

Duffer strives for the perfect putter



Ted Doman demonstrates his cylindrical-headed golf putter. The "Hi-Tec" putter has been approved for tournament play by the United States Golf Association (USGA).

By Teri Dumas
staff writer

When Ted Doman first began design work on his cylindrical-headed golf putter, he had no plans to make a lot of money.

His main reason for designing the club was to provide work for a friend's Redford Township tool and die company which was experiencing hard times during the recession.

Now two years and some \$10,000 later, Doman, a feisty 70-year-old, believes he has discovered the answer to the world's putting problems.

The Livonia's discovery, which has come to be called the "Hi-Tec" putter, involved determining what constitutes "the perfect putt."

The idea came two years ago when I started playing golf again with an old putter and got an unusual bounce with the ball. I began to look into the reasons of why this happened and did an analytical study and designs and found the defect was built into the club itself," said Doman, a retired commercial real estate salesman of 30 years. "I found this could be eliminated with a round club."

"With the round-headed putter it doesn't matter if you're ahead or behind the ball. It compensates for the improper position of your hands. To a

great extent, it eliminates that hopping and skipping," he added.

DOMAN, who said a shoulder injury prevented him from playing golf for almost 20 years, began working on the perfect putter as a hobby in the basement of his Livonia home. With the help of a computer, he designed as many as eight different prototypes before hitting on the right formula, taking a scientific approach toward such elements as the diameter of the putting head, its placement in relation to the putting shaft (the shaft must be placed right at the center of percussion, called "the sweet spot"), and the overall weight.

"Oh, I'm an expert on putting. I bet you I've putted 10,000 golf balls trying this thing out."

Doman, who's at an age when most people are content to sit back and consider their life's accomplishment, is an example of a man who prefers to view his "Golden Years" with vigor.

"I've always been a non-conformist. Independent. I quit General Motors (and went to work selling commercial and industrial real estate) and probably could have had a pension by now. But hell, I'd probably be dead by now."

With his formal education in engineering, he becomes animated when he talks about his work on the perfect putter.

"THE THING I love about this is I've created something that isn't entirely new but it's an improvement. I've always thought that if someone can sell something as stupid as a pet rock than I can sell this. It's got a utilitarian purpose and it's an improvement over what's on the market."

Doman, whose patent is pending on the Hi-Tec putter, last November received word from the United States Golf Association (USGA) informing him that the model he submitted for inspection conforms to stringent association rules. That means it can be used in tournament play.

Frank Thomas, technical director for the USGA, said his position prohibits him from commenting on its merits. But he did say round-headed putters have not been all together uncommon over the years, just not very popular.

"We've had as many as 10 (round-headed) putters submitted over the years but I don't believe they've been as popular in comparison to the blade-type putters. Why? I can only speculate. Either through marketing or performance problems."

Doman said he plans to launch a direct mail marketing drive aimed at some 7,000 golf pros and pro shops in the United States. His marketing strategy includes sales to big "Fortune 500" companies as retirement gifts and cor-

porate sales awards. Because of its weight, 19 ounces as opposed to the standard 18 ounce head, Doman claims it could also be of benefit to arthritic golfers because it gives them more control. In addition, he designed it with an "extra wide paddle grip."

DOMAN decided to invent a putter rather than a full line of clubs and irons because, as he puts it, "putting is 50 percent of the game. On an 18-hole golf course, you're allowed 36 putts and 36 other strokes. So, putting is 50 percent of the game. Plus, most golfers have four to five putters while they have just one line of clubs and irons."

He designed his round-headed putter, which can be used by either right-handed or left-handed players, in 18 degree, 18 degree and 20 degree angles. The length of the shaft is another feature than can be "custom built."

"The choice is to accommodate the way people hold their hands and bend over when they're putting," he said.

Doman, who has lived in Livonia with his wife since 1958, has close ties to the community through his involvement in the local Republican Party. Beside social ties, he completed an industrial capability study of the city while working in industrial real estate in 1982.

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