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**MAY 2007
NEWSLETTER**

Golf & Metal

By Jim Stavis

The game of golf is as old as any game on the planet. Whether you actively play, like to watch Tiger Woods or hack up the course on weekends, you know golf is a game for the ages. I remember when I was young, many of my friends played the game but I proudly stated "I won't play golf because it's an old man's game." What I didn't consider was that one day I too would be an old man. Not much foresight there.

The game of golf has truly changed over time. Its origins clearly exist in Europe from other games in which a small object was struck with a stick. The Dutch had a game called kolfas as early as 1296 which was played in churchyards,

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Golf and Metal

(Continued from Front)

highways and frozen lakes. An object was hit toward a succession of targets by striking the ball with a long handled wooden club. Ultimately it was the Scots who popularized the game. It became so popular in Scotland that in 1467 Parliament banned the game because it was taking time from archery practice, which was necessary for national defense. It has been said that the word “golf” stands for the slogan “Gentleman Only – Ladies Forbidden” as a chauvinist kind of sport, but everything I read would prove otherwise.

There have been many equipment changes through the years that have impacted the game. The early golf clubs were made entirely of wood. Not only was this material easy to shape, but it was soft enough not to damage the stuffed leather golf balls that were used until the mid 1800s. It was at that time in 1848 that a hard rubber gutta-percha golf ball was introduced that could not be damaged, allowing clubs with iron heads to be produced. Such clubs

could be made with sharply inclined faces without losing their strength. These irons would be used for making shorter, higher trajectory shots, while woods were used for making longer, low trajectory shots.

After the 1920s, manufacturers introduced golf clubs with shafts made from fiber-reinforced composite materials originally developed for military and aerospace applications. These shafts were lighter than steel, but more expensive. The first metal headed drivers were developed in 1979. It is rare today to see a wood driver that is actually made of wood (the material). The design of golf clubs today is both an art and a science. Clubs are produced that allow the average golfer a larger margin of error in striking the golf ball and allows for distances that were previously unheard of. This has forced golf course designers to rethink their courses to accommodate the longer distances that golfers could now achieve.

The metal manufacturers have helped to facilitate the new designs created by the club makers. With the current use of stainless steel shafts, titanium head



drivers and casted irons, the golf club industry is always searching for new technology, to create a longer, more accurate weapon. What is interesting is with three decades (1968-1995) of golf club design improvements, the driving distance of the best professional golfers has increased by only 12 yards and the winning score fell at a rate of only one stroke every 21 years. So it beckons the

questions: are all these improvements real or just golf hype?

My Hole in One

For those who play the game, they know the most unforgettable moment is the penultimate “hole in one.” Many good golfers can play their entire golf life without attaining this prize. It is so rare that tournament organizers give



away cars to any golfer who should be so lucky to attain one. According to Golf Digest, the odds of hitting a hole in one is one in 12,000 for an amateur golfer, about one in 7,500 for a professional.

Last month, I played a round with a few friends at the Trump National Golf Club in Palos Verdes. At the 142

yard, par three - fourth hole, I hit my eight iron straight to the pin. There was a marshal (course representative) who watched my ball fall gently into the cup and he started jumping up and down. Yes, it was a hole in one: a shot I will never forget. To memorialize it, the course sent me the flag from the flagstick signed by Donald Trump.

When people learn of my feat, the first question asked is whether it is my first ace. As an average golfer I'm embarrassed to say that it is actually my third one. And that, my friends, is the definition of lucky. If you have a hole in one story, please e-mail it to me at jstavis@paragonsteel.com. They are fun to share.

Quote of the Month

*“As you walk down the fairway of life,
you must smell the roses,
for you only get to play one round.
Golf is the only sport where the most
feared opponent is you.”*

-Ben Hogan