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For the Alpha Male

by Tom Dellner

We don't often feature reviews of equipment manufactured by obscure companies. It's not that we have a bias against the little guy trying to carve out a niche in an industry dominated by large, usually publicly held companies. To be candid—and to risk appearing cynical—it's because there's often a good reason the company is unknown: Nine times out of 10, the product is of inferior quality compared to that of the more familiar brands.

Which makes it all the more fun on the rare occasions that we do discover a hidden gem among the dozens of products sent to us each month by little-known manufacturers. Like the C830.2 Driver, manufactured by Alpha Golf (a company you've never heard of), a special division of Kent Sports (another company you've never heard of).

While four-year-old Alpha Golf remains little-known, its drivers have been a preferred brand on the long-drive tours almost from the company's inception.

The C830.2 has a 460cc (USGA maximum) clubhead with a face forged of a dense yet elastic SP-700 titanium for maximum ball speed. A unique hosel position minimizes the distance between the shaft and the center of the face to reduce torque and improve the driver's workability.

We found the C830.2 to be unlike any other maximum-sized driver we've hit, in both appearance and performance. First of all, it is extremely rounded, in a couple of dimensions. Not only is its profile (the view from the player's perspective at address) almost circular, its crown is rounded and domed, too.

Second—and more important—the Alpha driver looks like a 3-wood next to other 460cc drivers. You'll swear it's 400cc or less. (Most of the clubhead's volume comes from its depth—this clubhead, unlike most other driver heads, does not taper significantly from the face to the rear of the club.) As a result, the clubhead seems easier to square at impact.

It performs like a more traditionally sized driver, as well. Sure, as with other supersized drivers, the ball comes off the C830.2's face with a lot of speed and reduced spin for maximum distance (it's among the longest drivers we've tested). But with some 4600 drivers, slight variations in impact position—especially vertically on the face—can lead to rather dramatic differences in trajectory. (We're not saying these drivers aren't forgiving—slight mis-hits still fly relatively straight and suffer little distance loss—it's just that you may see significant changes in ballflight.) With the C830.2, the ballflight is quite consistent, even if you slightly miss the center of the face; shot after shot, you'll look up after impact and see your ball in the air exactly where you expect it to be. Now that builds confidence.