

## The Importance of Speed

How important is speed in playing at the top levels in today's game? I cannot stress the importance of speed enough for playing an elite level of golf. The majority of tour professionals and top players have much more speed in their swings than most golfers realize. The average club head speed with a driver on today's PGA Tour is around 110-113 mph, with the longer hitters having driver speeds from 120-130 mph. Most people do not realize how fast these speeds are until they have their own club head speed taken. The advantages of a high amount of speed greatly contribute to the success of many of the best on the tour and in the world, for example Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods. I am not saying that players can't be very successful without a high amount of speed but it is more difficult due to the advantages high speed provides players.

Higher speeds are beneficial to players in numerous ways. Players with higher speeds hit it longer off the tee and usually have the advantage of using a shorter iron into a green. Players with higher speeds also often hit their irons farther as well. These players gain a significant advantage both off the tee and on their approach shots and these advantages put together are substantial. It is possible for a player with 10 mph of less club head speed to have a 3 or 4 iron into a green, while the player with 10 mph of more club head speed might have only an 8 or 9 iron into the same green. Another advantage of high speed is being able to use shorter and safer clubs to cover the same yardages, and this has benefits both from the tee and on approach shots. High speed also gives players the ability to create a higher trajectory on their shots and a greater amount of spin. This allows players to access numerous pin locations and hold their golf ball better on firmer greens, often even with longer clubs. Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods' high club head speeds greatly contribute to their high trajectories and high amounts of spin on their long irons shots. Below is a list of some advantages high speed gain.

### **Some Advantages of High Speed**

Ability to recover from thicker rough and difficult lies

Easier ability to shape and curve shots

Advantage on all courses, short and long courses, easy and difficult

Easier ability to birdie par 5s, reach long par 3s and 4s, and reach drivable par 4s

Ability to access many difficult pin locations

Ability to hold the golf ball better on firmer greens

Gives players options to hit shorter and safer clubs to cover the same yardages

It is true that a high amount of speed does carry a few disadvantages as well. The off-line misses of high speed players can be greater than they would be with lower swing speeds. It can be more difficult for high speed players to control their distances and amounts of spin at times. This is why misses from high speed players can be substantially off-line, and is why high speed players can have a difficult time controlling their distances and spin on their shorter irons. High speed players often overcome off-line misses by using shorter and safer clubs off the tee and they improve their distance and spin control by working diligently on these aspects during practice. They can improve their shorter iron play and spin control by learning to make softer and more controlled swings when needed. All of this being said, the advantages of a high amount of speed still far outweigh the disadvantages.

It is also important to understand the difference between club head speed and ball speed. Club head speed measures the speed of the golfer's club head through impact and ball speed measures the speed of the golf ball after it is struck. It is possible for a player to have a high amount of club head speed, but a lower amount of ball speed due to mechanical flaws in the swing. Therefore, the goal of the player should be to have both high club head speed and ball speed. The average for club head speed with a driver on the PGA Tour is mentioned above. The average ball speed with a driver on the PGA Tour is usually around 165-170 mph, with the longer hitters closer to 180 mph.