

Customize Your Clubs to Play Your Best Golf: The Shaft

By Al Cloyd

Al Cloyd's Custom Golf

Possum Trot Golf Club

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Have you ever had your club shafts tested to find out if they are properly matched to your golf swing? If you haven't, you should. You will be surprised at the inconsistencies throughout your set and you will be amazed at the difference in the feel and performance the proper fit can make.

Golf club shafts are complex like an engine with many design features and with different manufacturing processes that are reflected in the pricing. The old saying of "you get what you pay for" pretty much holds true for club shafts.

I like to think of the shaft in a golf club much the same as an engine in a car. It is the main component. There are basically four, six and eight cylinder engines. The four cylinder is the least expensive to purchase and operate but does not have the horsepower performance of the more expensive engines.

Less expensive shafts are usually not as stable which means they produce less consistency with good ball-club contact and ball flight direction, and they also produce less power or distance.

The main features of golf shafts are: 1) composition, 2) weight, 3) flex, 4) flex point, and 5) torque. Each feature has an effect on your ball flight:

Composition . . . the most commonly used materials are steel and graphite. Steel shafts are heavier than most graphite shafts and have lower torque. They provide more control for the more aggressive golfers with faster swing speeds. Graphite shafts can help less aggressive golfers with slower swing speeds generate more distance. Graphite shafts are also beneficial to golfers with physical conditions such as arthritis or tendonitis as they absorb more shock than steel shafts on "miss-hits".

Weight . . . shafts can range from 45 grams to 135 grams. Lighter shafts benefit less aggressive golfers with slower swing speeds to generate more distance and heavier shafts provide more control for the more aggressive golfers with faster swing speeds. In general, you want to swing a club with the lightest shaft that provides an acceptable degree of control.

Flex . . . the main flex in shafts is the stiffness measured at the end of the shaft below your grip. There are also "butt-end" and "tip-end" measurements. Your

proper flex is based on the mix of your club head speed at impact, your swing tempo and your back-swing to down-swing transition speed. Flex affects the control, trajectory and distance of your golf shots.

Flex Point . . . is the measure of the height of the main flex on the shaft – generally high, mid or low. Your proper flex point is based primarily on your swing tempo and transition speed. Flex Point primarily affects the distance of your shots by changing the trajectory and backspin of your ball.

Torque . . . is the measure of shaft twist. Your proper torque is based on the combination of your club head speed at impact and your swing tempo and transition speed. A higher torque can help golfers with lower swing speeds generate more power/distance and a lower torque can help provide more control for the more aggressive golfers.

Alignment . . . shafts are not perfectly round and some shafts are actually unplayable! Most shafts can be re-aligned with the club head to perform most consistently. Miss-aligned shafts can cause your club face to point right or left at impact. Very few shafts are actually oriented in their most playable alignment.

Get your equipment tested and tuned today and you can play better golf tomorrow! Al can be reached at (843) 602-5527.