



Mizuno: Shaft-fitting device gains traction

When Mizuno plans to spend precious advertising dollars touting its new clubfitting system more than its respected irons, golfers should take heed.

The clubmaker began rolling out its Performance Fitting System in late October and noticed a significant uptick in custom clubfitting sales. The success is attributed to Mizuno's Shaft Optimizer - a device that, they say, in a matter of a few swings can help golfers identify two or three shafts best suited for them.

The development is critical in making clubfitting a more mainstream practice because it shortens fitting sessions significantly, Mizuno officials say. Plus, they say, it provides critical swing data that previously were unobtainable in basic fitting sessions.

"The shaft is the most difficult to diagnose as well as the most time-consuming," said Bill Price, Mizuno's custom fit program manager. To address that issue, Price said Mizuno researchers focused on "determining what's happening to the shaft as it's bending through the swing."

The result is the Shaft Optimizer, an LCD gauge that attaches to a 6-iron and instantly measures swing vitals



Mizuno's Shaft Optimizer collects swing data, which are used to recommend shaft options (above).

such as clubhead speed, tempo and shaft bend. It also calculates "release factor," which indicates whether the shaft releases early or late. (That information is important in selecting appropriate tip stiffness.)

Once a golfer's information is collected, it is uploaded into a software program that has logged the swing profile of the 44 shafts available in the fitting system. The computer provides the best matches. A golfer finishes the fitting session by testing the recommended options before making a final choice.

By mid-February, Mizuno's top custom-fitting accounts nationwide - about 1,300 locations - will be equipped with the Performance Fitting System, said Dick Lyons, Mizuno's vice president and general manager. In addition to the shafts, it is stocked with four MP and four MX iron models.

Perhaps the Shaft Optimizer's best attribute? It takes swing stereotypes out of the equation.

"There's absolutely no age or gender bias," Lyons said.

- Gene Yasuda