

Under the Radar

Check out these two equipment options you might not have considered

By Mike Bailey

Speaking of drivers ...

Do you like to bomb it off the tee? Who doesn't?

If that's the case, you might want to check out Alpha Golf from Kentsports Inc., the choice, it turns out, for quite a few competitors in the Long Drivers of America events.

Company president Jim Yeh said several players use Alpha's clubs in those competitions, many of them without their knowledge, but they do have a few on contract. Those include Danny Luirette, Jeff Swihart and Eric Jones.

"All have placed respectably in the sport," Yeh said. "Eric won the

2003 world title, and Danny placed second at last year's RE/MAX [World Long Drive Championship]."

The driver has definitely driven Alpha Golf, which offers a full line of clubs. The company came about in late 2000, when it first introduced the Alpha Reaction.

"Right away the players picked it up noting the benefits in distance and forgiveness," Yeh said. "Since then, we've had tremendous success with each of our drivers. Lots of people hit them, we get phone calls everyday from people around the world saying they love them."

Yeh said Alpha Golf isn't just about bringing something new.

"We're not a brand that tricks people into thinking 'newer is better,'" he said. "Sometimes, it's not. The (425cc) V2 has been around for three years, and it's still one of our top sellers."

The V2 has been a favorite among long drivers, having won three world titles. The newer 460cc C830.2, which features an "innovative Increased Target Design (ITD) face insert for a large sweet spot and super hot face," also has won three championships and is the most used driver on the circuit, Yeh said.

So what makes Alpha drivers so unique?

"Our drivers are actually designed quite simply to fundamentally address each and every player characteristic," Yeh said. "The projections of the center of gravity on the face, and the actual center of gravity location are all very carefully

placed along with the optimal COR zone. This allows us to focus on addressing the spin, launch angle, forgiveness and speed (COR).

"But perhaps more importantly, all our clubs are never designed to promote a marketing message – each club and their weight distribution is done so because it enhances performance for a specific player type. That's why the design works. We don't design things in and see if they will be of benefit. Every part of the club's structure is there for a reason."

Yeh said the same philosophy goes into the irons. Coupled with varying degrees of weight distribution for differences in playability and forgiveness, all the faces (including the blades) are CNC-milled to achieve the accuracy of all the engineering parameters of the design, he said.

"Basically, if we didn't CNC-mill the faces, players wouldn't be able to take advantage of the center of gravity placement and weight distribution benefits," Yeh said. "Again with the irons, we address the most fundamental issue of how the impact is made with the ball."

Unlike KZG, Alpha Golf is a component company, popular among do-it-yourselfers and clubmakers alike. (To find distributors, visit www.alphagolfclubs.com.)

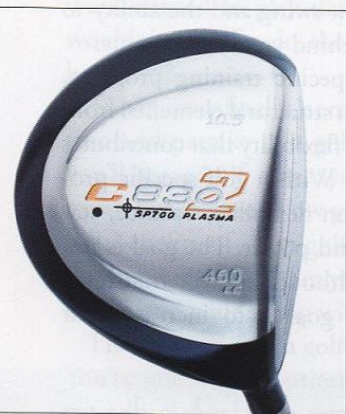
"We are seeing a trend of younger and younger players approaching us, which I think is great because I've always hoped that all ages could reap benefits from this game," Yeh said. "The people that have played with Alpha in the past are also hardcore loyal enthusiasts. They watch for every product that comes out and always want to be the first to try them and spread the word."

And like KZG, Alpha doesn't do much in the way of advertising. And that money is sunk back into the product, Yeh said. Alpha Golf uses the same major foundries that supply TaylorMade and Mizuno, for example.

"We demand the best quality," Yeh said. "Cleveland is bragging about their CNC-milled wedges, while we've been using the same procedure in all our irons and wedges for years."

So why Alpha Golf over the major manufacturers, especially since it's not necessarily cheaper? Yeh said it's because of the variety. With a wide selection of products, Alpha can offer gear to fit every type of player, no matter the skill level or physical attributes.

"We are never going to market the 'best club for everyone' message, because that simply will never be true," Yeh said. "Our clubs are designed to fundamentally address the issues different players face."



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Mike Bailey is based in Houston and has covered the golf industry for several national golf publications over the past 10 years. Currently, he's a senior writer for Golfweek's SuperNews.