

A New Twist on an Old Concept

Adjustable Hosel Technology can provide some relief against errant shots By Russ Ryden

SEVERAL GOLF COMPANIES announced innovative new technology this year called adjustable hosel drivers. Yet, it's not exactly innovative or new technology.

If you happen to have the 1995 Golfsmith Catalog, you will see that Adjustable Hosel Technology, AHT, was released on March 15 of that year. In more recent memory the Ping Si3 Driver had a hosel insert that created different face angle and lie combinations.

What is new is the simplicity of making the adjustments. The old systems had to be glued in; the new systems use a screw and torque wrench. Adjustments can be made quickly and easily during a practice or fitting session.

Initial ball direction is the result of face angle and swing path. Recent research found that face angle accounted for 85 percent of the direction, swing path the remaining 15 percent. Until adjustable hosels arrived, we had heads that were open, square or closed. A clubfitter would find a head with a face angle that created the correct launch direction. With an adjustable hosel, the face angle can be changed by rotating the head.

DRIVER HEAD GEOMETRY

Adjustable hosels change the loft, lie and face angle. A head designer will tell you that all three elements change as you turn the hosel appliance. To explore this I measured two of the popular systems on a loft and lie gauge. I started with the assumption that this was going to be difficult for the average golfer to understand and use. I came to quite a different conclusion.

The typical golfer does not change his lie angle to accommodate his club. In fact, it is the opposite; your clubs should be custom-fit to your lie angle. With that in mind, I set up my loft and lie gauge to a 59-degree lie angle and began rotating the hosel appliance and measuring the effect on two of the systems. Much to my surprise, the loft did not change but the face angle did. I could change the face angle in one system from one degree closed to three degrees open in eight positions. The other system gave an even wider range, from four degrees closed to two degrees open in 26 positions. The Adjustable Hosel is *the* fitting tool of the year in the hands of an expert clubfitter.

Because of this technology, we are likely to see open, square and closed driver heads disappear. There is less cost and inventory for manufacturers and golf shops with one head that can adjust to any position. Nickent quickly converted an interchangeable shaft system to an adjustable hosel system. Look for others that already use interchangeable shaft-fitting systems to convert soon.

THE NEGATIVES

Some will argue that head geometry is weird with this technology. I expected that as well, but measurements convinced me otherwise.

Still, others will point to the cost and weight of the hosel appliance. I have a 185-gram 460cc head with a 9-gram hosel appliance in my hands today. The tour van weights add from 4 to 32 grams, creating a 460cc driver head total weight of 198 to 226 grams. The typical 460 driver head weighs 205 grams. Thus, the weight argument is not true.

The real issue is grip and shaft spine alignment. Any grip that has a seam or reminder will not work if you are planning to test this yourself or adjust it often. The grip rotates with the shaft. You must use round grips and ignore the graphics. Or, the grip must be removed and realigned after you find the correct face angle.

Shaft spine alignment is a larger problem. Driver shafts are the most sensitive to spine misalignment. They are longer and more flexible making the spine more of a factor. The shaft must be removed from the hosel appliance and re-glued to get the spine alignment correct. The good news – it is very easy for a clubmaker to get a hosel appliance off and re-glued to the shaft.

GETTING IT STRAIGHT

Driver head geometry is only one of a number of club parameters affecting face angle at impact. An expert clubfitter also considers grip size, head weight and shaft. In a driver fitting, these will be considered first before changing head geometry. Remember, the other 15 percent of initial direction comes from swing path. Total club weight and balance influence the swing path. Clubfitters regard face angle changes as a last resort. The adjustable hosel is a great last resort.

Can you do this on your own? Perhaps. The adjustable hosel offers some relief from a wayward face angle if you understand the technology. To properly fine-tune your driver you should seek the services of a custom clubfitter that will work with your swing coach to properly match your equipment to your swing.



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