

WHAT'S THE FUSS?

Written by TMAC GOLF
Thursday, 16 February 2017 07:42

People want it, while others do everything they can to prevent it. Ask anyone who plays and the number one thing they want is more distance off the tee. The motto for the USGA and R&A is to preserve the integrity of the game and the root of that centers around distance. Damned if you do, if you are the stewards of the game and damned if you don't if you are the equipment manufacturer. In this eternal tug of war, it isn't too difficult to see which side is really winning the battle.

The governing bodies recently published their annual review of driving distance. According to the organizations, driving distance data was used from seven of the major professional golf tours, based on approximately 285,000 drives per year. Data from studies of male and female amateur golfers has also been included for the first time.

Key facts noted in the paper include:

- Between 2003 and the end of the 2016 season, average driving distance on five of the seven tours has **increased by approximately 1.2%, around 0.2 yards per year**

- For the same time period, average driving distance on the other two tours studied **decrease d by approximately 1.5%**

- Looking at all of the players who are ranked for distance on the PGA TOUR and PGA European Tour, the amount by which players are "long" or "short" has not changed – for instance, since 2003 the 10 shortest players in that group are about 6% shorter than average, while the 10 longest players in the group are about 7% longer than average. The statistics are not skewed toward either longer or shorter players.

- The average launch conditions on the PGA TOUR – clubhead speed, launch angle, ball speed and ball backspin – have been relatively stable since 2007. The 90th-percentile clubhead speed coupled with the average launch angle and spin rate are very close to the conditions that

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The R&A and the USGA, golf's governing bodies, use to test golf balls under the Overall Distance Standard.

When you consider the hundreds and hundreds of new drivers that have been introduced from the manufacturing community from 2003 to 2016, all promising greater distance its startling to think the data categorically refutes the marketing departments claims! Forget about all the times the word innovative has been used to articulate the next game changer being promised from marketing departments. The *reality*, according to the USGA and R&A DATA, is that simply isn't the case. What this information supports is the argument that the driver you already own is just as long, if not as good as the one you're about to buy!

Martin Slumbers, chief executive of The R&A, stated, "In the interests of good governance and transparency it is important that we continue to provide reliable data and facts about driving distance in golf. Driving distance remains a topic of discussion within the game and the review provides accurate data to help inform the debate." Clearly Slumbers will never be confused for a marketing maven!

The 2016 report can be viewed at usga.org via [this link](#) and RandA.org .

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