

# Get Shafted

It's crucial to find the right fitter for this piece of equipment

By Bill Choung

Are you playing with the right engine?

Do you need a V4, V6, V8 or a V12 engine for your swing? The shaft is what powers your driver. It stores the energy created by your golf swing and delivers the energy to the ball.

The shaft is the only part of the club that is dynamic during the swing, which can dictate your swing speed and tempo. Selecting the right shaft is the most important part of the clubfitting, yet it is the most misunderstood and ignored part of the process.

Your goal should be the same as the Tour players when it comes to optimizing the driver. Find the right shaft to maximize the energy load and make sure the shaft variables provide positive reinforcements to your swing and tempo.



When I worked with Dustin Johnson at a Tour event to collect data for our shaft and swing research project, as you could see by the pictures, he was loading the shaft with almost 98 percent efficiency rating. More importantly, the right shaft was helping Dustin reinforce his swing tempo. The TaylorMade tour van had done a great job fitting Dustin.

You may not be able to swing a driver at 128 miles per hour like Dustin, but you can find a right shaft to increase the shaft load efficiency and reinforce the correct tempo, which would lead to more distance and better accuracy.

Here are some helpful facts you need to know about shafts:

## There is no industry standard to quantify the shaft flex.

The S flex label on your driver does not mean a thing. Each manufacturer has their own standard or many times no standard at all. Why? If a standard is established, it would have to be followed by better quality control, which would increase the cost.

Here's a solution: If available, try to quantify the actual stiffness by measuring on a frequency meter.

## Lighter, softer and longer shafts will give you more distance.

In theory it should, but there are exceptions to this rule. If a shaft is too soft and light, it could promote more of an upper body arms swing. When you use less lower body, you will generate less clubhead speed. If the club is too long for your body, it could generate more clubhead speed but generate less ball speed, which will lead to less distance. Why? A longer shaft will change your swing plane and slow the tempo; therefore, it could promote a glancing blow.

To solve this, find a golf pro/fitter that has the measurement tools to quantify the relative benefits of each shaft. Quantify the shaft's effect on your swing by using high speed video and bio mechanical measurement tools. When testing shafts, make sure that you are using interchangeable heads like R11s or Razr fit to ensure that you are comparing apples to apples.

## Custom shafts will give me better performance.

Custom shafts will cost \$100 to \$400. How can you justify the cost? Custom shafts are produced with the same high quality control and standards as the shafts used on the PGA Tour. Custom shafts' specifications also are more precise than stock shafts, and have a better feel because of the 335mm tip size vs. 350mm tip for stock shafts.

Do not waste your money on custom shafts if the fitter does not quantify the benefits of the upgraded shafts; frequency match the shaft to ensure the exact flex of the shaft; and provide you with some kind of performance guarantee.

## Should I buy a new club or just change the shaft?

The smart money says to re-shaft your existing clubhead, assuming that your head is less than 3 years old and you are happy with the performance of your current head. This option only makes sense if your launch data (launch angle, back spin, etc.) is pretty close to being optimal.

For all you club geeks who want to learn more about driver and iron shaft fitting and the shaft frequency matching process, please visit my website for a short video presentation.

Have fun finding the right engine for your swing and trying to load the shaft like Dustin Johnson!



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