

By Scott Kramer, Contributing Equipment Editor

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## Hot Trend

### Scouting the Competition

Spending time at other nearby facilities will provide you with a competitive advantage

Anyone driving along Interstate 5 just south of the “Y”, as the I-405 connector is known in Southern California, over the past 20 years has seen unbridled sprawl. But there’s now a deep orange, 40,000-square-foot building on this stretch of the Irvine skyline, which serves as the new home of Golfsmith Xtreme, the state’s largest golf and tennis superstore.

Billed as an interactive playground, it features a nine-bay, extended-flight indoor driving range with state-of-the-art launch monitors for clubfitting via a partnership with GolfTEC; a massive selection of products from every brand name you can think of; a huge indoor putting green; three virtual reality custom fitting studios; a low-price guarantee; and oh yeah, in-store PGA teaching professionals.

## this Just In

**Callaway Golf** has formed Callaway Golf India, a new wholly-owned subsidiary, and also announced an agreement with Jeev Milkha Singh, the highest ranked Indian golfer in the world, who has played Callaway equipment for years and now serves as Callaway Golf India’s brand ambassador....

**Scheyden Precision Eyewear** premiered its Fixed Hybrid collection of sunglasses (\$259 - \$309) for golf with a full-coverage wrap design.... **PowerBilt** has debuted Air Force One – Air Foil irons, featuring clubheads that are filled with nitrogen gas, and an Air Foil driver (\$349.99/Tour, \$299.99/high-MOI) with forged head construction, low CG, and a

square face angle at address.... **UST Mamiya** has named Patrick Dempsey as a PGA Tour representative, and Michael Guerrette the company’s senior director of research and development.... Jeff Quinney inked a one-year endorsement deal with **Cleveland Golf**. The company also named David Hunter director of field

marketing.... Retief Goosen became the first player to swap out the face on his 54- and 60-degree **TaylorMade** TP xFT wedges.

**Nike Golf** has debuted the Victory Red (VR) Hybrids (\$203.99 apiece) with an ultra thin clubface and Split Compression Channel.... **Fujikura**  
*continued on next page*

TOP LEFT, COURTESY OF GOLF SMITH INTERNATIONAL



Eric Lohman, PGA director of golf at Oak Creek Golf Club in Irvine, roughly four miles north of the superstore. "Some of our managers have been there already, and I have heard it is quite impressive.

"Considering the competition we already face in the market, from the big-box stores to the many other green-grass stores within 30 miles of here, we are not all that concerned with the new competition. We will continue to focus on our strengths – providing superb personal service to our 1,500-plus members and 100 or more annual tournament groups, impulse sales to our 50,000-plus annual golfers, outdoor grass hitting area for our clubfitting services, competitive pricing, and course-goed apparel."

**"When we can't service a client, we will have no reservation sending customers to Golfsmith, as we feel they will send their golfers to us in return."**

**—Eric Lohman,  
PGA director of golf, Oak Creek  
Golf Club, Irvine, Calif.**

Lohman says he also plans on working with the new store, with respect to referrals. "When we can't service a client, we will have no reservation sending customers to Golfsmith, as we feel they will send their golfers to us in return," he says.

When you stop and think about it, your competition is everywhere. When people walk into that Golfsmith store, they're experiencing something beyond just a large inventory and low prices. They're also walking into the whole technology and instruction arena, as well. Whether or not you have a Golfsmith-style mega-store in your area, chances are there is someone around your community offering a course to play, clubs to buy, apparel to wear, a range to hit on, discounted greens fees, instruction, and a clubfitting experience. Anyone aspiring to be significant in the golf marketplace these days should really be into clubfitting.

Point is: You can be smart by sending some of your staffers, including yourself, to see what the local golf discount shops are doing, how they're striking deals and what kind of services they're offering. Take some of them up on a clubfitting session, and see what kind of information and style they're presenting. One savvy PGA Professional told us recently that he perpetually scours his area's competitors to stay on

"We wanted to make our new Irvine store the kind of place golfers and tennis players don't want to leave," says Martin Hanaka, Golfsmith's president and CEO. "Our superstore format is about giving people hands-on experience, expertise and, of course, great selection. Our purpose is to improve our customers' games and help them enjoy their sports more than ever before."

Question: Would you be prepared if this type of facility opened up in your neighborhood? You would need to have some kind of game plan, to help counter the nearly guaranteed defection of business, right? Or maybe you'd just need to be proactive, according to one PGA Professional who was personally thrust into the situation. In other words, if you can't beat it, you'd better learn to quickly embrace it.

"We certainly are aware of the new Golfsmith store and consider it to be strong competition for the like items we both sell," says

## this Just In

*continued from previous page*

**Golf** introduced the enso 3D clubfitting system that uses advanced motion tracking and biomechanical performance technologies. It can measure the performance of the shaft before impact, as well as swing efficiency, showing golfers if their grip, shaft or clubhead is helping or hurting swing efficiency.... The U.S. Golf Manufacturers Anti-Counterfeiting Working Group reported that the Shanghai Huangpu District People's Court sentenced a retail shop owner to serve a seven-month jail term and pay a fine after being convicted of selling counterfeit golf equipment.... **Wilson Golf** has signed Paul Lawrie as a Staff Advisory Member.... **Dawgs Golf** debuted its Ultralite Golf Spirit shoes for men and women.... **Bettinardi Golf** has inked Brian Gay to an endorsement deal.... **Eaton Corporation** introduced the revamped Golf Pride Tour Wrap 2G grips, with enhanced tackiness and softness.

**Fourteen Golf** appointed Greg Gersen to expand its market in the Pacific North West territory. The company also announced its new MT-28 V5 wedge with a reverse taper design, plus a groove strategically located between the sole and blade that helps move the CG to a higher, more stabilizing position.... **LT Golf** debuted the EazyBag (\$199) that features a rubber club holder that keeps clubs in place on top and bottom with a soft yet secure hold of the shafts.... **FootJoy** has inked Geoff Ogilvy to a multi-year endorsement agreement.... **Etonic Worldwide** named Kent Wheeler director of sales and marketing for its golf division.... **SeeMore Putter Company** debuted the offset mSeries DB4 (\$325) blade putter with platinum finish and RST2 alignment technology. It's also available in 100 percent milled carbon steel with a multi-layer black satin finish, called mSeries CS Gunmetal Black, for \$295. SeeMore also debuted five SiSeries putters

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## ask PGA Professionals

**P**GA Magazine asks PGA Professionals: What new piece of golf equipment for 2010 are you most excited about and why?

■ **Chad Cockerham**, PGA head professional, Otter Creek Golf Course, Columbus, Ind.: "I'm most excited about the Callaway FT Tour driver. With a slightly smaller head, open face, and classic look at address, this driver just begs to be hit!"

■ **Cary Cozby**, PGA head professional, Wichita (Kan.) Country Club: "I am really interested to see how the USGA groove ruling affects everyone other than the Tour. Specifically, I'm curious to see how it affects their scores!"

■ **Steven David**, PGA head professional, Brackett's Crossing Country Club, Lakeville, Minn.: "I am excited about the new Ping 4 Under golf bag. The sleek design, color options, durable stand and functionality of the bag should help to create excitement among my 'walking' membership. I am happy that Ping has entered the lightweight bag market with a product that will offer value and an additional option for the membership."

■ **Bill Flood Jr.**, PGA head professional, Rock Ridge Country Club, Newtown, Conn.: "The TaylorMade TP xFT wedge with the removable face will be awesome. I think the public will be caught up in technology and it has a story to tell for the retailer. It's a win-win!"

■ **Darrin Helfrick**, PGA general manager of golf and spa operations, Doral Golf Resort and Spa, Miami, Fla.: "Our assistants are collectively excited about Nike's VR woods and Method putters, as Nike is introducing a great classic-looking line of woods and a new putter series that gets the ball rolling much sooner. Also, we're interested in: TaylorMade xFT wedges with the interchangeable face; Titleist's Scotty Cameron California Series; Callaway's Diablo and Diablo

forged irons which both look to be a great addition to the company's already strong line of iron sets; and Callaway's Solaire Series for ladies, as well as the Solaire ball, all of which makes buying a high-quality ladies set in a very attractive bag a piece of cake."

■ **Virgil Herring**, PGA director of instruction, Golf Institute at Gaylord Springs, Nashville, Tenn.: "I am most excited about trying all of the new left-handed blades from Callaway, Mizuno, Titleist, and Nike. The lefties can finally rejoice in some classic-looking blades. I am interested to see how well True Temper's Project X driver shafts perform, and I'm curious if the interchangeable TaylorMade wedge faces sacrifice any feel. I'm very interested in the comparison of the Callaway i(s) and i(z) and the TaylorMade Penta balls. I'm curious if the new balls will sacrifice distance for more spin."

■ **Don Hurter**, PGA head professional, Castle Pines Golf Club, Castle Rock, Colo.: "I really am impressed with the Callaway FT-iZ driver. It's really an easy club to hit straight, and it takes no effort at all."

■ **Jeff Kiddie**, PGA head professional, Aronimink Golf Club, Newtown Square, Pa.: "I'm most looking forward to the new Cobra ZL and S2 drivers. They look fantastic and with adjustable hosels at this price point, I think they will be a big hit."

■ **Jerry King**, PGA director of instruction, Kapalua Golf Academy, Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii: "I am most excited about TaylorMade's new TP xFT wedge with the removable face. What a great new technology and product. As a PGA Professional, it provides me excellent benefits: The ability to change out non-conforming grooves when playing in events requiring the new conforming grooves (i.e. U.S. Open qualifiers, PGA Tour qualifiers, etc.). This new technology also allows me to maintain my custom sole grind by simply changing out the face. The

thought of bringing in fresh new grooves for tournament play is exciting. There's no need to bring in a new wedge since I only need to swap in a new face. During the SBS Championship here in January, Retief Goosen made the comment that he only needs one wedge and five faces for the entire year on Tour!"

■ **Eric Lohman**, PGA director of golf, Oak Creek Golf Club, Irvine, Calif.: "The Nike Method putter. I'm excited about the fact that it's been out with PGA Tour professionals for a while and is just coming out to consumers now. Lucas Glover and Stewart Cink won majors with it in 2009, and you can tell those guys are putting well with it.

The technology sounds very interesting – keeping the ball rolling very fast. I spoke with a high-level player who used it and loved it, and said that other Tour pros were testing it and thought it performed very well. You have the buzz about it, it looks really cool, and then you have Tour guys saying they test really well. Its one thing when a company brags about a product, but quite another if independent guys on the PGA Tour like it.

I'm also looking forward to adjustable fairway woods, and I also am excited about the fact that we're going back to smaller heads on some of the new drivers. Most of the PGA Tour professionals aren't using big-headed drivers, but consumers don't really know that."

■ **Cliff Wagner**, PGA head professional, Oakbourne Country Club, Lafayette, La.: "We are excited about the new Callaway FT Tour authentic, as well as all Callaway and Titleist products. It is the game-

improvement changes to the products that I'm most excited about, and it should help in trying to get good players, as well as average players, to use the new technology."

■ **Trey Walewski**, PGA director of golf, Kanon Valley Country Club, Oneida, N.Y.: "It's all about the grooves in 2010. I am not sure if I am excited, but I am more curious as to how the new groove rule will affect the sale of wedges." ●



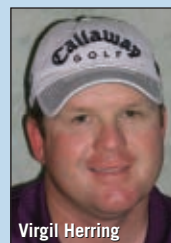
Chad Cockerham



Cary Cozby



Steven David



Virgil Herring



Don Hurter



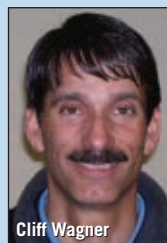
Jeff Kiddie



Jerry King



Eric Lohman



Cliff Wagner



Trey Walewski

top of everything going on. He accepted one clerk's invitation to get fitted for a driver, and quickly realized that the clerk had no idea what he was talking about and was freely handing out mis-information as if it was fact. Thus, this PGA Professional was able to use that information to his advantage and spread the word.

Likewise, you also need to know what all of the other green-grass facilities are doing in your community. See what they're selling and how they're merchandising their goods. Play their courses and see the conditions, and what kinds of messages are popping up on the in-cart GPS. Get on their e-mail lists and see what shows up in your in-box. Ask golfers what they like and dislike about playing there. You never know what kind of insight and edge you'll gain from a day at another facility. Be perceptive, watch and listen. You will learn something to help your own business, guaranteed. Don't ever underestimate the competition.

Mike Bender, the 2009 PGA Teacher of the Year and one of the nation's top instructors, advises fellow teaching professionals who are just starting out to visit successful operations in their area. "Call and ask if you can come watch them teach," he suggests. "Like most teachers, I love to give younger teachers that chance as a way to give back to the sport. I always wonder what they're taking away from it. I tell them to watch me teach, but really pay attention to how

the business runs, as opposed to the philosophy of what we teach."

Then do additional research on what other teachers are doing, what they're charging for lessons, and what kinds of instruction programs they're offering. Perhaps you can identify needs that aren't being met – maybe no one is offering putting lessons or putter fittings.

**"Like most teachers, I love to give younger teachers that chance (to watch me teach) as a way to give back to the sport."**

**—Mike Bender, 2009 PGA Teacher of the Year**

Finally, if you're at a resort course, visit new hotels in your area and see if they're referring golfers to your course. Ask to see a room, which can help you check out what the latest linens, pillows, bathroom amenities, carpet and décor they're using – and help you assess if your resort needs an upgrade, to prevent it from being deemed as "dated" by the competition.

In other words, you have to be aware of what's going on at all possible levels in your area, not just how much they're charging for golf balls. Chances are, your competition has checked you out recently, too. So challenge yourself and your staffers to stay ahead of the curve. ■

## The PGA Membership & Golf Digital Directory Set for Spring Launch



The *PGA Membership & Golf Directory* is recognized as one of the most important membership benefits by PGA Professionals. In Spring 2010, the directory will be launched in a new digital format available for all PGA members and apprentices.

- The digital directory will be available to all PGA Professionals and Apprentices (over 28,000), and will be promoted in *PGA Magazine*, accessible on [PGAMagazine.com](http://PGAMagazine.com) (the leading on-line source for golf industry news) and accessible on [PGALinks.com](http://PGALinks.com) (the official website for PGA members)
- Over 96 percent of PGA Professionals use the *PGA Membership & Golf Directory* regularly, consulting it for PGA information an average of 7.2 times per month
- Member search function of every PGA Professional: name, status, club affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address
- A second member search function of every PGA-managed golf facility in America
- A comprehensive Industry Suppliers Directory
- Complete PGA membership, benefits and section information

**For more information on advertising opportunities with the *PGA Membership & Golf Directory*, contact Patrick Cherry at 215-914-2071 or email [pcherry@pgamagazine.com](mailto:pcherry@pgamagazine.com).**



# Focus on Fairway Woods

## and Hybrids

### Market Metamorphosis

Rapid changes include adjustable fairway woods, the latest driver-style technology

By Scott Kramer



Peruse the latest lot of fairway woods and hybrids, and you'll quickly realize that things are changing. There are adjustable fairway woods, for one. Then there's all of the other driver-style technology, such as draw bias, hot clubfaces, and high-MOI construction. And how about the fact that one in every five iron sets sold these days have hybrids at the long end? The metamorphosis of this market segment has occurred quite abruptly. And that should affect sales in your shop.

Last year, the fairway wood market suffered. Several companies were offering a free fairway wood with the purchase of a driver – as a throw-in. One PGA Professional told us that many of the members who purchased one of these earmarked drivers told the shop to keep the fairway wood or give it away to a charity. Translated: They couldn't even give these things away.

"The free fairway wood promos were very detrimental to the health of the golf club industry, in general," says Mark Christensen, Cleveland Golf's senior product manager. "Fairway woods are typically the highest margin wood product for OEMs. By giving them away, OEMs have to absorb not only the physical cost of the fairway wood, but the lost 'potential' margin from the sale of a fairway wood that likely would have occurred had it not been given to the consumer for free. I assume the 2010 unit forecast for fairway woods to be flat compared to 2009. I just hope that all of these units are sold instead of given away."

So is it just that golfers don't upgrade their fairway woods often, or is it that the 2009 offerings weren't that attractive to consumers?

TaylorMade seemed to have no problem selling its new models. "We had a good year in 2009 with the R9, the only adjustable fairway wood in the market, which is currently the No. 1-selling premium fairway wood in terms of market

#### this Just In

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featuring thermoplastic face inserts that feel soft and have lower rebound characteristics.... **Utopia Golf Products** has named Jim Hames director of sales.

**Excel Golf** will provide its products to The First Tee Chapter network.... **Izzo Golf** has debuted its next-generation SWAMI 1500

Golf GPS (\$99.99) with improved firmware, auto-shut off feature to preserve battery life, and low-charge alert.... **Club Car**

introduced Visage, a mobile golf information system that utilizes global positioning, wireless and cellular technology to deliver 3-D flyover visuals, driving stats, weather alerts, distance to the pin and tee-time booking options and

displays it all to golfer on the cart screen.... The 2010 **Sunice** outerwear line includes the men's Hurricane collection, which is highlighted by the ultra-quiet Ultimate Jacket V2 with a lightweight Gore-Tex two-layer performance shell, Ultimate V2 Pant with exposed waterproof YKK zippers, Carnegie GORE-TEX PacLite Pullover, and ultra-

lightweight Karumba GORE-TEX PACLITE Pant with cinching system.... **Graphite Design** debuted its new Tour AD DI - DEEP IMPACT shaft, which has been integrated with a new nanotechnology material in the tip section that creates optimal launch and spin conditions, for increased accuracy and distance.

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share dollars,” says Tom Olsavsky, TaylorMade’s senior director of product creation.

“We expect to continue to do well in 2010. Sales volume will depend more on market economics than anything else.”

There are several new models that will undoubtedly continue to pique interest. Many are extensions of familiar line names, such as Cobra S2, Callaway Diablo Edge, TaylorMade Burner, Cleveland Launcher DST and Adams Speedline FAST 10. That should spur sales as golfers will see the driver or irons of the same name, then naturally ponder matching fairway woods. You’re also seeing a push this year to make fairway woods easier to hit. The latest lot includes the likes of shorter shafts that still play as if they’re longer – for more distance; higher lofts; material combinations that lower the CG, to help the ball get airborne more quickly; and more versatile sole shapes that help the club not get caught up in turf at impact, so it enhances the crispness of impact with the ball.

As for hybrids, companies are pleased with how unit sales are relatively holding their own, in general. “The hybrid market has certainly dropped in the past year, but I frankly thought it would drop even more than it has,” says Christensen. “By now, just about everyone has one or two hybrids in their bag, so now we’re looking at consumers trying to upgrade or replace their existing hybrids.

“The hybrid replacement market moves much more similarly to iron set replacement than driver/fairway replacement. On average, consumers don’t replace their irons very often (every three-six years) whereas driver/fairway replacement is much more common (every one-three years). Likely because hybrids are typically used to replace irons, consumers don’t think about replacing them until they think about new irons.”

And that’s a large reason you’re seeing more hybrid-iron sets for sale this year – as they appeal to consumers who’ve already independently replaced their low irons with hybrids, and are now back in the hunt for new irons.

“It’s easier and more cost-effective for them to find a combo set that they like rather than buy a 5-PW iron set and then find two or three hybrids that don’t necessarily match the irons and cost significantly more,” says Christensen. “You will see this combo set market continue to grow for this reason. However, single-digit handicappers will likely continue to buy irons separately from hybrids. They are more likely to want low irons in their bag for workability and low trouble shots. Higher handicappers aren’t as adept at these shots and have little reason to keep their low irons.

“Also, hybrids designed for combo sets typically target higher handicappers in look and

## seven to Try

- **Adams’ high-MOI, thin-faced Speedline FAST 10 fairway woods** (\$299.99) have sole curvature for cleaner ball striking, and strategically placed weight pads to optimize flight. A Draw version is also being offered with a weight pad in the heel.
- **Callaway’s Diablo Edge high-MOI hybrids** (\$139-\$159) improve stability from last year’s model thanks to several features, including a wide, shallow profile and a low, deep CG. A Tour version has a slightly forward CG, producing a boring flight for higher swing speeds.
- **Cleveland’s Launcher DST fairway woods** (\$179) have a “low-drag” sole that improves ball contact, and lower weighting that helps the ball get up higher.
- **Cobra’s Baffler Rail H hybrid** (\$169) has a thin, maraging steel face insert, strong loft, and dual-rail sole. A matching Baffler Rail F fairway metal is coming soon with a small clubhead, a slightly shorter shaft, and a rail sole.
- **Nike’s STR8-FIT Tour fairway woods** (\$299.99) feature adjustable face-angle technology, a red split compression channel on the sole, and an ultra-thin steel face.
- **TaylorMade’s Burner SuperFast 17-4 steel fairway woods** (\$199) have an aerodynamic clubhead shape, a light 301-gram overall weight, slightly long shaft, and a deep face.
- **Titleist 909F2/F3 fairway woods** (\$200-\$225) The F2 has a round profile and larger, extended clubface help yield a higher launch with mid spin. The F3 bears a pear profile and small-and-deep clubface, delivering mid launch with low spin.

performance. Purchasing hybrids separately from the iron set allows lower handicappers to better individualize the hybrids to fit the needs of their more refined game.”

Callaway is one such company banking on that thought, as it has introduced the Diablo Edge irons in two configurations. “We are one of the companies pushing hybrid-iron sets this year, as our Diablo Edge line is offered in an eight-piece (two hybrids and six irons) combo set as well as the traditional 3-PW set,” says Tim Buckman, Callaway Golf’s director of public relations. “The combo sets provide greater distance and accuracy for golfers who struggle to hit their long irons consistently well. We are seeing less 3- and 4-irons in play nowadays, even on Tour.”

That type of packaging will most certainly boost sales of hybrids in the future, regardless of if they’re bought by themselves or as part of a set. “Hybrids have been fairly stable at 20 percent of the market for the last four or five years,” says TaylorMade’s Olsavsky. “However, prices are dropping some in response to promotional activities, some due to saturation of the market.

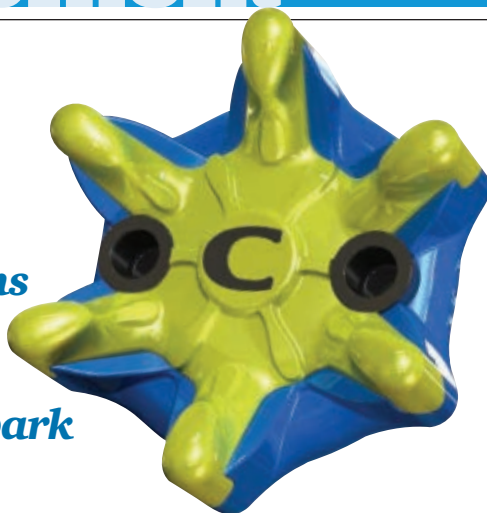
“We do find that many golfers don’t switch their hybrids as often as other clubs, and many are still playing older versions because they work so well. But we have seen more movement every year away from the traditional sets. Most large retailers suggest mixed sets now account for 20 percent or more of their iron business.” ■



# Spring Is in the Air

*The latest introductions from Champ, FootJoy, Odyssey and Adams Golf can spark early-season sales*

After the winter layoff, golfers are finally returning to your facility. The latest products from Champ, FootJoy, Odyssey and Adams Golf are bound to help ease them into the new season.



Champ's **Zarma spikes** (\$14.99/pack) are made of a three-material design, in which a soft cushion layer is sandwiched between a durable traction layer and a rigid attachment layer. All three are held together with advanced polymer molding techniques that helps soften the impact of walking.

FootJoy's **SPIDR2 glove** (\$15) combines water resistant leather on the entire palm and fingers; soft, breathable stretch material throughout the back of the hand and along the fingers; and PowerNet mesh in the base area of the thumb and back.

The new Odyssey **Black Series Tour Designs milled putters** (\$269) sport a black finish, Advanced Roll Technology for precise

response and true roll, and a urethane dampening layer between the head and the tungsten flange, which enhances feel. They're milled from soft 1025 carbon steel.

Adams Golf's new **Idea a7OS 14-piece premium set for women** (\$899.99) includes an aerodynamic titanium driver, three low-profile fairway woods, Idea a7OS Hybrid Irons (4-SW), a mallet-style putter and a cart bag in a choice of three designs.



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It's available in weights of 50, 60, 70 and 80 grams.

**STX** added the ProFIT 6 Mallet putter (\$199) to its line that features interchangeable faces and weights.... **Adams Golf** debuted the Idea a7OS Senior Integrated Set (\$899.99) for moderate swing speeds, and includes an aerodynamic driver, two low-profile fairway woods, Idea a7OS Hybrid Irons (4-SW), mallet-style putter and cart bag.... **TaylorMade** has

debuted the 460cc, high-MOI Burner SuperFast driver (\$299) that weighs 284 grams, helping deliver more clubhead speed and distance. The company also unveiled the 460cc R9 SuperTri driver (\$399-\$499, depending on shaft) that combines three movable weights and adjustable face angle technology.... **True Temper** has

introduced its Performance Fitting Center (PFC) Program in which dealers can receive first-to-market opportunities, exclusive access to its products, and members-only use of its ShaftFit Pro online fitting system. ●

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