
GAME CHANGERS

THE COUNTRY'S LEADING CLUB-FITTERS ARE REVOLUTIONIZING THE GOLF EQUIPMENT INDUSTRY, ONE CUSTOM-BUILT CLUB AT A TIME.

by Shaun Tolson

If golf equipment advertisements are to be believed, the only thing preventing you from playing the greatest golf of your life is the obsolete collection of clubs in your bag. The latest generation of golf equipment by itself won't automatically improve your scores, but you'll get the most out of those clubs—not to mention the confidence to know that you're playing the right ones—if you invest in a custom fitting.

That's the message that **Club Champion** (clubchampiongolf.com) has preached since launching in 1998, when the company operated out of two fitting centers in greater Chicago and a tour van that founder Nick Sherburne drove to local golf clubs. Today, there are 39 Club Champion locations around the country—with 20 more set to open in 2019—all utilizing Trackman launch monitors and outfitted with hundreds of aftermarket shafts. The company is further strengthened by partnerships with exclusive—and, in some cases, obscure—equipment manufacturers, which offer clients a chance to test out clubs and shafts that they may have only previously read about. "These companies love getting in with us because if they have a product that performs, they know that we can sell it because we're focused on the performance more than a name," Sherburne says. "We're brand agnostic."

Aside from the company's diverse manufacturer offerings, its team of fitters and builders can customize a club—drastically changing its swing weight (how the club is balanced given the weight of its various components) or bending it to extreme lie and loft angles—far beyond production limitations set by the manufacturers.

"The market is thirsty to play better golf," Sherburne says. "So we want to keep evangelizing. Educating the consumer that there is someone out there who can help them, letting the data—not a personal bias or marketing—determine what's in their bag."

When **GOLFTEC** (golftec.com) opened its first center in 1995, it specialized only in instruction. The company now operates more than 200 training centers around the world, and it has made club-fitting, along with instruction, a focal point of its business. "Our mission statement is very simple: to help people play better golf," says Joe Assell, the company's president and CEO. "To live up to that mission statement, we have to deliver on both. Sometimes people need a lot of swing help and the clubs are secondary. Other times, people are swinging well, but they're playing outdated equipment that doesn't allow them to maximize the results of that swing."

Powered by a proprietary software program that analyzes launch monitor data, specifically launch angles and spin rates, GOLFTEC club-fitters can find the right club-head-and-shaft combination for each golfer. The company doesn't offer the same breadth of equipment brands as Club Champion, but does work with a variety of the best known club and shaft manufacturers in the world, which allows customers to test and compare the industry's most popular equipment. All GOLFTEC club-fitting appointments begin with a thorough analysis of a player's existing clubs, and the performance data of those clubs are measured against the data accrued by all other club-head-and-shaft combinations during the fitting.

"You may have the perfect clubs already," says Assell. "Our mission is to help people play better golf, not to sell more golf clubs." ♦



GOLFTEC's proprietary software program analyzes launch monitor data, specifically launch angles and spin rates, for a truly custom-fit club that will maximize swing results. *Below:* Grinding a customized wedge at Club Champion.

