

THEY NEED FOR SPEED

by Scott Kramer



Titleist
909D
Series

Without question, golfers deem their driver to be the sexiest piece of golf equipment in their bag. That's because you hit your longest shots with the driver. Potentially, it offers you the bragging rights of your foursome. Stiff an 8-iron from 140 yards and you may get some soon-forgotten respect. But pound a tee shot 25 yards beyond everyone else—even just once—and you're an instant legend.

Perhaps that's why driver manufacturers seemed to especially embrace that "more distance is a good thing" concept this year for the slower swingers among us, who can't quite yet master a 300-yard tee shot. They incorporated several of the latest lightweight materials, streamlined clubhead shapes, and newfangled manufacturing processes into their respective products that will help you gain both clubhead speed and yardage.

The more clubhead speed you achieve, the faster the ball leaves the tee and the further it travels. The general rule of thumb: For every three miles per hour you increase clubhead speed, you'll get an extra yard of distance.

Accuracy and forgiveness are nice side benefits, too. Because many of the latest drivers have increased Moment of Inertia (MOI)—a buzz term for clubhead stability—you'll find many of your mis-hits reacting off the clubface as if they were struck on the money. All of this is particularly helpful for players with slower swing speeds who can't generate enough distance to keep up with the other members of their foursome.

So which models should you consider?

The answer ultimately comes down to personal preference. But trying a few demo models always helps start the process. See which one looks best to you, as you're standing over it. As you swing, pay attention to how the clubhead feels both during the backswing and at impact. Once you decide on your utopian driver, try it with a few different shafts to zero in on the best ball flight.

One final piece of advice: Several brands offer various drivers. For instance, Titleist's 909D Series consists of three models – the Comp, D3, and the PGA Tour-popular D2 – that differ slightly in appearance, as well as in the launch trajectory and ball spin they produce. Then there's PING, which offers the G15 driver for golfers seeking forgiveness and the i15 for those who want to work the ball. Point is, if you have your heart set on any particular label, you still have some viable options and will need to test out the various models.

Adams Speedline FAST 10

Sleeker and more forgiving than the original Speedline, this version generates a slightly higher launch angle with lower spin for more distance. It also has 10-percent less aerodynamic drag—a byproduct of the crown's streamlined shaping on the heel and toe outside scoops—which speeds up the clubhead.

Callaway FT-iz

Billed as Callaway's longest and straightest driver ever, its aerodynamic triangular body yields 11-percent less drag than last year's FT-iQ. That means increased ball speed and distance. Localized weight at the front and rear adds stability and optimizes shot consistency.

Cleveland Launcher DST

This lightweight driver hardly tips the scales at 292 grams, translating to faster clubhead speed. The Mitsubishi Diamana shaft—which is a quarter-inch longer than standard—also increases clubhead speed by sheer leverage.

Cobra ZL

Using the company's Adjustable Flight Technology hosel to alter face angle, this 455-cc model sports a carbon composite crown and sole, 6-4 titanium clubhead body and clubface, milled rhombus laser-welded face insert, thin perimeter area, and a swingweight screw in the sole that helps balance the clubhead with the shaft.

Nike Golf VR-STR8-FIT Tour

With 32 face angle options, this adjustable driver can help any golfer find their preferred ball flight—and the fairway. A compression channel in the sole helps produce faster ball speed from shots hit across the entire clubface.

TaylorMade R9 SuperTri

The 460-cc, deep-faced clubhead features an adjustable hosel sleeve and three movable weights, giving golfers the ability to adjust both side-to-side dispersion and flight trajectory. The crown shape reduces wind resistance for extra distance, clubhead walls are ultra-thin to make the clubhead lighter, and the standard Fujikura Motore 60-gram shaft helps launch the ball higher.

Tour Edge Exotics XCG3

This 460-cc titanium driver features 28 grams of tungsten sole weights and an amorphous light-and-strong carbon crown. Its cup face's thin outer edges create a large sweet spot and generate fast launch speed and long distance from all across the clubface.



TaylorMade
R9 SuperTri

Freelance golf writer Scott Kramer lives in Carlsbad, Calif., the capital of the golf equipment world. Thus, he was able to preview all the latest drivers for ClubLink Life. "These models are pretty powerful," says Kramer, who also writes for PGA Magazine, Golf Tips and Met Golfer. "A lot of them will instantly make average golfers longer off the tee."



Callaway
FT-iz