



# SPECIAL REPORT

## “Seven Questions You Should Ask Before Buying Golf Clubs”

By Bobby Lopez, PGA Professional



You want to get better at golf, but you're not sure if a new set of golf clubs will do the trick. Determining whether changing your golf clubs IS the solution isn't easy and demands some expertise.

You should NOT go out and buy a set of golf clubs hoping for an improvement.

Buying golf clubs is very similar to buying a computer. First determine what software you are going to run so you know what configuration of hardware you need to support the software.

It is the same with golf clubs. One needs to consider the golf swing in question first. The golf club configuration must match the swing not just the physical characteristics of the golfer such as height or arm length, etc. Your swing is the software, your golf clubs are the hardware!

There are so many variables to consider that you must be patient and expect to spend a considerable amount of time during the fitting process.

If the question is, “should you take lessons first?” The answer is a resounding yes! Golf lessons from a qualified professional will help immensely in getting you to swing properly before you buy golf clubs. The best person to fit you is someone that already knows your swing. Second best is to be fitted by a good golf instructor.

For effective golf club fitting you need a professional fitter who understands your golf swing motion and how your current golf clubs are effecting your swing motion. Club fitting an improper swing motion could cause you to repeat bad habits with mediocre results.

Here's a good example. If a golfer plays with golf clubs that are too short and too flat a lie angle, he/she will probably slice the ball. A quick check of your lie angle could save you years of aggravation of trying to

get rid of a slice that is not from a faulty swing move but rather a result of a faulty lie angle on your golf clubs.

Equipment problems that can cause swing compensations are, but not limited to, improper lie angle, improper head design, shaft length and flex, drivers with too little loft and golf clubs that are too heavy in total weight or swing weight.

Lets consider lie angle as an example. For every one degree your golf clubs are off in lie angle it could cost you as much as 15 feet off line in your approach shot. Eight degrees off in lie angle could cost you as much as 80 or 90 feet off line!

### The Seven Questions

*Question #1 What are the most important considerations in club fitting?*

*Question #2 What is your training in golf club fitting?*

*Question #3 How many golf club fittings have you done?*

*Question #4 What golf club brands to you carry and why?*

*Question #5 Do you have testimonials?*

*Question #6 What are your golf club fitting qualifications?*

*Question #7 Do you offer any guarantees or support after the sale?*

# “Seven Questions You Should Ask Before Taking Golf Lessons”

Page 2

**Question Number 1** - *What are the most important considerations in golf club fitting?*

Golf club configurations that MUST be taken into considerations are:

- 1) Shaft length
- 2) Shaft flex and deflection point
- 3) Golf club head design
- 4) Lie angle
- 5) Grip size
- 6) Total weight
- 7) Swing weight

There are so many variables within these seven configurations that it would be impossible to list them all here. However if you are interested in further information concerning this section just call me at **804-378-7456**.

Just keep in mind that what you are trying to fit here is a golf swing and it's characteristics. You are trying to create a golf club configuration that rewards you with a great shot when you make your **BEST swing motion**.

Many golfers are out there playing with golf clubs that do quite the opposite. They reward them when you make an improper motion, (*a swing compensation*).

**Question Number 2** - *What is your training in golf club fitting?*

Proper golf club fitting demands in-depth training on the part of the fitter. Some golf club companies offer quick one day training courses, others offer a one or two week course. Be certain to choose a fitter that has in depth golf club fitting experience, authorized by the manufacturer and at least two years of experience in fitting golf clubs.

Training or no training, there is always the potential of possible bias on the part of the fitter. The best fitters will go through the proper fitting process and base the decision strictly on ball flight and your over all balance.

**Question Number 3** - *How Many Golf Club Fittings Have You Performed?*

First you need to know what kind of fittings the individual you're considering to choose as a fitter performs. There are **dynamic fittings** and **static fittings**. Dynamic meaning "*in motion*". Dynamic fitting is what you're looking for.

Static fitting calls for taking measurements such as your arm length wrist to floor, etc. Static fitting is of little value but better than nothing.

If the fitter does only static fits then start looking elsewhere. Equally if the fitter says that he/she has been fitting for only a year or two I would seek more experience.

I would be very cautious of store clerks. Check their teaching and playing experience as well as fitting school credentials first.

**Question Number 4** - *What Brands Do You Carry and Why?*

The reason for carrying more than one brand is strictly for head design. Golf club companies do not make golf shafts. They buy golf shafts and install them in their golf clubs. The number of golf shaft configurations available in the fitting system will have a significant impact on discovering the best golf club configuration for your swing.

A specific head design might produce a better ball flight which might NOT look appealing to your eye. I must strongly caution you here, **DO NOT FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LOOKS OF A SPECIFIC HEAD DESIGN!**

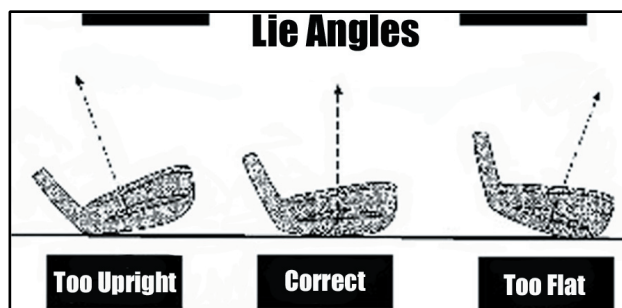
You might find that the golf club that you dislike in looks might be the best for your golf swing. Get over it! You want the best ball flight performance, not the club that looks the best.

The lower distribution of weight and the off set head design promotes a higher ball flight and about three degrees draw to the left, (*for right handers*).

Don't be concerned about hitting muscle back golf clubs if they produce the best ball flight for your swing. Again, let your golf swing choose your golf clubs. Equally you might find that a softer shaft might perform better for your swing. Don't be a macho man and insist on a stiff shaft because your swing speed is 100 miles an hour or above.

**Question Number 5** - *Do you Have Testimonials?*

If the fitter has in depth experience then he/she can gladly introduce you to other golfers that can give you there testimonials on the results they have enjoyed.



# "Seven Questions You Should Ask Before Taking Golf Lessons"

Page 3

If the fitter does NOT have testimonials then walk! Anything the fitter will tell you is not nearly as powerful as what his/her customers will tell you. Ask his customers how long they have been playing with the golf clubs. Anyone playing with their golf clubs more than a year shows that the fit must be pretty good.

I have seen some terrible fits out there that have potentially ruined many a golf swing. Especially golf clubs that were fitted too long and too upright. If you find that many of the golf clubs the fitter has offered are long and upright beware!

In most cases, the upright lie angle the fitter prescribed is related to a golfer swinging "over the top" or "outside in". The improper swing path leads to centrifugal force causing the shaft to bow down producing a toe down effect.

This is a false reading for an upright lie angle requirement! In this example I would first address the "over the top" swing path before fitting for golf clubs.

## **Question Number 6**

- *What are Your Qualifications?*

A PGA professional with golf club fitting training and past playing experience would be my choice for a golf club fitter.

A former player would be more apt to recognize that you should have a configuration that you can best score with through accuracy and better balance.

Choosing a PGA member does not guarantee that your fitter is competent or experienced however it does show that the professional is dedicated to the golf business having completed a three to five year apprenticeship for PGA membership.

A competent fitter will always choose accuracy over distance in fitting you for golf clubs. Accuracy and consistency is the key! A golf club you can hit well frequently and comfortably with your best balance will improve your golf game.

**Question Number 7** - *Do You Offer Any Guarantees or Support After the Sale?*

Your fitter should guarantee his/her work. The golf

clubs should NOT be shipped to you directly. Good fitters will insist on the clubs being shipped to the fitter. The fitter should watch you hit some balls with your new golf clubs to be certain that the fit was proper and the new clubs match perfectly with the sample club used in the fitting.

Your fitter should have used face tape, (*a tape that sticks to the face of your golf club that marks the impact spot on your club face when hitting a golf ball*) during your club fit. More face tape should be used once your golf clubs are delivered to see if your new golf clubs are consistent with the original fit.

If the fitting is improper, or the manufacturer made a mistake on the specs, the fitter should have a strong enough relationship with their supplier to send the golf clubs back for adjustment.

It is this type of special attention and follow-up that your golf game and considerable investment deserves.

Buying "off the rack" golf clubs would represent buying golf clubs under "perceived performance". You perceive, (*by way of a commercial on TV or an ad in a golf magazine*) that the new set of golf clubs will improve your golf game. Under the scenario I am recommending you would make your purchase under "proven performance." You see the proven results before

you buy. This is how touring pros choose their golf clubs. Do you deserve anything less?

## **What should my golf clubs cost?**

We haven't talked about price. Custom fitted golf clubs can be more costly than off the rack clubs. However when you consider that fact that you are less likely to purchase another set for quite some time after being fitted properly, the custom golf clubs in the long run are less expensive.

Plus what is a good golf game worth to you? Why spend money on green fees and lessons and not go all the way with the right equipment.

I would budget at least \$800 to \$1,000 for a custom set of top of the line irons. You might be changing drivers more often than you like but you should be able to keep your irons for several years if they are fitted properly. Top quality forged golf club heads allows you to re-shaft the set



# “Seven Questions You Should Ask Before Taking Golf Lessons”

Page 4

in the future and bend the lie angles while still hanging on to the original heads saving you a considerable amount of money over time.

## *Special Tips for Juniors*

Buy the best quality and the best fit. A poorly fitted set of golf clubs can promote swing faults that could last a lifetime. Similar to buying a child an inexpensive pair of shoes that end up causing damage to their feet.

Again a top quality set of forged club heads will allow you to change the shafts as your son or daughter improves or grows taller. If you can't find a suitable forged set make sure to ask for 431 Stainless Steel.

I like the Acculength golf clubs that feature an insert you can install in the golf shaft as the child grows taller. You can see the Acculength Golf Clubs at <http://quickfixgolf.com/Junior-Golf-Clubs-Acculength.htm>

## *Extra Tips*

Should I buy My Golf Clubs From A Store That Fits With A Computer?

**Absolutely not!** Reason being the computer can not take in account any swing faults you might have. For instance, if you have an improper swing path the computer can not inform you of the problem.

How About Professional Club Builders?

The key word here is professional. Some golf club builders are very good. Technically they put together a very good golf club. Try to make sure the club builder you choose is a member of the Professional Clubmakers Society, (PCS). Some home grown club builders have excellent construction skills however these garage mechanics generally do not have solid golf swing knowledge for fitting.

How About Graphite Shafts?

It is especially important to have the right fitter when talking graphite. Graphite can be an asset in the right hands however only the best quality graphite will do, which could prove very expensive. Only choose quality graphite from a credible company that can get you the same golf club delivered in specs as the sample golf club hit in the fitting system.

Titanium Drivers?

Most all driver heads weigh the same, about 200 grams. There are some lighter heads available for extra long club

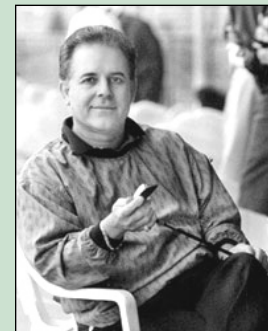
configurations however be careful about choosing a long driver. Although many of the drivers you see displayed in golf stores are 45 inches and above...most players on tour will not play with a driver over 44 inches for accuracy and consistency.

The biggest advantage to the titanium driver head is the light weight of the titanium metal which allows the same 200 gram weight with a larger surface.

Manufacturers take advantage of the light Titanium head to insert more weight below the center of gravity of the golf ball, by designing a heavy bottom plate or sole plate of the golf club. Anytime you get the center of gravity of the golf club below the center of gravity of the ball you improve lift.

Bobby Lopez is a PGA professional with 38 years of experience in the golf business.

- Host of the Bobby Lopez Golf Hour on ESPN Sports Radio
- Host of Blab TV Richmond television Show “Golf Your Way”
- Toured for the USO as a trick shot show in support of our troops overseas
- PGA professional of choice in local interviews with Big Al Coleman on 950 AM ESPN radio and with WRVA Jimmy Barrett
- Master of Ceremonies and Entertainment for General Richard Myers Chief of Staff Pentagon as well as annual USO event coupled with NFL Howie Long
- Head Professional at various well known Country Clubs such as Crooked Creek C.C. in Miami, owned by Ted Hendricks of the NFL Oakland Raiders
- Director of Golf at Nueva Andalucia C.C. in Marbella Spain site of the World Cup
- Instructor of choice by the president of V1 Video capture software in training other teaching professionals
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