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TABLE OF CONTENTS



4. ING At Valley Forge Was Worth The Wait

8. Travel: Valley Forge - *Lynn Luczkowski*

14. Top Products: From ING Spring Forum

18. Faces In The Crowd At ING Spring Forum

22. Profile: Michelle Wie West - *Ron Kroichick*

26. Technology On Track - *Ken Van Vechten*

34. Bifurcation: Yes Or No? - *Jimmy Roberts*

36. Member News - Zero Friction, Mears, More



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Tour Edge
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WORTH THE WAIT!

Valley Forge Proves To Be A Terrific Host For ING Spring Forum



By Len Ziehm

We've been involved with the International Network of Golf, a 33-year old non-profit group organized by Mike Jamison to bring the media and golf industry together, for about 10 years. It's been a worthwhile and enjoyable experience for us, but especially over the last few days.

ING was to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2020 at Valley Forge, Pa., during its annual Spring Conference. That event couldn't be held because of the pandemic and the return to Valley Forge couldn't be made until this week. The event was re-structured and the anniversary celebration wasn't part of it but lots of good things were.

We had two mornings worth of presentations on various topics and two afternoons of golf outings at the Raven's Claw Golf Club in Pottstown, Pa.

Ed Shearon, who designed the challenging course, gave us a pre-round background talk but the climax, as is traditional with such ING media events, was the annual Durland Cup Scramble tournament. It's been especially special for Joy Sarver. Last year she made a hole-in-one at the event in Sebring, FL., and on Thursday she was – with Mike Ramsey, Tony Leodora and Phil Sokol – on the champion team.

My team didn't fare so well, but it gave me the chance to play with Marti Ramsey (the daughter of the late honoree of the Durland Cup) and long-time golf media friends Mike Bailey and Gary D'Amato. Gary, the long-time golf columnist for the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, and I have played a lot of golf together – but not for the last few years. It was a great pairing (at least as far as the fun side goes).

A full room enjoyed a very beneficial marketing seminar by led by Tiss Dahan (R) and Krystal Smith (Below) of English Riding Supply



ING Spring Forum Golf



ING STABLEFORD LEADERS

Bob Davis	35
Tom Gorman	33
Mike Kern	32
Mike Ramsey	32
Tony Leodora	32
Mike Jamison	31
Mike Bailey	31
Phil Sokol	30



ING DURLAND CUP SCORES

63

Phil Sokol
Tony Leodora
Mike Ramsey
Joy Sarver

65

Mike Kern
Mike Jamison
Jeff Gilder
Dahan/Smith

68

Tom Gorman
Charles Humphries
Greg Logan
Dave Daubert

69

John Glozek
Bruce Vittner
Lynn Luczkowski
Donna LaFleur

69

Mike Bailey
Gary D'Amato
Len Ziehm
Marti Ramsey

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Happy And Storied Trails In Valley Forge With History, Golf And More



*First published on
New England Golf*

By Lynn Luczkowski

KING OF PRUSSIA, PA -- There's no time like the present to revisit and reflect on our American history and the brave people who sacrificed for our independence. Valley Forge National Historical Park is one such place.

Whether you're a day tripper or a weekend warrior, prefer extended stays or have the luxury of a lengthy vacation, Montgomery County (PA) is a destination -- home to a storied shrine of quiet valor -- and so much more.

Located 35 miles outside of Philadelphia, you will not run out of things to do but may be challenged by what to choose from: history, 50 golf courses,

recreational trails, world-class shopping, vibrant arts, culture, and entertainment.

Anytime I can parlay an educational experience with a golf trip, I'm a happy traveler. I had the opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues in the golf industry while attending the ING (International Network of Golf) Spring Forum, an annual event, and absorbed as much as possible in the week spent there.

HISTORY: The time spent at Valley Forge National Historical Park was a great start to a memorable visit. Embraced by endless rolling hills and fields of green on a warm spring day, this must-see destination is for history buffs or those interested in revisiting the American Revolution. Today, the meadows that once

surrounded the encampment are painted with golden rod and milkweed and a favorite spot for runners, bikers, hikers, and picnickers who utilize the 3600 acres of well used trails.

The VFNHP Visitor Center (renovated and reopened in 2021) offers sights, sounds, and stories as part of the vast exhibits and artifacts. There is a 19-minute movie and a vast selection of books and souvenirs to put things in perspective.

We were greeted by Russell Brindley, a passionate guide at the park (and fellow Rutgers grad), who was as enthusiastic as he was knowledgeable. He provided park notables including the 9-stop tour -- easily marked and maneuverable by car (bike or foot) with other guided tours available. Brindley shared a few compelling short stories about George Washington's Continental Army and what they endured while wintering here in 1777-1778 (regrouping from the Revolutionary War). While no battles were fought in Valley Forge, it was here where the army recovered, trained and some 2,000 men lost their lives to harsh elements of winter (hunger and disease).

Statues, replicated huts (log cabins) as well as the Washington Memorial Chapel and the original headquarters, are located throughout the grounds, while high on a hill stands the United States National Memorial Arch, built to celebrate the arrival of General George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge.

After a profound step back in time and a profound history lesson, you can embrace an abundance of activities from golfing and recreating to shopping at King of Prussia's mall, one of the nation's largest and diverse retail offerings (369 stores). There's also a Town Center and outlet stores nearby.



GAMING, ENTERTAINMENT: The Valley Forge Casino & Resort, the region's only full-amenity gaming resort, offers live entertainment, dining and is accommodating and centrally located. It features a 40,000-square-foot gaming floor, plus 100,000 square



feet of meeting, conference, and banquet facilities, and two luxury hotel towers. A host of hotels and bed & breakfasts are also worth considering for your stay.

GOLF: There are many choices with 50 courses to consider, according to Mike Bowman, President & CEO of the Valley Forge Tourism and



Convention Board who shared, “we have more than 300,000 yards of golf courses -- 50 of the most historic, beautiful, challenging public as well as private clubs in the Northeast.”

Playing the popular Ravens Claw Golf Club was a real treat. Opened in 2005, the Par 71, 6006-yard



championship track is the site of the Valley Forge Invitational and LPGA Symetra Tour. Architect Ed Shearon’s philosophy of course design is all about science, engineering and aesthetics. It’s earned “the Claw” a consistent top 10 rating among the state’s best. It is fun in that no two holes are alike and the layout offers mature woodlands and

a variety of terrain from rolling hills and some tight fairways as well as a few uphill dog leg challenges. Putting greens were well kept yet they kept us guessing with a variety of undulation and mounds of rough. On one par 3 we were challenged by a double tiered surprise. Playing two rounds on back-to-back days

gave me an appreciation for the course and a chance to navigate a little easier the second time around.

Post round we enjoyed a delicious meal at Sessano’s at Raven’s Claw. Chef and owner Santino Ciccaglioni, a native of Italy who came to the U.S. as a 10-year-old, spoiled us with his award-winning roast pork sandwiches, old-fashioned Italian pasta and other homecooked favorites. Sessano’s cuisine includes deeply rooted traditions and simplicity.

If you’re looking for stay and play packages more than 20 of Montco’s golf courses are open to the public and accommodate golfers of all skill levels and budgets. At Macoby Run Golf Course you can play 18 while taking in stunning views of lush forests and meadows. If you’re an advanced golfer, you can test yourself at the challenging at Westover Golf Club in Norristown.

In Montco, there are private golf courses with impressive amenities like the elegant Philadelphia Country Club, one of the oldest courses in the country which dates back to 1890, or if you are looking for a family outing the Blue Bell Country Club, is a premiere family-friendly country club with an 18-hole course designed by legendary golfer Arnold Palmer himself.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS, AND MUSEUMS:

Beyond the greens and golf, you can also enjoy Montco's museums and offerings ranging from fine art to the art of comedy. A few considerations:

- The Berman Museum of Art (located on the campus of Ursinus College) presents innovative exhibitions in an atmosphere conducive to curiosity and exploration—a free, accessible, welcoming space.
- Cirque du Soleil BAZZAR, an iconic and breathtaking show makes its North American debut at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks, PA, September 26, 2023, and performances run through October 22, 2023.
- The Bryn Athyn Historic District (National Historic Landmark District) near Philadelphia offers spectacular architecture and gardens with tours and events at Cairnwood, a gilded age, Beaux Arts mansion; Glencairn, a Medieval castle-like museum; and the Gothic-Romanesque Bryn Athyn Cathedral.
- Arts Montco Week & Jazz Festival run September 20 - October 1, 2023, allows you to celebrate all the arts has to offer in Montgomery County with local theaters, galleries, museums, gardens and more while Montco Jazz Fest will highlight the region's diverse jazz artists and venues.

For more information contact the Valley Forge Tourism Convention Board or email info@valleyforge.org.



Lynn Luczkowski is an award-winning publicist and marketing specialist who has represented leading golf and sporting goods manufacturers, consumer lifestyle brands, clubs, and resorts over a 25-year span and has also written for golf publications and mainstream media. She is a member of the Golf Travel Writers and International Network of Golf and can be reached at Lynn@L2comm.biz.

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GreenKeepers Continues To Bring Creative Products To Golfers

Back in the nineties when metal spikes became a thing of the past, the Carroll brothers in Philadelphia decided to join the revolution, creating a successful and critically acclaimed non-metal cleat under the company name GreenKeepers, Inc.

The Carrolls were truly pioneers in that arena, and their invention of the outward-angled, traction-tooth golf cleats is still being used around the world today.

Since then, GreenKeepers has introduced several products many golfers know and love, including the 4 Yards More Performance Golf Tee, the Line-M-Up stenciling device, the Myball golf ball personalizer, and the PosiSet grip counterweights.

Attendees at the ING Spring Forum in Valley Forge had the pleasure of learning about the products first-hand from Frank Carroll.

“All our products are designed, tooled, and produced in Philadelphia,” says Carroll. “We take our time inventing new products. We want to make products that make a difference in somebody’s game.”

The “4 Yards More” performance golf tees have proven to be the most successful product in the line, with



various lengths for various clubs. The unique, durable design flexes at contact, reducing ball spin and providing tighter control and greater distance.

One of the more popular GreenKeepers products is Myball, a personalized ball-marking tool. There are several design choices, including “man’s best friend,” and “the gambler.” The players simply color in the design they choose.

The LineMup Pro is a precision ball alignment tool that provides multiple marking options. The lines improve aim, stroke and green-reading abilities, helping players to save strokes.

The PosiSet product is a weight for every club in your bag, including your putter. Attaching easily to the top of your grip, this PosiSet is the easiest method to adjust the weight in your clubs. It puts a sense of direct heaviness in your hands to help stabilize the club and putter head.

For more information visit www.gkspikes.com.





Wright Brothers Combine Passions To Create Caliber Golf Grip+Shaft

Brothers Chip and Tim Wright have created a product that they believe will help all golfers improve their score, and their passion for the product was on full display at the ING Spring Forum.

Caliber Golf officially launched its patented putting grip+shaft at the 2023 PGA Show in Orlando, but gave ING attendees a close-up look during their presentation at the ING Spring Forum in Valley Forge May 31. The Wright brothers combined their two passions – golf and ice hockey - to invent this unique product.

The carbon fiber, rectangular grip extends the length of the putter shaft. It evokes thoughts of greatness, while giving golfers an edge on the green. This innovation is engineered to improve the player's sight-to-target alignment, and to give the freedom to place hands in any position while maintaining consistent tempo and control.

"We have taken something golfers are familiar with, the hockey shaft, and converted it into the first putting grip+shaft of its kind that conforms with the rules of golf," said Caliber Golf CEO Tim Wright.

Added COO Chip Wright, "Our goal is to get our product into the hands of as many PGA professionals, media, golf manufactures, fitters, influencers as possible to test & experience how Caliber Golf is changing the status quo."

Caliber Golf's innovation fits to any putter head. Players can convert their current putter to the Caliber Golf grip or select a complete unit at CaliberGolf.com.



Makefield Putters - You Truly Can Make A Better Product

When you incorporate science with high quality materials and state-of-the-art manufacturing, you really can't go wrong, regardless of the type of product being developed.

Those three elements are a huge part of the foundation of Makefield Putters, a relatively new and successful putter company based near Philadelphia. Makefield Putters was born after owner Everett Farr began watching putting videos on YouTube during the COVID pandemic. When Farr saw slow-motion studies of how far a golf ball skids before it begins rolling on the average putt, he thought he could use his manufacturing experience to do better.

"We already had Lehdrex, an engineering company that designs and develops new products to take to market," said Farr. "Through Lehdrex and our specialization in 3D computer modeling and fabrication, I already had a significant head start to implement my engineering concepts to create a great putter."

And he was right. Makefield Putters is making headway in a challenging segment of the golf industry, as attendees at the recent ING Spring Forum in Valley Forge learned from representatives Nick Biglasco and Mike Dynda.

The Makefield putter starts with a head that is



milled from a single block of aluminum alloy to minimize any vibrations that can come from heads with multiple parts. The face is optimized using Radial Cusp Face Technology (RCFT). The CNC milling on the face creates Inodules that produce an equal impact on the ball across the face.

Makefield Putters created the X3 Weight System for different types of strokes and skill levels to maximize adjustability for all golfers. This is similar to driver weighting systems. The weighting system enables golfers to change the weight of the head depending upon green conditions and individual stroke characteristics.

For more information or to order, visit www.makefieldputters.com.



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PROFILE



Wie West talks with Curtis Cup USA Team members Kristen Gillman, Jennifer Kupcho, Andrea Lee and Lucy Li during a practice round ahead of the 2018 Curtis Cup at Quaker Ridge Golf Club.

Northern California is not only where **Michelle Wie West** attended college and gave birth to her first child, but it's where she learned to be comfortable in her own skin.

BY RON KROICHICK

Photos Courtesy of USGA

Michelle Wie West's journey, from golf prodigy and U.S. Women's Open champion to proud mom and ambitious entrepreneur, included several stops along the way. She was born and raised in Hawaii. She spent seven years in Florida. Now she lives in the Los Angeles area.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

But, in some important ways, nothing shaped Wie West – who announced she was stepping away from playing full-time following the U.S. Women’s Open in June – more than her time in Northern California.

Start with her four-plus years at Stanford, a famous professional athlete savoring the chance to expand her mind, stroll unbothered across campus and attend football games with her friends. Then, after her 2012 graduation and the stint in Florida, she returned to the Bay Area and lived in San Francisco with her husband, Golden State Warriors executive Jonnie West.

Their daughter, Makenna, was born during their two years (2019-21) in the city. That’s an unconventional place for an LPGA pro to use as a home base, but Wie West relished the chance to reconnect with close college friends who also lived in San Francisco. She embraced the city’s vibrancy – attending Warriors games, often eating out (pre-pandemic), going for walks with her daughter and dog.

Wie West routinely hit shots on the range at Stanford, or carried her own bag and pushed Makenna in the stroller for abbreviated rounds at Lake Merced Golf Club. She also occasionally played friendly, informal games with West and one of his buddies from the office. You may have heard of Stephen Curry.

“I always wanted to come back to the Bay,” says Wie West, “and it was a dream come true to live in San Francisco for the time we did.”

But to truly measure Northern California’s impact on Wie West, consider the Stanford chapter. Her face lights up when she reflects on her college experience, partly for the friendships she forged but also for the refuge Stanford offered amid an upbringing in the spotlight.

Remember, at age 10, Wie West became the youngest player to qualify for the USGA Women’s Amateur Public Links Championship. She became the youngest to Monday qualify for an LPGA event (at 12) and the youngest USGA champion in an adult event when she won the Public Links at 13.

Then she made the Curtis Cup team at 14, posted five top-5 finishes in LPGA majors at age 15 and 16 and made eight PGA

Tour starts as a teenager, stirring overheated debate in the golf world.

So by the time Wie West enrolled at Stanford, she craved the chance to be a regular college kid – trying to navigate life in the dorms and survive final exams.

“Going to Stanford allowed me to be normal,” she says. “There are so many things in my life that aren’t normal, so it was really nice to go there and experience it. That’s carried on to the rest of my life. It allowed me to understand what’s real life and what’s important. ...

“I loved my time at Stanford. It was a monumental period in my life. I’m grateful for all the friends I made and my experience there.”

In a 2012 interview, just before she finished college, Wie West talked of how her time at Stanford made her realize she loves meeting new people, eating new foods and trying new things. Those discoveries didn’t help her win more tournaments, but they mattered to her.

As she put it in that long-ago interview, “I didn’t go into college thinking, ‘Is this going to help my game or not?’ It’s just something I needed as a person.”

Fast forward to 2022, and her needs as a person – and a parent – still take priority. Wie West hasn’t entirely abandoned her career as tour pro, but it’s clearly not her consuming passion.

Wie West won five LPGA events from 2009-18, including the Women’s Open at Pinehurst in 2014. She once reached No. 6 in the world ranking. Those aren’t the splashy achievements widely expected, given her youthful rise to prominence, but they also aren’t easily dismissed.

Then real life got in the way. Wie West had wrist surgery in 2018 and took a 21-month hiatus from the tour, stretching from June 2019 to March 2021. She got married and delivered Makenna during that time, dramatically reshaping her life.

Wie West made six LPGA starts last year, with four missed cuts (including the U.S. Women’s Open at the Olympic Club)

Wie West reacts to her putt on the 17th hole during the final round at the 2014 U.S. Women’s Open at Pinehurst Resort & C.C.



DARREN CARROLL



Ten-year-old Wie West had her father, BJ Wie, on the bag as caddie during the 2000 Women's Amateur Public Links Championship. At the time, she was the youngest player to ever qualify.

and a high finish of tie for 40th. She tied for 28th in her first event this year.

She insisted her love of the game remains strong, but Wie West also has a new life. It's a challenging mix, competing at golf's highest level while remaining an involved mom.

"Makenna is the No. 1 priority in her life," says Excel Sports vice president Kevin Hopkins, who represents Wie West. "Michelle has a lot of different interests in the game of golf. She loves playing and she loves the competition, but her family is always going to come first."

Wie West, now 32, also is pursuing passions such as designing a tie-dye LPGA hoodie, a 2021 campaign that raised \$400,000 for the Renee Powell Foundation, which provides need-based grants to girls golf programs, including those in Black communities. Her list of business partnerships include Nike, Omega, MGM Resorts, Laird Superfoods and Pitchbook.

She's also served as an ambassador for companies such as Tonal, Oxigen Water and Sportsbox, among others.

"This is where Stanford really helped shape her," Hopkins

says. "Michelle is an entrepreneur at heart. She's been way more involved on the business side of things than I probably expected. She has a vision for the types of companies she wants to invest in and be part of. It's not transactional for her."

These new elements in Wie West's life have put her in a good place, to hear others tell it. Tour pro Christina Kim (from San Jose), a longtime friend, talked last year of how marriage and motherhood "allowed Michelle to become a more complete person."

Golf Channel analyst Kay Cockerill similarly senses Wie West is really happy now. Cockerill always saw her trying to find balance, even if the public typically defined her solely through golf.

And though Wie West didn't win 20-something LPGA victories, a gaudy total that seemed realistic when she was a teenager, she still has had a profound impact on the game.

"Michelle brought so many young girls and boys into the game," Cockerill says. "She has a magnetic personality and a physicality on the course, much like Tiger. She really opened up a lot of people's eyes to the women's game."

These days, Wie West focuses less on her own game and more on wider-scope issues related to growing golf. She's talked of wanting to play for her daughter, and maybe that will motivate her to rejuvenate her career as Makenna (who turned 2 in June) gets older.

For now, she's content hanging with her "goofy, hilarious" daughter as much as possible. Wie West says she and her husband constantly laugh when they're with Makenna, the fun side of being a parent.

"She's the best thing to ever happen to me," Wie West says. "But it's hard. Your life changes overnight – you think you have nine months to prepare, but nothing prepares you for this." 🌿

Ron Kroichick covers golf for *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

PGA Frisco Set To Host 2023 PGA Buying & Education Summit

Complimentary registration is now open at PGABuyingSummit.com for PGA Professionals and golf buyers attending the PGA Buying & Education Summit at PGA Frisco, July 31-Aug. 2.

The new location and format for the event have attracted more than 120 top and emerging golf brands planning to showcase the latest trends in apparel, accessory and golf lifestyle products in the sold-out exhibit ballrooms of the new Omni PGA Frisco Resort. Participating brands also have been capped for the invitation only One to One buying appointments.

The packed three-day schedule also features equipment and technology testing, a fashion show, national-level PGA Education and peer networking during experiential events at the golf-centered entertainment and dining area of the Monument Realty PGA District.

Participation in the PGA Show Buying & Education Summit exhibits, special events and networking programs is complimentary for PGA Professionals and golf buyers.

Education enrollment for all six national-level education sessions is only \$75 for PGA Professionals and \$100 for golf buyers and industry professionals.

The Summit begins on Monday, July 31, with curated One to One Buying Appointments at the Omni PGA Frisco Resort and the PGA Education Conference at the new, state-of-the-art PGA Professional Development Center. This features hybrid indoor/outdoor hitting bays, simulators, an indoor short-game area, a putting lab, modern classrooms, and a full-size driving range.

The exhibits will be open Tuesday and Wednesday.

There will be a welcome reception and fashion show at the Omni PGA Frisco Resort on Monday, and Demo Night product testing at the Monument Realty PGA District on Tuesday. Both nights also will feature networking events and fun golf competitions within the PGA District, which features:

The Dance Floor, a lighted 2-acre putting course; The Swing, a 10-hole, lighted par-3 short course; the PGA Coaching Center, offering coaching, club fitting and fitness elements to golfers from PGA Professionals; restaurants, children's play areas, and shopping options for the public to enjoy, and Topgolf.

Organized tours of the new PGA Frisco campus are also being planned during event days. The new Home of the PGA of America debuted in August 2022.



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Prepare TO LAUNCH

Coming in all shapes and sizes now, tracking technology delivers more numbers and insight than a good accountant.

BY KEN VAN VECHTEN

Have you been to TopGolf? Balls appear from nowhere, teed up and ready to fly. You smack a 7-iron into the night sky and, voila!, seconds later lights flash and a fairy or a nymph lets you know where it came to rest in the mist-shrouded field. Constant auditory pulses wave in from the ether. Hell, grub and grog appear. It's like having Merlin as your caddie.

For all the badgering golf endures about being moldily tethered to the ways of old, our game is rather out there when it comes to new ways and new technology (too out there for the tastes of some). But that drive for advancement today isn't happening most dynamically, arguably, in the area we traditionally associate it with – the wands we wield and the orbs we swat. What we are now clearly seeing is the heretofore unseen; the how – and, more importantly, why – of what is happening to said ball when it is sent skyward by said club.

Tracking technology, in a nutshell.

Through a variety of “capture” techniques – at the essential level, think camera versus radar – with varying degrees of sophistication and thick-to-thin layers of datasets, and hence a retail ask stretching from a few hundred dollars well into five figures, a launch monitor exists to give a golfer, an instructor, and/or a clubfitter a snapshot of how the ball is performing at impact, through flight, and upon reconnection with Mother Earth. (In an indoor, simulated flight analysis the ball touches net shortly after takeoff, but the idea is the same.) Some devices capture a handful of the key parameters – clubhead and ball speed, launch angle, backspin, distance, and the like. Top-end products assess 30 or more data points, including attack angle, side spin, angle of descent, and shaft deflection.

(While the above are portable diagnostic devices – take 'em to the range, to the course, to the basement hitting bay – tracking technology powers the alpha facilities, too: TopGolf, BigShots Golf, DriveShack, and every indoor golf simulation – teaching or entertainment – center around.)

This spring Golfzon, an industry leader in the red-hot realm of indoor golf simulation (see “Opening Doors” in the November/December 2022 issue of *The Met Golfer*), joins with the likes of Foresight, Mevo, Trackman, and Rapsodo in the realm of portable tracking technology, and it is dubbed Wave.

Golfzon's new Wave (\$3999) is a radar-equipped device about the size of a small tablet capable of analyzing 26 flight parameters. Like many other higher-end devices, Wave also functions as a gameplay simulator, allowing fun or competitive play “on” tip-top courses around the world. Pebble Beach or St. Andrews, anyone? Wave also features a putting mat, where infrared detection picks up impact data allowing full tee-to-green “golf.”

There's also Wave Play (launching later this year), which uses a sensored, wand-like club with a weighted mechanism meant to mimic the swing dynamics of a driver on down to a putter – pre-selected by the player on the device – allowing practice or play from the same array of courses. Wave Play is more entertainment than

diagnostic tool, though it will integrate with Wave if Mom or Dad wants to work on swing mechanics and impact position while the little one just swings away.

"We want to get people involved in golf at all levels," says John O'Malley, Golfzon's chief revenue officer. "When you look at our portfolio, at one end we have our high-end, two-vision system with all the bells and whistles, and you can play 240 courses, practice, get instruction, etc. Then we have Wave, which acts as both a launch monitor but also a simulator at home with a putting mat. And then we have Wave Play. That's for fun. You have to have a portfolio for different calibers of users and golfers."

Rapsodo, maker of the wallet-friendly, covers-the-basics MLM Mobile Launch Monitor (\$299), has now released a camera-and-radar-based flight-analyzer/video-playback system that also supports simulated course play, the MLM2PRO (\$700). MLM2PRO includes specially tagged Callaway golf balls for indoor spin-rate capture. Bushnell (\$3,999) and Foresight Golf (\$5,999+) have been in the high-end personal portable monitor game for a while, with multi-data, three-camera units – with SIM capability. Swing Caddie, Garmin, and Sky-Track are just a few of the many other makers of tracking and/or tracking/simulation products. Please note that many of these products require an ongoing subscription to maintain all analytic and play functions. By the same token, indoor simulated play requires a game console, smartphone, or computer connection, a hitting bay (just a net and mat will do), and for highest entertainment value, a good-sized monitor.

For local teaching professionals, this technology has been a boon.

"I use this technology – a [higher-end] Bushnell GC3 – and particularly through the winter," says Scott Klemme, the general manager and director of instruction at Centennial Golf Club in

Carmel, N.Y. "It gives us all the data we need, all the parameters we need to 'see' real ball flight when we can't be teaching outdoors."

The biggest beneficiaries are students. "From a teaching point of view they are incredible," adds A.J. Berglund, the head pro at Anglebrook Golf Club in Lindendale, N.Y. "I've spent a lot of time working with Trackman, and it is fascinating how we [instructors] get all these data points for all these people. It is like putting a big puzzle together. Hands down the technology has made me a better teacher because I have a better understanding of what is going wrong – and right – and why."

And, of course, monitors and data collection are essential to clubfitting; a trained eye and ear are still cornerstones, but a tracking device – indoors or out – shows a lot more than tape and an impact board can. (With all due apologies to old-school fitters.)

If you decide to go down this track, don't go also down the rabbit hole. Klemme and Berglund both have clients and associates who've made a purchase. Some are inveterate number-geeks, some simply want a statistical backup to what the less empirical methods are telling them to do. Their collective advice boils down to two caveats: Don't overbuy. The \$500 unit does most all of what you need (but if that \$25,000 in-home studio system fires your rocket, ignite it). Know what the numbers mean. For those of a certain

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.
– Arthur C. Clarke

age, beware GIGO, in other words.

Or as Berglund wisely advises: "If you are going to buy one of these, take the time to actually understand it. Figure out the data that is important to you and spend time with a professional who understands your swing, so you know what is good for your swing."

And if all else fails ... pixie dust. ■

Opposite page: A backyard setup with the Golfzon Wave.
Below: An indoor Foresight Golf simulator in action.



Big Is Beautiful!

How Much More Distance Can We Expect In A Driver?



*Reprinted with permission
from FORE Magazine*

By Ken Van Vechten

Four hundred: That's how far I should be hitting my drives. Take my baseline 230-yarder from 15 or so years ago, add the gain promised annually with every best, better, bestest-ever driver released, and I'm a long-drive contender. "There is nothing in golf like crushing a drive," says Paul Bucy, director of the Palm Desert Golf Academy at Desert Willow GR. "It's one of the reasons we play golf. Everyone loves to bomb a driver."

Big is beautiful

And I've also won two Emmys, brokered peace in the U.S. House of Representatives and garnered a Noble Prize in chemistry.

Or perhaps none of that is true, save what Bucy said. The Holy Grail

Distance is the Fountain of Youth, Excalibur and Seven Cities of Cibola of golf wadded together. It is mythical. We lust for it. Few are the players who regale friend and family with tales of a double-breaking curler dropping in from across the green. But let the planets align just once and a hacker tags it 250 ... and the playback tape rolls on without stop.

And talk of distance fuels the industry: in advertising; on the range, where most of us ignore wedges to 100, 112 and 124, precisely; in devotion to pounding driver; and in the game as played by the best practitioners on the planet, who we tune in to most every Sunday afternoon. Distance is good because ours is

a downrange sport to a target that can seem very far away.

The thing is, we might've tapped out that well.

"There has been a huge change in equipment from 20 years ago, but I don't know how equipment is going to change that much going forward," Bucy explains. "We found a way to move weights around to help people who have biases in their ball flight. There is an array of shafts that help people with how they load and unload [the shaft] and with delivery of the clubface to the ball. Weight is down, and we have huge composite heads. And I don't think the ball can go much farther with how good it is now, and with the regulatory standards."

As Cobra Golf Vice President, Research & Development Tom Olsavsky advises, the advances to be gained by new gear and proper fitting are most typically inversely proportional to ability:

It is lesser-skilled golfers who likely have older, ill-fitting sticks and who, had they once been fitted, might not have gone back for a tune-up in years. We change, our swings change, our gear changes — grooves wear out, loft and lie get out of whack — and, yes, technology over time has wrought gains, but we can't take advantage of a better stick if we don't find one that works with our physique and swings.

"We in the industry always talk about fitting because that is the way we can get to an individual and give him or her what's needed," Olsavsky says. "It all comes down to what you have in the bag and should have in the bag. The funny thing is it's the higher handicapper who can see the biggest differences with new gear and a fitting. Golfers can improve, and we are trying to build equipment that delivers more distance and more accuracy, that delivers improvement."

End of the Road?

Perhaps a more germane inquiry is where that road has taken us.

When it comes to distance, elite and other capable high-swing-speed players have an interstate all their own and the on-ramp is closed to us by dint of basic physics. Data provided by the USGA shows that the average amateur in 2019 picked up only six yards over their 2000 self. (Ten yards were gained between 1996

and 2000, a period that saw an explosion in driver-head size — 250cc to 300 to 350 — and, at the end, the introduction of the modern golf ball, courtesy of the Pro V1.) Half a club in nearly 20 years? Where's the revolution?

Before reading the riot act to the salesperson at the shop and swearing fealty to bowling, chill. Better is the true way of golf, and while distance is a big part of that, so is accuracy, acumen and a deft touch. A big(ger) drive gets us close(r) to the hole with a short(er) club for our approach, but we play our foul balls, and while a 140-yard shot from the rough to a tucked pin might be in the wheelhouse of Nelly and Xander, the rest of us would be better off easing off on the gas and going in from 160 from the fairway.

Distance gains aren't a thing of the past, as more can be had. And it's just not a credit card away — it never really has been — and certainly not if you pulled out that card just a model cycle or three ago. It's also not to be found in 30-yard chunks with each equipment tweak.

Distance gains aren't a thing of the past, as more can be had. And it's just not a credit card away — it never really has been — and certainly not if you pulled out that card just a model cycle or three ago. It's also not to be found in 30-yard chunks with each equipment tweak.

For instance, improved aerodynamics and continued shaft advancements — ever lighter but able to withstand the forces imparted by a swing, thereby maintaining accuracy and optimal launch conditions — can yield more swing speed, which can yield more



ball speed, which leads to more firepower. Improved in-club diagnostic sensors could help players more readily identify swing flaws and work on cures. A longer shaft can produce more swing speed. Or it might not, since players often tap the brakes with a longer stick because they lose a sense of where the club “is” in their swing. It’s all about ball speed, anyway, which is swing speed and centeredness of contact — in other words, hitting it on the screws.

“I’m asked this question a lot more now than I was 10 years ago,” Bucy explains. “How do I increase my clubhead speed?” There are a lot of golfers who have moderate clubhead speed and who can find the center of the clubface, yet when we work with a bunch of different drivers, we don’t see a lot of gains because all these drivers are all really good at this point. If there is a bad driver out there, it’s not going to sell. To say one is longer can’t be done because of the [USGA] regulations and the build-quality of all these manufacturers.”

“If there is a bad driver out there, it’s not going to sell. To say one is longer can’t be done because of the [USGA] regulations and the build-quality of all these manufacturers.” -- Paul Bucy

Longer for a particular swing or person? Yes. But in the abstract, not demonstrably longer versus its peers in the market. Or last year’s version.

Still, for most of us, if we have newer gear, and it fits us, we can find meaningfully greater distance, but in doing so something will be asked of us: Golfer,

improve thyself. Lessons and practice are good. We also need to stretch, work on strength and balance, and take up yoga or Pilates, as Bucy ardently advises. If we move the club faster and hit the sweet spot more consistently, we will add distance and accuracy. To borrow an album title from Steely Dan, you can’t buy a thrill. Oh, and move up at least one set of tees. Most players’ distance “problem” is an ego problem.

In other words, it takes work.

That’s the short and long of it, and it’s always been that way, whether done by baby steps or huge leaps.



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Some Days... Are Better... Than Others

When Jim Mercado heard his name called as the winner of the “Trip of a Lifetime” at the 2022 World Am, he was only half paying attention.

After all, in the preceding 24 hours he’d already been announced as a co-winner of his flight, he passed a kidney stone that had been bothering him for months, and everyone in his flight won a Golf Buddy rangefinder.

Was it really possible he also won the World Am’s grand prize, an all-expenses paid six-night, six-round trip to Myrtle Beach?

Yes, it was.

As Mercado processed what had happened, he grew increasingly excited.

“I started getting together with (tournament director) Scott (Tomasello) and I’m like holy crap, this is one the best things that has ever happened to me,” Mercado said.

In addition to golf and accommodations for a foursome, the trip included flights, rental car and Mercado’s choice of courses to play.

His World Am friends, several of whom have played in the event for more than 30 years without winning a random drawing prize, were green with envy, but Mercado’s sons, Eric and Bryan, graciously volun-

teered to join their father on the trip, turning it into a family affair. Long-time friend Jamie Thacker completed the foursome.

Eric and Bryan flew in from Denver and Columbus while Jim and Thacker made the trek from the Dallas/Fort Worth area to enjoy a dream vacation.

The golf course lineup was like a “who’s who” of the area’s best layouts, featuring Arcadian Shores Golf Club, Grande Dunes Resort Course, Prestwick Country Club, Tidewater Golf Club, TPC Myrtle Beach and True Blue Golf Club.

The group played golf by day and enjoyed food

and drinks at Chuck’s Steakhouse, Greg Norman’s Australian Grille, Cafe Old Vienna, and Dead Dog Saloon, among other places, reveling in the camaraderie of a trip they all enjoyed for free.

“It was a great time for all of us to hang out and have a good time, and we got to play really cool golf,” Mercado said.

For those of you wondering if Mercado’s dream 24 hours continued into his performance during the 2022 Flight Winners Playoff, the answer is no. He finished T-56 with a net 84, playing as a nine handicap.

A man can only ask for so much!



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LAST WORD BY JIMMY ROBERTS, NBC SPORTS



Bifurcated Feelings

Is a rolled-back golf ball for elite golfers a good thing?

I must've flunked geometry because I never realized that a sphere actually had sides. Apparently so, because the golf ball—a round object—has two (very differing) perspectives on where we are and where we're heading.

I get both opinions. Really, I do. But for a debate that has inspired SUCH passionate partisanship, I just can't bring myself to figure out where I stand.

That might be because so many of the opposing arguments seem reasonable and sane. (How often do we disagree on *anything* these days without it being a hill to die on affair?)

On March 14th, the USGA and the R&A announced their plan to finally address golf's elephant in the room the last few years: the increase in the distance elite golfers have been hitting the ball.

"Predictable, continued increases will become a significant issue for the next generation if not addressed soon," USGA CEO Mike Whan said.

"What is right is not always popular. What is popular is not always right."

In the eyes of the game's rules-makers and watchdogs, we are traveling down a road that might soon threaten to make some of golf's most historically significant tracks obsolete.

Last summer, the 150th Open Championship was celebrated at St. Andrews, where all 83 players who made the cut averaged 299.8 yards off the tee. When the championship was held there seven years earlier, just 29 of the 80 players who made the weekend hit it that far.

So, what say you? When Aaron Judge hit 62 home runs last year, I don't remember a

movement to push back the fences at Yankee Stadium. (OK — maybe Red Sox fans might've felt that way.)

Here's the problem: Unlike Augusta National which can just stretch to its heart content — the 13th this year "grew" by 35 yards—places like St. Andrews and Merion, and who knows how many other courses are just maxed out. If you want to make the 18th at the Old Course any longer, you'd probably have to put the Valley of Sin across the street at the Dunvegan — which, come to think of it, might not be a bad idea for the name of an anteroom at the famous pub.

But even if that were an option, it would be an absurdly expensive one. And wouldn't it be kind of like putting a cell tower at the top of the Washington Monument? We'd get

better phone service. But just because technology marches on, is that really a good idea?

The arrived upon solution is the dreaded "B word."

Bifurcation. One set of rules—or equipment—for the pros and another for the provolones. That would be us.

They do it in baseball. Major leaguers don't use aluminum bats. If they did, places like Fenway and Wrigley would have instantly become arcade games.

In fact, nothing would change for all of us who play recreational golf.

ZERO.

"I'm glad in this new proposal that they haven't touched the recreational golfer," Rory McIlroy told the No Laying Up podcast. "But for elite level play, I really like it. I really do. I know that's a really unpopular opinion among my peers, but I think it's going to help identify who the best players are a bit easier."

But some people feel even though it doesn't affect recreational players... it really does.

Think of it this way: even if the smallest NBA players can dunk with ferocity and effortlessly drain jumpers from distances we could never even imagine trying... the rims on all our playgrounds and driveways are still 10-feet high... because that's the standard.

As my friend Ben Daughan says: "Frank Daughan (his dad) likes going to his club and knowing that he's facing the same challenge as the best in the world."

But there's something else.

This could cost the manufacturers millions for a product they can never sell.

I'm pretty sure this is going to happen—the comment period is six months, and then what they call "the Model Local Rule" is set to go into effect in 2026—but even if I've yet to figure out how I feel about it... I do believe this: the governing bodies who've proposed this aren't acting out of some self-interest. They think what they've proposed—perhaps imperfect—is what's best for the game.

That remains to be seen.

A long time ago I worked with Howard Cosell. One of his favorite quotes seems to sum it up in my eyes: "What is right is not always popular. What is popular is not always right." ■



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news

Zero Friction LLC, an industry leader in innovative golf products, including its “one size” patented compression-fit technology golf gloves and its award-winning Wheel Pro push cart bag, recently received a notice from the United States Patent and

Trademark Office that another of its patent filings on its innovative one size and multi-fit glove technology has been allowed.

“When this patent issues, Zero Friction will add another patent to its already impressive portfolio of 12 US and foreign patents covering this glove technology; demonstrating, once again, that Zero Friction is a true innovator in this area,” said **John Iacono**, CEO and Founder of Zero Friction.

Customers are thrilled with how the gloves mold to you hand, regardless of size.

One customer review on GolfersRX stated, “When I put it on I was immediately at ease because it fit perfectly! I was amazed that it also fit everyone else who I asked to try it on. The real difference however came when I tested it on the range. I tested throughout four range sessions of 50 balls with a regular golf glove and 50 with Zero Friction’s compression fit glove. I wish I could say that I didn’t

see a difference – but I did. I was able to control my draw and fade with higher precision than I could with a regular golf glove. It’s hard to describe the way the compression fit glove feels, only that the glove molded to my hand perfectly and was incredibly comfortable – and it’s safe to say its the best fitting golf glove I have ever worn.”

Retailers love the glove as well. Zero Friction’s true advantage for retailers is that the universal fit means shops do not have to carry a huge inventory of sizes. Instead, the shops can offer a large selection of colors.

ING member and First Tee-Sarasota executive **Andy Mears** recently received the Youth Player Development Award from the Southwest Chapter, North Florida PGA. “We love growing the game of golf,” said Mears.



Colorado AvidGolfer, a leading regional golf lifestyle brand, has a new content leader. **Jon Rizzi**, the brand’s Founding Editor and content leader for the past 21 years, has retired and the company has selected Jim Bebbington as its new Content Director.

New England dot Golf, a digital marketing platform that highlights the best of golf in New England and beyond, is pleased to announce that award-winning publicist and marketing specialist



Lynn Luczkowski (L2 Communications) has joined its team of golf and travel writers.

Luczkowski has represented leading golf and sporting goods manufacturers, consumer lifestyle brands, clubs, and resorts over a 25-year span and has also written for golf publications and mainstream media. She is a member of the International Network of Golf, and Golf Travel Writers.

Blue Tees Golf, a rapidly growing producer of golf rangefinders and accessories, has teamed up with Sean Foley, one of the biggest names in golf instruction. Foley has been voted among the best golf teachers in the world by players on the PGA Tour.

“Choosing Blue Tees Golf was simple. It is one of the best products on the market and at an incredibly reasonable price,” said Foley.

Foley has taught major players like Tiger Woods, Cameron Champ, Justin Rose, Lydia Ko, and many more but he also offers elite golf training for rising players of all ages. He will use Blue Tees Golf’s leading technology, which includes the Series 3 Max, the Player+ and Ringer while teaching on and off the golf course.

“I am glad to partner with Blue Tees Golf. Their rangefinders are fantastic. The technology is within one yard differential,” said Foley. “This is so important when selecting your club and moving forward. I trust Blue Tees Golf and that is why I partnered with them.”

Drew Koehler, Co-Founder and Head of Business Development of Blue Tees Golf agrees, “We are incredibly excited to welcome Sean to the team. Having someone of his caliber endorse our products is game changing. Sean’s prominence on the PGA Tour and exposure on the Netflix docuseries Full Swing will help the company grow brand awareness exponentially,”



Mike Bowman, President and CEO of the **Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board** (VFTCB), has once again been named to the 2023

Philadelphia Business Journal Power 101 list, compiled by Editor-in-Chief Ryan Sharrow.

The distinction honors not only professions in powerful positions, but also those helping to shape the future of their respective industries. Sharrow’s assessment of Bowman’s notable work reported that “... tourism continues to rebound in Montgomery County after being hit hard by the pandemic. Last year ... Bowman projected the county would very nearly return to prepandemic revenue in 2022 of \$250.7 million in revenue. something it expects to only grow in 2023.

“When the county hosts the U.S. Youth Soccer Eastern Presidents Cup in June, it will be the largest sporting event yet, expected to generate a nearly \$5 million economic impact,” the write-up concluded.

Bowman cited the efforts of his staff to the success the destination-marketing agency has had.

“I’m so proud to work with an incredible team of industry leaders every day to support hoteliers, partners, and overall tourism in Montco,” he said.

“The team’s commitment to innovation and creativity is just remarkable. It’s one of the many reasons why Montgomery County continues to lead and outperform the region.”

Bridgestone Golf recently announced the signing of former college star Logan McAllister to its Tour staff. McAllister is great addition to a growing list of talented players sponsored by Bridgestone.

McAllister played four years at the University of Oklahoma where he was teammates with another Sooner star and recent Bridgestone signing, Chris Gotterup.

Together the pair dominated with McAllister collecting ten top 10 finishes and four wins, the second most wins in program history. The Oklahoma native was a two-time All American, a member of the Big 12 First Team, and a Haskins Award finalist.





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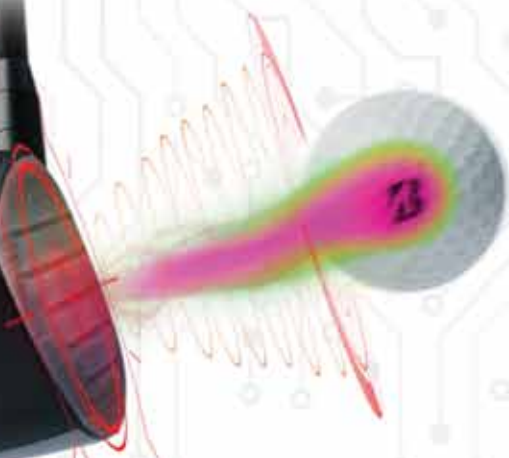


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PARTING SHOT



A Raven's Claw Tradition In Valley Forge

Mike Kern bites into a roast pork sandwich, created by Sessano's Chef and Owner Santino Ciccaglioni, who hosted the ING Awards Dinner following the Durland Cup at the ING Spring Forum. It was as tasty as advertised!