

# 12 Myths That Could Wreck Your Golf Game

**Excerpts from  
The Search  
for the  
Perfect Golf Club**

Tom Wishon  
with Tom Grundner



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# Introduction

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The game of golf is treading water these days.

Each year about the same number of people leave the game as start playing. When surveyed, one of the major reasons given by those who give up golf is “frustration with the game.”

This fact led noted golf club designer Tom Wishon to ask: how much of that frustration is the result of a game that is, admittedly, inherently frustrating to even the best players; and how much of it is caused by “equipment-induced frustration”? How many of those golfers simply hit a “grass ceiling” where they found themselves trapped in a nightmare of publicly embarrassing poor performance caused by equipment that not only would not—but *could not possibly*—meet their needs. Thinking they are playing with equipment that is properly designed and fitted (after all, they paid enough for the stuff), they can then only ascribe their failings to themselves—to their own ineptitude—and give up on the game.

To help deal with this problem, in 2005 Wishon wrote *The Search for the Perfect Golf Club*, which became an immediate success. It was the first book to explain to the average golfer, in simple terms, how golf clubs worked, how you can make them perform better for YOUR game, what to look for (and look out for) in buying clubs, and much more. Chief among his assertions is that *all golfers—from beginners to single-digit handicappers—will directly and immediately benefit from custom built clubs*, and that perfecting this area will be the next major frontier in golf.

*The Search for the Perfect Golf Club* has become the one book that every golfer needs to own and read! Excerpts in *12 Myths* will introduce you to Wishon’s work in an entertaining way.

After reading this mini-book, we’re sure you will agree that the full version of *The Search for the Perfect Golf Club* belongs in YOUR library.

# Myth 1

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Modern golf clubs hit farther than clubs of even a few years ago.

In reality, no, they don't. What you are seeing basically is a marketing gimmick.

Let's begin at the beginning.

Three things primarily determine the distance you hit a golf ball: the loft of the clubhead, the length of the shaft, and the speed with which you swing. There is also a time proven adage about golf clubs—the longer the length, the lower the loft, the heavier the weight, and the stiffer the shaft, the harder the club will be to hit. Over the past few years your body's swing speed has probably stayed about the same, but the loft angles and the shaft length of your clubs have not.

Each year, in order to say their clubs "hit farther," the club companies have been tinkering with the loft angles on the faces of your clubheads—lowering them a bit at a time each year. As a result, every club in the set has moved "up" at least one, if not two, numbers. So, when you go to a driving range for "demo day" and you are hitting a 6-iron farther than you hit your old 5-iron, you now know why. It's because that shiny new 6-iron in your hands *was* a 5-iron only a few years ago and probably a 4-iron a few years before that.

In some ways these changes would be comical if they didn't have such sad results. Now golfers carry clubs that are, in effect, designed from the factory to be unhittable in the hands of the average golfer and are forced to buy additional clubs that they otherwise would not have needed.

Again, let me start with some background.

In the world of club design there is something called the "24/38 Rule." Basically, it says that the average golfer cannot hit an iron that has less than 24 degrees of loft or more than 38 inches of length. The reason is that a club like that requires a swing precision that the average golfer rarely has the opportunity to attain.

**Table 1—The Dreaded Vanishing Loft Disease**

Evolution of Men's Wood & Iron Lofts—Industry Average				
Club	1960s–70s (degrees)	1980s (degrees)	Early 1990s (degrees)	1997+ (degrees)
1-iron	17	17	16	16–17
2-iron	20	20	19	18–20
3-iron	24	23	22	20–21
4-iron	28	26	25	23–24
5-iron	32	30	28	26–27
6-iron	36	34	32	30–31
7-iron	40	38	36	34–35
8-iron	44	42	40	38–40
9-iron	48	46	44	42–44
PW	52	50	48	46–48
SW	56	56	56	55–56
Driver	11	11	10	9–10.5
3-wood	16	15	15	13–14
5-wood	22	21	19	17–18
7-wood	28	27	23	20–21

Note: A quick look at the information above shows how drastically golf club companies have reduced their loft angles over the past few decades. This was done primarily so they could say their clubs hit the ball farther and thereby sell more clubs.

A few years ago the 24/38 line fell on the other side of the 3-iron. So, when you bought a set of clubs, you bought a 3-iron through pitching wedge and you could reasonably expect to hit each of those clubs. Because of the “vanishing loft disease” I just described, the 24/38 line has now moved to just the shy side of the 5-iron—making the 3- and 4-iron unhittable for most people.

So, what are you supposed to do? It's simple. The club companies want you *to buy three more clubs* to compensate for the corner that *they* painted you into. You are now supposed to buy something called “hybrid” clubs, which are easy-to-hit substitutes for the 3- and 4-irons that are no longer hittable by the majority of golfers. In addition, as all the irons have now moved up and away from the sand wedge, you are now supposed to buy something called a “gap wedge” to fill in the “gap” *they* created with their loft-shrinking marketing stunts.

For more information on this topic refer to *The Search for the Perfect Golf Club*: “The Dreaded Vanishing Loft Disease” (pg. 7) and “Set Makeup and the 24/38 Rule” (pg. 139).

## Myth 2

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The longer my driver is, the farther I'll be able to hit the ball.

In my estimation, 90 percent of the drivers sold in the shops today are too long for most players. If that's the case for you, then get it cut down and re-swing-weighted to the shorter length, and don't be shy about doing it. Here's why:

Let's start with the issue of distance. Most golfers believe that longer length drivers will hit farther. They won't. Drivers ranging from 43 to 45 inches were put to a test with 50 different golfers of varying handicap levels. Here are the data. Read it for yourself. The difference in distance between a 43- and a 45-inch driver is a whopping yard plus inches. Accuracy wise, there is no question that the old adage of “the longer the length, the harder the club is to hit” certainly rings true.

But wait. The plot thickens.

There is another reason for having a shorter driver. It appears that, in the hands of real people the shorter driver might very well hit the ball, not just with more accuracy but more distance as well.

For every quarter inch you miss the sweet spot on your driver, you lose about five yards in distance. Miss it by a half inch and you lose 10 yards; an inch, 20 yards, and so forth.

Conversely, if you can gain enough control of the club to hit the ball even a half inch closer to the sweet spot, you'll not only enjoy the distance increase that comes with a more solid impact but you'll be more likely to keep the ball on the fairway.

Okay, fine. So most golfers today are using clubs that are too long to allow

Golfer Handicap Group	Driver Length (inches)	Average Distance (carry in yards)	Average Misdirection (yards off center of fairway)
24 to 36	45	206.4	+/- 25.3
	44	207.0	+/- 21.3
	43	207.3	+/- 16.7
18 to 23	45	214.2	+/- 26.4
	44	214.8	+/- 22.7
	43	215.7	+/- 17.0
12 to 17	45	221.3	+/- 23.5
	44	222.5	+/- 18.1
	43	222.8	+/- 15.1
6 to 11	45	227.1	+/- 18.2
	44	228.1	+/- 15.6
	43	228.4	+/- 11.8
0 to 5	45	238.7	+/- 15.7
	44	238.3	+/- 12.2
	43	237.5	+/- 9.7

them to play their best. How do you know what the right length is for you? Most people assume that if they are taller than 6'2" or shorter than 5'8", they might need "inch-over" or "inch-under" length clubs. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The length of your clubs is not determined by your height; it is determined by the length of your arms, and then massaged from there to the final length by your swing plane and ball striking ability! A custom clubmaker works with one basic principle in mind:

The proper length for all golfers is the longest length that the golfer can hit SOLID AND ON-CENTER the highest percentage of the time. Truth is, when it comes to your woods that length is undoubtedly shorter than what you are using now.

The way a clubmaker determines proper length is by first measuring the distance from the golfer's wrist to the floor and referencing that dimension to a chart developed over years of fitting research to guide the initial club length

recommendations. Fitting length is not done through a fingertip to floor measurement, but wrist to floor. The reason is because of the wide variance people have in finger length and the fact that the end of your grip lines up closer to where your wrists are in the grip. The wrist measurement is a more reliable measurement to indicate arm length. The size of your hands or length of your fingers is only relevant to grip fitting and not club length.

**Table 2—Wrist-to-Floor Measurement for Initial Club Lengths (inches)**

Wrist-to-Floor	Driver Length	5-Iron Length
27 to 29	42	36.5
29 to 32	42.5	37
32 to 34	43	37.5
34 to 36	43.5	38
36 to 37	44	38.25
37 to 38	44.25	38.5
38 to 39	44.5	38.75
39 to 40	44.75	39
40 to 41	45	39.25
41 to 42	45.5	39.5
over 42	46 and up	39.75 and up

Note: A wrist-to floor measurement is used as the initial guideline for determining club lengths for the golfer that will match well with their height and arm length for comfort. To make the measurement correctly, wear flat-sole shoes only, stand comfortably erect, shoulders perfectly level, arms hanging relaxed at the sides. The measurement is made from the major wrist crease on the dominant hand to the floor in inches plus any fraction.

So, proper length fitting starts with a length recommendation based on the golfer’s wrist-to-floor measurement. But, that is just the beginning. After the initial length from the wrist-to-floor measurement is determined, a good custom fitter will look at both your swing plane and your swing tempo as well as your ability to athletically control the club during the swing. Only after those data are factored in will a final length recommendation be made.

For more information on this topic, refer to *The Search for the Perfect Golf Club: “A-R-G-G-H!! Drivers”* (pg. 150) and “Finding the Right Length” (pg. 146).