

Quality Time

New technology can help clubfitters be more efficient when working with customers

By Don Jozwiak, Senior Editor



For a relatively small private club, Preston Trail Golf Club in Dallas, Texas, has made a considerable investment in clubfitting. The 285-member club built a state-of-the-art indoor/outdoor teaching and fitting center in 2009, and PGA Director of Instruction Jeff Barton (pictured above) and his staff have a TrackMan launch monitor and nearly every possible custom fitting cart at their disposal.

But time is money, and Barton is using some new technological tools to make sure he and his members are making the most of the time they spend during the clubfitting process. One of them is the Adams Golf HITfit system, which helps Barton determine what mix of hybrids and fairway woods a golfer should be using.

"Everybody's always pressed for time, and I'm finding that HITfit really helps me do gap fitting quicker than I did before," Barton says. "It gives me a great starting point for a fitting that's faster than my old method of gap fitting and deciding on set makeup."

Barton says his previous method for gap fitting involved having a golfer hit shots with every club through the bag. As the golfer worked their way from wedges through longer irons, Barton would look for a five mile-per-hour increase between clubs. When the golfer stopped showing a gain between clubs, Barton would use that as the cutoff point where irons should be replaced with hybrids or fairway woods. This provided an accurate result, but required hitting dozens of balls – causing fatigue for the golfer and taking time away from other areas



of fitting.

Using HITfit, Barton now has his members hit between five and 10 6-irons. The web-based HITfit application takes the data from the 6-iron shots, compares it with thousands of previous player tests in the Adams Golf database, and extrapolates the best mix of fairway woods, hybrids and irons for that particular golfer. Barton has compared HITfit results to his previous methods, and the results are the same.

"What HITfit does is get me to the meat of the fitting that much faster. I don't have to wear my members out hitting golf balls at the beginning of the process," Barton says. "It gives me information I can use to start deciding what clubs should be in that players' set, but lets me be objective about how to do the rest of the fitting. Then I can spend more time and effort on loft and lie, heads, shafts and grips."

Barton also uses the Mizuno Shaft Optimizer as a way of reducing the amount of trial and error needed during the shaft selection process. He says his members enjoy the validation provided by these technological tools, and they also serve a purpose when training younger teachers how to fit.

"These technologies are great for training my staff. It gives them and the members confidence in the fitting because there's some additional guidance provided by the technology," Barton says. "That makes the customer more comfortable, gives our younger guys more confidence and teaches them a lot about tempo, ball speed and gapping."

At Preston Trail, time saved in gapping and shaft selection translates into more time working on short game fitting, especially wedges. Since many of Barton's members also belong to other golf clubs, he works with them to make sure they have multiple sets of wedges – less bounce for the firmer sand and turf at Preston Trail, and more bounce for courses with lighter sand and fluffier grasses.

Barton's goal isn't to spend less time with his members; he prefers to use technology to focus his time on the most beneficial areas of a fitting.

"If you're a skilled fitter, you can get the same results without some of these tools – it all comes down to where a golfer is striking the ball on the club face and what the ball flight looks like," Barton explains. "But these technologies give me a good starting point where I can get to my objective a little quicker." ■

TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company to acquire Adams Golf

The adidas Group and Adams Golf have announced that TaylorMade-adidas Golf has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire all outstanding shares of Adams Golf. The transaction value is approximately \$70 million, and comes less than three months after Adams Golf announced it was examining strategic alternatives. The transaction is expected to close in mid-2012.

According to Barney Adams, interim CEO of Adams Golf, TaylorMade-adidas Golf has decided to maintain Adams Golf's headquarters in Plano, Texas, and will run the Adams Golf brand as part of TaylorMade-adidas Golf's stable of brands.

"The proposed combination of Adams Golf and TaylorMade-adidas Golf brings together two highly complementary sets of brands, combining Adams' focus on game-improvement, as well as senior and women golfers, with TaylorMade-adidas Golf's focus on the younger and the low-to-mid handicap golfer," says adidas Group CEO Herbert Hainer.

For more details on the proposed transaction, log onto www.PGAmagazine.com.