

# Gut Check

Belly putters are riding a wave of popularity, and companies are clamoring to get their models to market **BY SCOTT KRAMER**

**L**isten up, all you closet long putter fans. It's okay to reveal yourselves now. Those oversized flatsticks are no longer just for old guys with ailing backs and shaky nerves. They're simply cool. This is especially true for belly putters, which allow you to anchor the grip against your body, aim, and fire. It's so easy that plenty of Tour pros considered it cheating—and some still do. Now, however, the craze has gone mainstream and appears here to stay.

The year of the long putter began at the Masters, when Adam Scott—young, healthy, and with a steady stroke—used one to tie for second place. Scott then won the Bridgestone Invitational in August, a week before Keegan Bradley took the PGA Championship with a belly model, which was a week before Webb Simpson won using a belly putter at the Wyndham Championship (and then won again). And it certainly helped when Phil Mickelson swapped to a belly-length Odyssey—a left-handed replica of Bradley's Sabertooth model with a White Hot XG insert—at September's Deutsche Bank Championship, and raved about all the short putts he could suddenly sink with it.

Once Mickelson switched, Callaway (which owns Odyssey) was inundated by retailers calling on behalf of their customers who wanted to know where they could find that magical putter. Prob-

lem was, the Mickelson model was not mass-produced. In fact, despite all of the requests, Callaway officials are still not sure if they're adding it to Odyssey's 2012 lineup.

That's not to say you can't enjoy some great new long putters that are now hitting the marketplace. Before you buy, though, you need to know how to find the best long model for your stroke.

The best idea is to get fitted by your pro or other certified instructor, just as you would with any other putter. Remember that the conventional putting stroke you've used until now will be far different than the stroke you'll use with a belly or long putter. As you learn and try to get comfortable with the long-putter stroke, it's a good idea to test several putter models and see which feels best.

You'll also need to figure out what putter length you're comfortable with. Do you want to anchor the putter into your belly, against your chest, or hold it away from your body? Try several lengths and see what feels comfortable to you. The longer the putter, the heavier the putterhead.

Switching from a standard-length putter is a learning process that takes some trial and error. But once it works for you, you may never go back. ■

### Ping Scottsdale Pickup B

This belly model boasts a high moment of inertia (MOI) for stellar performance. The shaft length comes standard at 42 inches but can be built up to 45 inches. The head weighs 390 grams and features a thermoplastic elastomer face insert for consistent distance control and a soft feel. (\$180; ping.com)



### Scotty Cameron Studio Select Kombi

This mallet is offered in mid-length models of 42, 43 and 44 inches, and long models of 48 and 50 inches. The putter's balancing ensures proper head weight per length, and has a deep center of gravity that stabilizes the putter for optimal roll and feel. (\$325; scottycameron.com)



### TaylorMade Corza Ghost

This putter comes in belly (41 and 43 inches) and long (48 inches) models. Both sport a 3/4-inch offset shaft, and the white clubhead makes alignment a snap. The face insert helps reduce skidding for a better roll. (\$199; taylormadegolf.com)



### Odyssey White Ice D.A.R.T.

The White Ice comes in mid- and long models. The Mid has a double-bend shaft with full-shaft offset and a 400-gram head. The Long boasts a longer, double-bend shaft and full-shaft offset, with a split grip and a 450-gram head. (\$240, odysseygolf.com)



### Nike Method Core Drone

Polymer and aluminum grooves are featured on the clubface of this large, belly putter to soften feel and improve roll. The 41-inch model features weighting in the center and wing tips of the putter head to help keep it on path during the stroke for more accuracy. (\$227.99; nikegolf.com)



### Cleveland Golf Classic Almost Belly

This heel-toe weighted blade comes with a rich, black pearl finish that minimizes glare. It's 39 inches long and can be used as a belly or a traditional-length putter. The CNC milled face produces a soft feel. (\$119.99; clevelandgolf.com)