

Our Obsession with Distance

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On this day, the fastest person is Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, he's also the fastest man in history with a world record time of 9.58 seconds. The fastest woman in history is Florence Griffith-Joyner with a world record time of 10.49.

Zdeno Chara maintains his title record for the hardest shot in the NHL with 108.8 mph (175.1 km/h) in 2012, besting his own previous record of 105.9 in 2011. Prior to Chara the record was held by Al Iafrate at 105.2 mph.

As human beings we have an avid interest in such information as 'Who is the fastest' or 'Who is the best at something'. It is general curiosity to find out who the ultimate is or the best.

Golfers have this same need for information, example, who has the longest drive? The world record recognized by Guinness Records as the longest drive in a competition is 515 yards (471 m) by 64-year-old Mike Austin in 1974 at the US Senior National Open Qualifier with a 43.5" steel shafted Persimmon wood driver.

What is it that attracts us to strength, speed and distance?

Even golfers, male or female, young or old strive to attain the longest yards while on the golf course. However, this does not mean that you will have the best score on the score card or leader board.

The top PGA players have a swing speed average between 169 and 177 KPM (105 and 110 mph).

Some of the fastest recorded swings have taken place at the various national and worldwide longest drive championships. The speed of these swings range from 233 to 249 KPM (145 to 155 mph).

The leading LPGA players have been measured between 145 to 161 KPH (90 and 100 mph).

The average male golfer swings the club between 129 to 144 KPH (80 and 90 mph). The average female golfer swings between 97 to 112 KPH (60 and 70 mph).

The driver is by far the most popular golf club in the amateur golfer's golf bag. Not because it is the most used on the golf course but because it is the most popular at the driving range.

Golfers are fascinated by the power and distance with their driver and for good reasons. We naturally strive for the rush we feel when we successfully send our golf ball down the fairway in a straight line and at a better than average distance.

Among all standard clubs made for golfers with the exception of your putter, the #1 also known as the 'driver' is designed to hit the ball the farthest. It is also the club with the largest club head, the longest shaft and the least amount of loft.

The driver is most commonly used for lead shots on par-4s and par-5s, with the ball teed up in a tee box.

Regarding the best driver available on the market today, I will leave this for you to discuss with the most qualified salesperson you will meet during your next visit at a sports outlet but here are a few tips to a better swing with your driver:

- Give yourself adequate room when hitting the ball with your driver. One of the biggest mistakes made by those who are uncomfortable with the driver is that they stand too close to the ball. Stay at least 18 inches away and as much as 24 inches from the ball to give yourself room to take a good swing. The objective is to keep your lead arm straight. If you are too close, you are sure to bend that elbow.
- Play the ball a bit forward in your stance. Most drivers only have 3 to 6 degrees of loft. The ball should be lined up with the heel of your front foot.
- Take an athletic position when you hit all your golf clubs, especially the driver. Your stance should be wider than your hips or shoulders, whichever is widest.
- Posture is also very important. Your back should be straight and knees flexed slightly. This will ensure a lift to your golf ball.

My best tip when it comes to your time at the practice range prior to a round of golf is to begin your warm up with the short game (putting, chipping and pitching). Once you have practiced your short game, then move to your irons and last on your routine should be the driver. Why? You will have practiced with all of the clubs in your bag and sufficiently warmed up for the first tee, which of course will be with your driver!

Also, consistency over distance will serve you best when it comes to golf.

ANOTHER SMILE MOMENT: Golf is an easy game... it's just hard to play.

To book your next golf lesson, contact Lisa today via e-mail at lisalgolpro@gmail.com or by telephone at 506-232-0728 or visit her website at www.PrivateGolfPro.ca .

Lisa Elle is the PrivateGolfPro who teaches in the greater Moncton area and southeast NB. Her unique golf service assists all levels of players with their golf swing. Her golf articles have been published in print and on websites across Canada. She is also the face of the charitable trust 'Lisa's Fund - a breath for Cystic Fibrosis'.