

## equipment+hot trend

By Scott Kramer, Contributing  
Equipment Editor

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## Hot Trend

### In the Palm of Your Hands

**Suggestions for selling more  
golf gloves range from  
inspecting them while giving  
lessons to bringing them out  
from behind the counter in  
your golf shop so members  
and customers can try them on**

**A**s fitting equipment has become so popular these days, it's only natural to think that a golf glove should also fit, well, like a glove. However, many consumers don't necessarily know how a glove should fit. To confuse matters, the taper and fit of gloves have changed over the years.

Thus, glove manufacturers have suggestions for PGA Professionals, who might be a little out-of-touch with the way the latest glove models should fit on a golfer's hand.

Jack Curry, vice president of sales and marketing at US Glove Company, says he's seen plenty of shop clerks mis-fit customers. He likes to look at fit from a golfer's perspective. "Gloves should fit snugly when they are first put on because all gloves will ease up a little with use," says Curry. "There should be no loose material, especially in the palm, that could fold over and cause irritation. A properly fitting glove should not creep up from the wrist when a fist is closed. If this happens, the glove is probably too small."

When one of your customers tries on a new glove – and trying it on in your shop is key, so that you don't face a return from an unhappy customer later on – the glove shouldn't be pulled on, which is a primary cause of glove failure, according to Curry. The fingers should be inserted first and then the thumb. At that point, the glove should be smoothed down to eliminate any wrinkles. The Velcro tab should be pulled across with the hand open and relaxed, so that the palm is snug but comfortable. When the club is gripped, the hand expands and the elastics at the side tension the palm more to provide maximum club feel.

Once the glove is on and the tab is fastened, "you should see about a quarter inch of Velcro remaining," says Maria Bonzagni, FootJoy's director of golf glove marketing. "Any more and the glove is most likely too tight; any less and the glove is probably too big. The closer the hand-to-glove fit, the greater the glove-to-club

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contact, grip and feel.

"Ultimately, however, it comes down to the customer's preference and how the glove feels. We also encourage consumers to grip a club while wearing the glove in order to see how the glove and club feel in their hand."

Sizes can vary from brand to brand, so a large in an Etonic isn't necessarily the same size as a FootJoy large.

Also, make sure your customers have realistic expectations as to how long the glove will stay effective. "A golfer's personal standards have a lot to do with how long a glove will last," says Curry. "Also, the materials selected affect a glove's longevity. A cheaper, thicker synthetic glove may well outlast a fine, thin leather glove, but not provide the sensitive club feel that most golfers want. To some, a dirty or slightly worn glove is not acceptable. Others will wear a glove until it totally fails."

Curry's recommendation is that a player should not use just one glove per round. "It's best to put in play two to three gloves during a round, especially if the golfer sweats excessively, so that a dry surface is maintained during the entire round," he explains. "It also alleviates excessive wear on one area of just one glove."

How many rounds should gloves last? A long-time performance standard has been 15 rounds."

Unfortunately, it's tough trying to judge a glove's quality by visually inspecting it. Golfers need to try them on or simply pick them up and feel them. But you can tell them confidently that if the material is soft and has some stretch, that's a good indication of quality. The palm surface shouldn't feel dry or slippery. Irregular sewing margins, particularly on the finger backs, are a warning that the glove may fail when stressed. Stitching should be straight and even, bearing a sewing margin of about 1.5mm. Not sewn properly, the fingers won't allow for a comfortable fit and may feel tight and restrictive.

To help sell more gloves in your shop, try changing your approach to merchandising. "A golf shop typically has gloves displayed behind the counter," says Curry. "Gloves are impulse items which the customers must 'scratch and sniff.' Successful shops merchandise them on racks or bins out where the customers can try them on, and feel and see the differences in materials/fit."

Multiple displays are a good idea – just because gloves are behind the counter doesn't

## this Just In

**S**rixon Sports will donate 5 percent of net proceeds from the sale of its camouflaged packaged golf products and accessories, or those featuring the USO logo, to the USO.... **Summit Golf Brands** has named Billy Draddy senior vice president,

## Ping unveils new clubs



**E**arlier this summer, Ping debuted its Anser irons. Next come the blade-style S56 players' irons (\$127.50/club with steel shaft). They boast a steel body design with variable tungsten toe weighting positions, machined face and grooves, and produce higher-launching long iron shots and more controlled, penetrating trajectories short-iron shots. These already helped Louis Oosthuizen capture the Open Championship, and they will hit retail shops by mid-September.

Also from Ping is the new K15 super game-improvement club. The 460cc all-titanium driver (\$337.50) is heel-weighted to help turn the clubface at impact, and help golfers who tend to slice. SFT is also present in the K15 fairway woods (\$222.50 each), which are larger and more forgiving than the company's popular G15. They boast an external weight pad and low profile, and are offered in 3-, 5- and 7-woods. The K15 hybrid-iron set (\$155/club with graphite shaft, \$1346.50/steel) contains steel 3H and 4H as well as optional 5H and 6H if preferred.

Also new from Ping is the Tour S wedge (\$157.50 w/Rustique finish, \$130/Brushed Silver Chrome finish). Machined face and grooves optimize spin, and a vertical Custom Tuning Port angles toward the back surface to increase perimeter weighting for more forgiveness.

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## Seven to Consider Stocking in Your Golf Shop

- **Bionic's Performance** (\$29.95) features a Triple Row Finger Grip for enhanced feel, maximum breathability and increased durability.
- **Callaway Ion X** (\$24.99) is made of premium AAA Cabretta, enhancing the feel and fit. It features a digitized chevron grip zone and motion control mesh, as well. But its main attraction is the ion-generating wristband that aims to ease aching.
- **Etonic's Perfect Fit** (\$18) features G>SOK design for a snug fit. It also has premium leather on the palm and index finger, microfiber back and Stabilizer Island Thumb.
- **FootJoy's SciFlex** (\$18) acquired fame during the Open Championship when winner Louis Oosthuizen marked a trigger-device red dot on it. The glove has a soft feel, features hand-crafted Taction APL leather, and is engineered to stay softer longer.
- **Nike's Tech Xtreme** (\$15) boasts lightweight textile in the back for extended motion range and breathability. Cabretta palm, index finger and thumb means a soft, supple feel. Lycra spandex in the fingers and thumb brings flexibility.
- **TaylorMade's Tour Preferred** (\$24.99) features ultra-thin Cabretta leather for soft feel and gripping ability. Sean O'Hair and Dustin Johnson both wear it, appreciating the Lycra pleats between the knuckles that enhance an ergonomic fit. A black ion interior cuff wicks moisture and enhances comfort.
- **U.S. Glove's Power Lock Grip** (\$18.99) has Poron shock-absorbing comfort pads throughout the palm and fingers. Celliant panels help increase hand circulation, while longfiber deerskin absorbs shock.





## equipment

ask **PGA Professionals**

Bill Abrams



Chris Adams



Bob Dolan



Virgil Herring



Jerry King



Nevin Phillips



Brady J. Wilson

**P**GA Magazine asks PGA Professionals: What's the best tip you've ever received to help you sell golf clubs?

■ **Bill Abrams**, PGA head professional, Balmoral Woods Country Club, Crete, Ill.: "The best advice I received years ago was to make equipment fitting part of my instruction program. Players come to me for my professional help with their swing and game, so not including proper equipment is foolish. We won't sell any irons unless they are custom fit. Proper fitting and instruction go hand-in-hand. If a fitter lacks the knowledge of proper swing mechanics, the fit may not be proper and could be just a band-aid. I'm on the range for all of our demo days, helping players and showing them why this equipment may or may not benefit their game."

"I create a level of trust and respect with our players, and this lends to their trust in my recommendations. I also keep an eye on all of my players' equipment and fit them as their game and swing changes."

■ **Chris Adams**, PGA head professional, Sunrise Country Club, Rancho Mirage, Calif.: "The best tip is to out-service the competition. For instance, we offer as many

demo days as possible. The more golf companies, the better. We put up posters (either provided by the golf companies or we make are own) and make announcements prior to the demo days. Having the golf companies come here makes it easier for our members to try all the latest equipment. A nice touch that my staff and I try to do is schedule lessons and be available for demo days."

"The one key that I've found where we can compete and sell more clubs than the off-course retailers is we follow up the demo days with phone calls to members, asking if everything is correct with the clubs. Once they've had a chance to play the new clubs, we then have the opportunity to support their purchase with lessons and clinics. By providing clubs that fit members, and offering professional services to assist with these new clubs, we're now 'customizing the sale' to further enhance the buying experience. Doing this ensures the members are happy with their purchase and the overall experience."

■ **Bob Dolan**, PGA head professional, Columbia Country Club, Chevy Chase, Md.: "Support companies that have substantial marketing budgets. If the company does not advertise on TV or in the

print media, don't bother stocking its clubs."

■ **Virgil Herring**, PGA director of instruction, Golf Institute at Gaylord Springs, Nashville, Tenn.: "The best tip I ever received was to suggest to the player that he try a different club during a lesson that I know will fit him better. Usually he starts hitting it better and then I tell him why I chose the club. From there, it's an easy sell."

■ **Jerry King**, PGA director of instruction, Kapalua Golf Academy, Maui, Hawaii: "The best tip I've ever received for selling golf clubs was to integrate subtle (yet impactful) instruction with expert clubfitting. Strategic guidance from an instructional point of view supports the perception that the clubs are producing enhanced results, when in fact it's the combination of the instruction, quality club fit and product. That's why a PGA instructor should outsell everyone else based on the ability to mix in rapid swing advice, along with personalized club specifications."

"Again, if the person's perception is that the club made the difference then the chance of sales goes up exponentially. Once that strategy is established, it's all about getting clubs in players' hands. In all my years of selling golf equipment,

there's been no better way to sell clubs than via PGA Professional-hosted demo days. A dynamic way to host a demo/fitting day is to have stations set up for full swing, wedge play and putting. This allows us to service a variety of customers: The player looking for an all-around fitting; the player who was thinking full swing only but is rewarded with wedge and putter fitting; the player looking to improve one particular section of equipment (driver, irons, wedge, or putter); and the player simply making an unplanned stop to check things out."

■ **Nevin Phillips**, PGA director of golf, Mahogany Run Golf Course, St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands: "If you want to be a good sales person, you should understand the basics about the product you are selling. I decided that I should take a clubfitting course, which has helped me excel in golf club sales. It's also provided me with more positive feedback from my students."

■ **Brady J. Wilson**, PGA director of golf, The Classic Club, Palm Desert, Calif.: "Offer custom fitting. Would you buy a \$1,000 suit without trying it on or getting fit by a tailor? Then why would you expect your guests to do that with golf equipment you're trying to sell to them?" ●

mean you can't have a second display on a table or in a basket, says Kent Wheeler, Etonic's director of sales and marketing. "It's always a good idea to take a few gloves out of the package, so they can be tried on," adds Wheeler. "Stock a glove that has the features and benefits your membership will appreciate and then show them why it is so good."

Jason Pardus, Nike Golf's U.S. retail experience manager, says he likes to merchandise gloves by performance aspect, so customers can see the breadth of the line. "It's also smart in key demographics to keep the winter gloves in close proximity, as conditions vary and tee

times vary, so expect different types of weather conditions and have the gear to support it," says Pardus.

Lessons also provide more opportunities for glove sales. Inspecting someone's glove during instruction sessions will reveal their swing habits and be helpful in recommending a new glove. If there are any heavily worn areas after a few rounds, the golfer's hands may be slipping during the swing. Wear around the thumb pad indicates the golfer may be extending the hand too far down the club shaft. Wear on the heel/palm suggests the person may be holding the club too close to the end. ■



## equipment

## Focus on Footwear

Spikeless,  
More Casual  
Shoes are  
Slowly  
Gaining  
Popularity

Regardless of the style, knowing the right basic questions to ask your members and customers will spark footwear sales

By Scott Kramer



Rarely is there a craze over golf shoes such as the one created back in April by Fred Couples and the skateboard-style Eccos he strolled around in at Augusta National.

But you never know what the future holds, and there will undoubtedly be hot upcoming footwear emerging for 2011. Which will catch the fire of popularity remains to be seen. But regardless, whether the shoes become extremely popular or not, it still takes some savvy to successfully sell them in your shop.

One thing the Couples shoe sensation did accomplish – aside from draw plenty of attention to Ecco and the golf footwear category – was spark debates over whether spikeless shoes will become more popular in the U.S., like they are throughout the rest of the world, and if this is the beginning of a trend of more casual-looking golf shoes.

There are blogs all over the web that include these discussions, and even one website completely devoted to the topic. That said, Ecco certainly didn't produce the first spikeless shoe to hit the mainstream. In recent years, mainstays such as FootJoy and adidas have offered teaching shoes bearing nubs on the outsole, while the likes of Etonic's G Sok and Puma's shoes with Smart Quill technology have each carved their niche of customers.

The spikeless business currently accounts for just three percent of the total U.S. market, according to the folks at Etonic. But in Japan, spikeless golf shoes account for roughly 40 percent of the market – the largest such market in the world, claim experts. That's because of how golf fits into the fabric of life there.

"Courses there are less accessible, so golfers spend more time on the range," says Dave Ortley, director of global footwear, accessories and gear at adidas Golf. "So they need the versatility of being able to wear a shoe to work, then ride on the train with them to the range, etc. And if



## this Just In

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creative director of Fairway & Greene and Zero Restriction....

**SeeMore Putter** expanded its milled CS Gunmetal series with the center-shafted mFGP blade and mFGP2 mallet (\$295 apiece) that are 100-percent milled and available in soft carbon steel with a proprietary

multilayer black gunmetal finish.... Online used-golf ball seller **GuaranteedGolfBalls.com** redesigned its website....

**Williams Sports** inked Blue Lotus to handle distribution of its golf equipment in Japan, and All Square Golf in Canada....

**TaylorMade-adidas Golf** renewed its supporting partner relationship with the Executive

Women's Golf Association.

Ryan Moore has begun playing a **Custom Machine** putter — TIG welded center-shaft model — from Dogleg Right....

Sears opened **Edwin Watts Golf Shops** inside two of its Maryland stores.... **Club Glove** has debuted an ultra-lightweight Sunday Bag.... **Bobby Jones Golf** introduced the SuperLite Series

drivers with a promise that the driver will add 15 yards to golfers with swing speeds of 85 mph or less. The driver has a triangular clubhead that allows the face to square easier at impact and help correct off-center hits; a 47-inch, 45-gram SuperLite shaft, and lightweight Winn grip.... **DnA Golf** CEO Howard Lindsay

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they play golf, then it turns out to be a 10-hour day wearing the shoes. So spikeless shoes make a whole lot of sense there.”

U.S. retailers, on the other hand, have been apprehensive in pushing spikeless models – although several larger chains have been reportedly merchandising them more aggressively this year, since the Masters. While golfers may never completely replace their cleats with non-cleat models, they do have some viable alternatives to choose from these days.

And many of today's golfers are simply much more knowledgeable about all types of shoes – those with and without cleats – by the time they arrive in your shop. Yes they price-shop, but they also tend to do their research up front. Much of that is done from the convenience of their home computer. Of course, there's plenty of information available online from both manufacturer websites and from individuals.

YouTube is full of “unboxing” videos, in which golfers provide video of themselves opening a fresh box of golf shoes and trying them on, all the while explaining what they're experiencing with respect to feel, smell and sight. While many people might consider this concept perplexing, there are apparently thousands of people watching these videos based on the number of viewers listed.

“People on these videos are essentially doing my job for me,” says Ortley. “They're telling fellow golfers what it's like to put on a pair of our shoes for the first time. It's kind of captivating.”

That added exposure is one of the reasons adidas is changing its internal and external packaging for 2011 – to make the whole shopping experience more attractive. To accommodate larger golf shops and sporting good stores that stack boxes atop one another along long walls, the company made all of its shoe boxes the same size this year, so that there's a uniform flushness to the way they stand out in a shoe wall. Large photos of the shoes on the box ends also stand out visually, as does the size and a color-coded system so that retailers and golfers can quickly tell which shoe family they're looking at.

“The product is fully exposed, looks clean and is accessible,” says Ortley. “This makes it welcoming and a positive, easy-to-shop experience. And it's very clean for salespeople, too. The inner packaging is more of a positive experience now, when you take the shoes out of the box, too.”

Because many sporting goods and specialty golf retailers are moving to this self-service shoe department style, that leaves an opportunity for green grass shops.

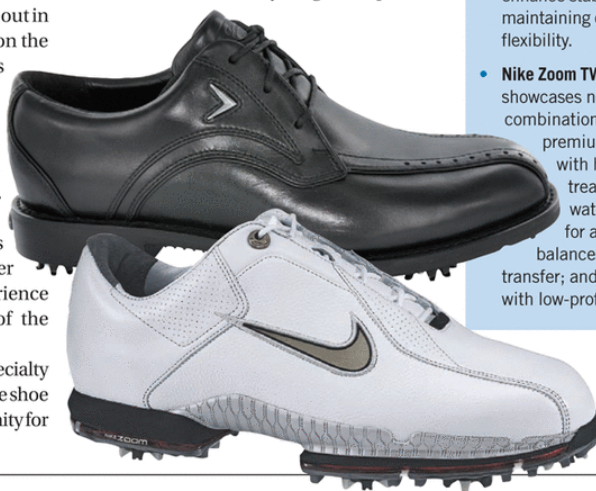
“It gives PGA Professionals an outstanding opportunity to improve their footwear business if they service the business well and sell the unique features and benefits of the footwear they have in their shop,” says Kent Wheeler, Etonic Worldwide's director of sales and marketing. “PGA Professionals need to look for footwear technology, performance and style that they can sell to their members.”

In fact, knowing your membership and their preferences is key in selling more footwear. Having a great selection within those preferences is, too. Perhaps the best way to sell more shoes in your shop is to simply ask customers the right basic questions. Are they walkers or golf car riders? If they're the former, steer them toward fatigue-reducing lightweight shoes with plenty of midsole cushioning. Are they concerned about swimming around inside their shoes? If so, state their need for stability, perhaps showing them low-profile shoes and models with underfoot cushioning. Do they play on a hilly or flat course, mostly in damp, early morning conditions? If so, steer them to a waterproof shoe with plenty of outsole traction. Do they wear prescription orthotics? If so, make sure they choose shoes with removable sockliner.

FootJoy is in the process of rolling out an online system to train retailers in selling footwear. It recently launched with modules on product education, brand messaging and selling tips and information. The first volume included a video on Shoe Fitting 101. It suggests to ask golfers simple questions, such as how often they play and if they've been fitted before – to build a base of knowledge and a sense of trust with customers. The video also shows how and when to properly fit someone, what to look for on their feet and street shoes for smarter golf shoe choices, and other tips for selling. Which will all come in handy when the next shoe craze hits your golf shop. ■

## Six to Sell

- **adidas Golf's Traction Lite FM** (\$79.99) is waterproof, ultralightweight, and boasts all-grip traction and stability in a fixed spike configuration. The ForMotion flexible heel absorbs impact for added comfort.
- **Callaway's high-end FT Chev Blucher** (\$229.99) boasts a soft and supple waterproof leather upper, and a Comfort Tech gel tongue that disperses lace pressure uniformly for more comfort. Like most 2011 Callaway shoes, this also features an Ortholite dual-density insert.
- **Ecco Golf's Street** (\$160) – the hybrid sport-casual shoe popularized at the 2010 Masters by Fred Couples – is offered in camel leather for 2011, in three colors. Its new “Second Skin” moisture-wicking and breathable lining is billed as the world's softest leather.
- **Etonic's new-for-2011, lightweight Stabilizer** (\$150) features an upgraded microfiber upper that won't stretch, so the fit is consistent from round to round. The new outlast temperature management system is keeps feet cool and dry by absorbing heat and reducing sweat. The Power Up outsole adds traction and balance.
- **FootJoy DryJoys Tour** (\$170) comes in January, blending traditional upper styling with edgy next-generation stability technology. The TPU-infused midsole/outsole components enhance stability while maintaining comfort and flexibility.
- **Nike Zoom TW 2011** (\$270) showcases new color combinations, each featuring premium full-grain leather with hydrophobic treatment that repels water; TPU sidewall for added stability and balance during weight transfer; and lightweight heel with low-profile cushioning.



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# new equipment

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announced that the Royal & Ancient ruled that DnA's new detachable-face Alpha 610 driver conforms with the Rules of Golf. The driver also conforms with USGA rules.

**The U.S. Golf Manufacturers Anti-Counterfeiting Working Group** reported that the Beijing Hadian District Court found five individuals guilty of attempting to sell counterfeit golf equipment to golf stores, including the Beijing World Famous Golf Store and the Beijing Te Qi Qiao International Commerce Center....

**Adams Golf** has debuted the Speedline 4G Ultra-Lite driver (\$379.99) that combines lightweight materials and aerodynamic technology. It weighs just 282 grams, including the 44-gram, 46-inch Mitsubishi Rayon Bassara UL Falcon shaft....

**Golf Pride** added two designs to the V-RAD Rivalry Putter Grip line, in the style of the U.S. and European flags....

**Callaway** has introduced the Hyperbolic XL shoe (\$169.99) with Clarino DS-30 Microfiber lightweight and enviro-friendly upper, moisture wicking linings, Outlast temperature management, Ortholite Dual Density insert, and Comfort Tech gel tongue; as well as the Bio Kinetic Tour shoe (\$159.99), which the company touts as having the best comfort technology and most advanced traction system in golf. Both will be available on Nov. 1.

Golf simulator company **aboutGolf** has named Robert R. Ryan chairman/CEO. Former CEO Bill Bales stays on in the role of founder.... **Etonic Worldwide** named Ken Maly its new El Paso and New Mexico sales rep.... **NIVO** introduced its first-ever women's outerwear collection for 2011, featuring vibrant colors and European styling in five styles.... **Dixon Golf** has debuted the Fire golf ball (\$74.95/dozen) that features an Elastodynamic recyclable cast urethane cover, 318 tour-precision dimple pattern, and energy-intensifying mantle. ●

# Late-Summer Sizzle

**Adams, TaylorMade, Sunice and Srixon introduce a new driver, golf balls and a pullover**

The past couple of months have been particularly slow for new product introductions. But that hasn't stopped Adams Golf, TaylorMade, Sunice and Srixon from recently debuting new gear. And in a market thirsty for exciting, fresh product, these are likely to satisfy as fall rapidly approaches.



The fourth Adams Speedline driver model to hit the market in 20 months, the **Speedline 9064LS driver** (\$479.99) has refined aerodynamic shaping that strives for less drag and more distance. Improved launch conditions mean lower spin and more forgiveness, as well.

TaylorMade's soft-feeling **Burner Tour ball** (\$22/dozen) sports a new softer cover and large, low-compression core – for plenty of spin performance around the green (15 percent more spin on 30-yard shots, compared to the current Burner ball). Meanwhile, it keeps driver spin low so tee shots fly longer.



Sunice's **Olie Superlite** (\$100) is a lightweight quarter-zip pullover with a Poly/Spandex blend for full freedom of movement. Featuring contrast flat lock stitching details, reflective zipper tape and a framed chest pocket, it's ideal for cool, damp mornings.

Srixon's new **SoftFeel 2010 ball** (\$19.99/dozen) outdoes its predecessor for tee-shot distance, soft feel and greenside spin. Its dimple pattern lowers drag and improves lift, so you won't balloon shots. Compression is also reduced.

For expanded coverage on new products, log onto [www.PGAmagazine.com](http://www.PGAmagazine.com) for weekly updates

