certainly with enough monitored practice many of these golfers could improve their swing skills. But the vast majority will not achieve the same level of swing control and repeatability as the low handicap players because they simply are not blessed with above average athletic attributes. Because of that, if the middle to high handicap player ends up with woods that are too long, a wood face angle that is not matched to their swing path, a swing-weight and total weight in their clubs that is not matched to their swing tempo and rhythm, and several other custom fitting parameters, they cannot possibly hope to play to the best of their ability.

Thus it is extremely important for middle to high handicap golfers to be accurately custom fit so that the clubs can be made to help overcome and offset many of their inherent swing faults. The following is a list of custom fitting parameters that are extremely important for middle to high handicap players to investigate in order to get the most out of their games. We urge clubmakers to use this information as a way to impress upon their middle and higher

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handicap customers not to put off custom fitting any longer.

1. Club Length

Hitting the ball more consistently on-center is THE most important key to playing better golf. The length of your clubs is one of the most critical fitting parameters that can change the success or failure rate of hitting the ball solid and on-center. Unfortunately the “standard lengths” of drivers and fairway woods that most golfers buy are too long to allow the vast majority of golfers, especially middle and higher handicappers, to achieve their highest on-center hit percentage. Thus it is of **UTMOST IMPORTANCE** that middle and high handicap players are properly fit for the right length which will result in their ability to control the clubs more easily, and from that, increase their percentage of solid, on-center hits. Remember the keys for proper length fitting – start with the wrist to floor (WTF) measurement chart and only go longer than the WTF recommendation if the golfer has a smooth tempo, flatter swing plane and good swing timing and coordination.

2. Iron Lie Angles

No golfer, regardless of handicap or athletic ability, can hit the ball straight without the lie angle of each iron properly fit to their swing. Fitting the lie angle of the irons to each individual golf swing so every iron arrives at impact with the sole parallel to the ground is the only way the clubhead can come into impact and assure a straight hit. If all golfers were the same height, had the same arm length and swung the club through impact the same exact way, then the standard lie angles designed on clubs bought “off the rack” would be fine. But that is definitely not the case, so if golfers want to eliminate the inevitability of an improperly fit lie angle causing errant shots, every golfer must be custom fit for the lie angle of the irons. Every golfer.

3. Woodhead Face Angle

Good players have trained their swing to deliver the clubface square to the ball a very high percentage of the time. Thus, the square face angle of the standard made woods sold today is an acceptable fit for the better golfer. Middle and high handicap golfers typically cannot deliver the clubface square to the ball nearly as often as can a low handicap player. Thus hooks, but far more often slices, are a frequent if not constant companion of the middle and high handicap golfers when they play. Well over 90% of all golfers with misdirection problems using their woods do tend to hit the ball to one side of the fairway far more than the other. Custom fitting the face

angle of the woods will offset this misdirection tendency and allow the middle to high handicap golfer to keep the ball in play a much higher percentage of the time. And remember, TWGT can Hand Select to wood face angles within a +/- 1 degree range of each woodhead’s face angle design to broaden your face angle fitting options.

4. Driver and Wood Loft

This is no BS whatsoever – at least 90% of all golfers are not playing with enough loft on their driver to fully maximize their distance off the tee, that goes for fairway woods as well. And I am not just talking about changing from your 9.5 loft driver to one with 10.5 or 11 degrees. If your driver swing speed is 90mph or lower, 90% of you are going to need a driver loft of 12, 13 or 14 degrees to be able to achieve the launch angle that will keep the ball airborne long enough to carry the ball as far as your swing speed will allow. At last check, 12 degrees is the highest loft the majority of the standard clubmaking companies even offer for men and 13.5 is the ceiling for women. That’s a pretty good indication that to get more distance off the tee, you need to be custom fit for the loft of your driver. See the accompanying chart for a very general recommendation of driver loft vs. swing speed. The reason for the ranges in loft for each swing speed is because your swing angle of attack affects the final loft recommendation. And to know that and really nail down the perfect loft for your swing and swing speed, get thee to a custom clubmaker with a launch monitor who can determine this precisely for you!

Driver Swing Speed	Driver Loft
50 mph	15 - 17 degrees
60 mph	14 - 16 degrees
70 mph	13 - 15 degrees
80 mph	12 - 14 degrees
90 mph	11 - 13 degrees
100 mph	9.5 - 11.5 degrees
110 mph	8 - 10 degrees

5. Swingweight/MOI and Total Weight

If all golfers were of the same physical strength and swung with the same tempo, rhythm and sense of swing timing, then all golfers could play with one standard swingweight and total weight. But again, this is obviously not the case. There are almost as many variations of strength/tempo/swing timing among golfers as there are golfers who play the game. No middle or high handicap golfer can hope to develop even a shred of consistency

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in their swing unless the total weight and the swing-weight/MOI of their clubs is properly matched to their individual strength and swing tempo tendencies. While good golfers have the athletic skills to be able to adjust to a range of swingweight and total weight, middle and high handicap golfers do not. Thus it is more important for middle and high handicap golfers to be properly fit to the right swingweight/MOI and total weight for their individual swing characteristics to have any hope of developing shot making consistency.

6. Shaft Flex and Bend Profile

If there is one area in which the better player can gain a little more advantage in a fitting than the middle to higher handicap player, it is in the selection of the right shaft flex and shaft bend profile (the design of the shaft's stiffness over the entire length of the shaft). This is because better players usually have a more refined sense of feel for the bending action of the shaft during the swing than do middle to higher handicap golfers. However, it is true that if any golfer uses a shaft that is too stiff for their swing speed and swing mechanics, they will suffer from a lower launch angle, loss of distance, and a poor feeling of impact. Thus, it becomes very important for middle and high handicap golfers to also be properly fit to the correct shaft weight and shaft bend profile (overall flex design). With the mid-to-high handicap player, always "err on the side of" lighter and more flexible in the shaft.

7. Grip Size

No golfer can hope to swing with any sense of repeatability unless their hands and forearms are relaxed and not in tension when they begin the swing. The grip size is a key element in allowing all golfers to be able to feel as comfortable as possible holding on to the club. And from that, to be able to keep the tension in the hands and the forearms at a bare minimum from the address position to the execution of the swing. Because middle to high handicap golfers often grip the club too tight, fitting these players with a grip size that is more comfortable is a very important way for them to learn that grip tension is a very destructive factor in making consistent swings.

8. Vertical Roll Radius

The vertical roll radius/curvature that is typically designed on all woodheads today has the effect of making the loft angle completely different at the bottom, center and top of the face. Loft angle is a hugely important factor for controlling the launch angle of the shot. And the launch angle of the shot is THE most important factor for ensuring that any golfer hits the ball as far as their swing speed and athletic ability will allow. Middle to high handicap golfers will have much more of a tendency to miss hit the ball high and low on the face of the driver and fairway woods. Thus if they are using woodheads with conventional roll radius, they will experience far more inconsistency in the launch angle of their shots than if they are fit into woodheads that have no roll radius, and thus have the same loft from the bottom to the top of the face.

9. Clubhead Center of Gravity

Middle and higher handicap golfers will always be more consistent in their shotmaking if they use clubheads in which the center of gravity is located as far back from the face as possible. Most less-skilled golfers think only of choosing clubheads with a low center of gravity. However, it is the rear location of the CG that has more influence over how high you hit the ball for any given loft on the face. In addition, woodheads with a more rear-located CG are more forgiving for off-center hits because the head tends to twist less when the CG is much farther back from the face.

Want to learn more? Pick up a copy of Tom's new book ***The Search for the Perfect Golf Club*** from your local clubmaker, or bookseller today.

Author Information: Tom Wishon is a 24 year veteran of the golf equipment industry specializing in clubhead design, shaft analysis, and clubfitting research and development. He is the only designer from the component clubmaking side of the golf industry whose clubhead designs have been used to win on the PGA Tour, having designed the clubs used by Scott Verplank, Bruce Lietzke, Ben Crenshaw and in 1999 before his so untimely death, Payne Stewart. He has written 6 books on clubmaking technology in his career and is a 10 year member of the Golf Digest Technical Panel. The PGA of America is pleased to have Tom Wishon as their Technical Advisor to explain clubmaking technology in clear and understandable, common sense terms.

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