

Big Bertha Back on Top

Callaway has hit paydirt with their new Big Bertha drivers and Apex irons

BY BILL CHOUNG

As a golf club junkie, my Christmas begins right after the PGA Merchandise Show in late January and ends two weeks after. Why? We get to test all the new clubs, balls and shafts during that time.

Every year I am pleasantly surprised by one or two new innovations, and this year is no different. A major equipment company has reintroduced one of the most iconic names in golf with a new driver that is getting everyone excited, and it tops my list of best drivers of 2014. That same company has also produced the year's best irons.

Best Drivers: Callaway Big Bertha and Alpha

When Callaway introduced the Big Bertha driver in 1991, it was a game-changer. It was the first oversized metal driver and outperformed my persimmon woods by 20 to 30 yards. It was the greatest golf equipment innovation and golfers became addicted to the technology.



Callaway has revived the Big Bertha brand and created a driver technology worthy of the name. The new 2014 Big Bertha and Alpha drivers, like the 1991 Big Bertha, are game-changers.

Why is it so good?

1. Looks: It has very clean sleek look without lots of distractions.
2. Feel: It has a very solid feel and sound. No tinny or ringing sound.
3. Adjustability: Independently adjustable loft and lie angle to maximize distance.
4. Best innovation: "Gravity Core" Center of gravity (CG) adjustment featured on the Alpha model. This technology is great because you can alter the backspin without changing the launch angle. When vertical center of gravity is lowered, the player will experience more penetrating ball trajectory with maximum roll out.
5. By-The-Numbers for Big Bertha: We independently tested the 20 most popular drivers for distance, ball speed, forgiveness, backspin, launch angle and adjustability. (1 = best, 20 = worst)
 - a. Distance: 1st - nine yards longer than the next competitor
 - b. Ball speed: 1st - three miles per hour faster than the second best
 - c. Adjustability: 1st - this is to rate "How effective is the adjustability."

Once you found the right head, how do you choose the right shaft and to optimize the adjustable settings?

1. The shaft is the engine of your driver. Finding the right shaft could be a difficult process without the help of a good fitter or your club pro. If you want to fit yourself, try to hit as many different shafts as possible before purchasing the club.
2. Right setting: Again, a clubfitter or your pro could help you with the settings. Here are some tips: 1) At first, set everything to neutral and hit 30 balls; 2) If you want to change the ball flight, set everything to its extremes. If you hit a high slice or push, set it to the lowest loft, most closed face angle and the CG to the lowest setting, and hit 20 balls; 3) If you over-adjusted the club, start moving 1 degree back at a time toward neutral and hit more balls.

Best Irons: Callaway Apex/Pro Irons

I don't want to sound like I'm drinking the Callaway Kool-Aid, but the winner of the best irons in 2014 is the Apex by Callaway. Like the Big Bertha brand, they have reintroduced the Apex brand with great success.



Customize the length of the club, lie angle and the grips to optimize the new iron technology.

Why are the irons good?

1. They have the feel of a one-piece forged iron with the length of a distance iron and forgiveness of a game improvement club.
2. Unlike its predecessor Diablo irons, the slick design and the colors makes the clubs look cool.
3. The rolled leading edge sole grind design is great for turf interaction from tight lies.
4. By-The-Numbers for Apex: We independently tested the 16 most popular irons for distance, ball speed, forgiveness and feel. (1 = best, 20 = worst)
 - a. Distance: 1st - five yards longer than second
 - b. Forgiveness: 2nd - It was the highest ranking ever for a forged head.
 - c. Feel: 2nd - Ranking on feel was only second to a very high-end expensive forged iron from Japan. It is the best feeling club in its price range.

Remember to customize the length of the club, lie angle and the grips to optimize the new iron technology. For complete review of the best equipment, visit www.compugolfcenter.com/clubreview.

Have a great time tinkering with all the cool golf toys in 2014.



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— Brandel Chamblee, Golf Channel analyst and part-time rules official