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2009 Equipment Review: The Latest Putters Ease Life On The Short Grass

By Scott Kramer

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The secret to finding a good putter is to discover one that generates confidence in you. Whether that means finding a model that looks good, feel right at impact, has the weighting you prefer -- or some combination of the above, you need to go for it once it comes along. Brand-new models out this summer might just accomplish that task for you. Several tout weight that's concentrated behind the clubface, to create more of an effortless momentum straight back and through your putting stroke. In other words, it helps keep the putter head on line during your stroke. This is a great putter style, particularly if your stroke resembles a pendulum, squarely moving in a straight line back and forth. If you have more of an open-and-close-the-gate-style stroke, in which you open the putter head back inside a little on the back stroke and then compensate by closing it on the forward stroke, you may benefit from a different style putter - perhaps with more of a blade-like head. Some of these latest models also have faces bearing groove patterns designed to help your putts forego skidding and instead impart instant roll on the ball. That will certainly help more putts drop. The bottom line is that you need to try them on the practice green first - before buying them - and see how they move you and the ball.

Where to start? Here are five suggestions:

Never Compromise NCX-RAY

If you want to putt with what may be the liveliest-yet-softest new putter, try this putter, which comes in a full mallet, geometry mallet, small mallet, and a blade with a plumber's neck. They're collectively wowing PGA Tour pros, including Vijay Singh and Joe Durant. Each model features "Suspended Face Technology," which includes a dual-density insert that uses isolated ribs that are embedded in a softer composite - providing dampened responsive feedback. One-fourth of the head weight is in the extremities, which helps increase stability for consistent ball velocity across the face. It feels simply awesome. A gray and red alignment feature makes for a consistent set-up and alignment.

\$149.99, clevelandgolf.com



TaylorMade Rossa Monza Spider Balero

This model is a distinctly shaped large mallet that prominently boasts what the company calls a "ball-in-cup" alignment feature in the rear, which works in conjunction with a white line on the crown. The high-MOI putter is made of stainless steel and has a soft polymer version of the company's proprietary AGSI insert. This helps your putts get rolling on a truer line quickly, so that you can sink more putts.

\$159, taylormadegolf.com

Nickent Golf PIPE Dream

This high-MOI model - the highest in Nickent's line -- features a face insert milled from anodized 7075 aluminum for a soft feel and sports an alternating groove design that lifts the ball at impact for a truer roll with less spin. It comes in double-bend mallet, center-shafted mallet and flare-tip mallet. New wings behind the heel and toe move the discretionary weight to the sides and the back, and have 8-gram weight plugs in each - enhancing stability through your stroke.

\$149, nickentgolf.com

Rife IMO

The title's "IMO" stands for "Inline Momentum," meaning that roughly 85 percent of the putter's head weight is focused down the centerline of the head, behind the hitting area. The result is a putter that has forward momentum on the stroke, guarding against deceleration. The shaft also helps create a face-balanced butter. The face features Rife's trademark Roll Groove Technology that's designed to get putts on an immediate true roll.

\$149.80, rifeputters.com

Ontic Golf M-Pulse Tri-Gold

This adjustable mallet boasts a down-the-line weighting and alignment bar, which puts more than half the head weight directly behind the ball. An adjustable weighting system provides three weight options of 350, 370 or 390 grams of head weight by placing the 20- or 40-gram weights into the back weight alignment bar. The putter is CNC-machined from aircraft-grade aluminum and has an adjustable lie

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\$149.80, rifeputters.com**Links****Ontic Golf M-Pulse Tri-Gold**

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\$249, onticgolf.com**Microfinance Empowers**

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Biography:

Scott Kramer, former senior editor of Golf Magazine, is a freelance golf equipment writer based in Carlsbad, Calif. - the unofficial capitol of the golf equipment industry. His work can be found on a regular basis in publications, such as T&L Golf, PGA Magazine, Met Golfer, Golf Tips and Private Clubs.

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