

Your weekly golf lesson in the Sun



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Tee It Up

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Good drivers education

Finding the right club that will help get you in the swing of things — and make golf more enjoyable

The old saying that you “Drive for show and putt for dough” is pretty catchy, but not that accurate.

Golf isn't much fun if you can't get off the tee with some degree of success.

Many golfers I play with get into so much trouble off the tee the rest of their game becomes almost irrelevant.

To have fun and success, you need to get your swing to the point where you can at least swing a driver with some consistency and balance.

The driver is the hardest club to hit because it is the longest club and its club head moves the fastest.

A better drive will only come with a better swing, although today's drivers are pretty terrific and easy to hit.

Here are six keys to finding a driver you can hit and have fun with:

1. Buy a top name brand

Companies such as Ping, Cobra, Nike, Titleist, Callaway and TaylorMade have dozens of engineers designing their clubs. If you can't afford a new driver from one of these companies, you're better off with a one- or two-year-old model than a new no-name club. There are some incredible deals out there — a one- or two-year-old top-grade club costs as little as \$100.

2. Get enough loft

The worst thing you can do is to try to hit a driver that has too little loft. You'll sabotage any chance of hitting great tee shots. More loft will allow you to swing more aggressively to a full finish. Loft also decreases sidespin, which is always a good thing. Even Tiger Woods hits a driver with



FILE PHOTO

Sometimes the longest club isn't the best club. Anthony Kim is one of the longest drivers on tour, but he sure doesn't use one of the longest clubs. Notice how Kim grips down on the club, yet still hits more than 300 yards.

10.5 degrees of loft because he says it's easier to hit.

3. Find the right length

Marketers will say that you'll hit a longer club farther. The reality is you'll hit your longest drives when you make your best swings and hit the club's sweet spot. If a club is too long, you'll miss the centre of the clubface more often, leading to shorter drives. Also, if a longer club feels awkward, you will lose consistency

instead of gaining distance.

4. Watch your weight

Again, be wary of advertisers promising that super light shafts can be swung faster. If your club gets too light, you can lose control of it and the sense of where it is as you swing. The club may swing a touch faster, but you'll lose rhythm. Today's graphite shafts are available in weights as light as 45 grams. Most pros use a 65-85-gram shaft.

5. Don't get shafted

When it comes to finding the right shaft, there are other factors besides weight to consider. The shaft is really the engine of the club. As you swing, the shaft flexes, twists and bows. To hit your best and longest, you need to pay attention to the characteristics of the shaft. Look for the correct stiffness, proper amount of torque and flexpoint that suits you and your swing.

6. Test the driver

No matter how expensive, your new driver will be worthless unless it fits you and your swing. You need to test a driver outside before handing over your hard-earned money. If you can't get to a PGA pro or a launch monitor, at least find a demo day put on by a leading company, then write down the specifications of the driver you fit into so you can order or find that exact club.

This year's top 5 drivers

1. Callaway FT-9

Probably the best multi-material driver in the game. The composite/titanium head is extremely forgiving. I prefer the FT-9 to Callaway's FT-1Q driver because it allows you to work the ball a little more and, frankly, it looks better.

This driver still gives good ball speed on off-centre hits.

2. Ping G10

The G10 is still selling well after a year and a half. It features a solid and traditional shaped head, combined with one of the best stock shafts in

the game. We get great results with this driver in testing with a wide cross-section of players.

3. Cobra S9-1

Cobra clubs are maybe the easiest to hit. They feel really light and even beginners have an easy time getting them airborne. The offset M speed model is a slice killer. If you still slice with that club, book a

lesson now!

4. Nike Dymo2 Str8t Fit

Nike has the best-looking square shaped driver on the market. The Str8t Fit model comes with an adjustable neck, so a player can choose from eight clubface, loft and lie angle settings. Adjustable clubs are gimmicky, but there's no question different settings give you different ball flights.

5. TaylorMade R9

TaylorMade has the best-selling driver, and always makes a great looking and feeling product. Like the Dymo, this has an eight-way adjustable neck and three adjustable head weights. Work with a PGA fitting pro to find your proper setting. Trying to figure out all the settings yourself could get confusing.



DUSTY SCHMIDT

Has made \$3 million online

\$1-million mistake? Poker star just wants to golf

PORTLAND, Ore. — Dusty Schmidt just wants to compete as an amateur golfer. The USGA maintains the online poker player gave up his amateur status when he threw down a \$1-million challenge to anyone who could beat him at 72 holes of golf and at poker. Now it's up to a judge to decide.

Schmidt has filed a complaint seeking a temporary restraining order that would allow him to keep his amateur status with the USGA and play in a series of events.

“At the end of the day, I'm trying to get my amateur status back. I am trying to fight for my right *not* to make money playing golf, basically,” he said.

Schmidt was a promising young golfer in Southern California who turned pro after a year at UC Irvine. His career ended, stunningly, when he had a heart attack at age 23.

Revoked status

During his rehabilitation, Schmidt took up online poker. Schmidt, now 28, estimates he's made \$3 million gambling online. Schmidt asked for, and regained, his amateur golf status. The USGA revoked his amateur status on June 11 when they got wind of the “Million Dollar Challenge” that Schmidt proposed in April through a website he co-owns, 10thGreen. The crux of Schmidt's argument is that no one took him up on the challenge, so it is moot.

In court documents, the USGA maintains that Schmidt's challenge violated a rule aimed at actions “detrimental to the best interests of the amateur game,” and another related to gambling and the spirit of the rules.

— The Associated Press