

Review: Technology helps golfers fine-tune game

January 12 2011, By RON HARRIS , Associated Press



The Garmin Approach S1 golf watch is displayed on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2011, in Atlanta, Ga. The watch is GPS-enabled and gives the wearer yardage to the front, middle and back of the green on thousands of preloaded courses. (AP Photo/Ron Harris)

(AP) -- Golf is a constant quest for improvement, which is why new clubs, balls, training aids and other gadgets are introduced each year. If gadgets were truly the answer, of course, there would be more top-notch golfers littering the links.

Nonetheless, I tested a few new [golf](#) devices and one club in the off-chance one might bring me a step closer to breaking 80 on a par-72 course for the first time. Although I didn't manage that, I found some promising companions.

- The Callaway uPro (\$399.99), from Callaway Golf Company, is a [GPS device](#) about the size of a deck of cards. It tells you where you are in relation to the hole you're trying to knock the ball into.

[Global positioning system](#) technology is familiar to the golf bag, but the uPro has several notable features. It lets you download full-color, birds-eye-view video clips of the course you're playing, so you can see trees, fairway widths and hazards that lie around the blind corner.

I connected the uPro to my PC and downloaded some of my local golf course maps to the device.

There are both free and paid versions of various golf courses. A single course map costs \$10, and multi-course packs go for as much as \$180 for 150 courses of your choosing.

The free ones provide basic yardage to the green, icons representing hazards and a few other features. The "Pro" paid versions gave me the flyover videos.

The Pro version also helped me select the best clubs for my shots by giving me the distance from where I stood to the spot I wanted my ball to come to rest. Using a navigation pad on the device, I moved an on-screen icon to my desired landing spot, and uPro gave me the distance to that location.

As I played the nine-hole Candler Park course in Atlanta, uPro gave me accurate yardage for all of my shots. That helped my game when I made solid contact with the ball, though very little when I misfired a shot.

The uPro is a fine device with premium GPS capabilities. It's lightweight, and I barely felt it when I shoved it in my back pocket during shots. I was also able to keep score for my round with the uPro,

which handled all the multitasking just fine. I'd buy it if I played a lot of long courses where distance data are at a premium, but it's disappointing to have to pay extra for the Pro course maps.

- The Garmin Approach S1 (\$249.99), from Garmin International, is a nifty GPS watch that offers important course info at a glance. No golf aid I've ever tried was easier to use than this one. I simply put it on my wrist and headed to the course.

All the course data are free and appear automatically. When I got to the Stonemount Course in Stone Mountain, Ga., the Approach S1 immediately recognized the course and my hole and gave me the yardage to the front, middle and back of the green. The numbers adjusted automatically when I arrived at my next shot, the next hole, and so on.

I never had to press a button unless I wanted to measure the distance of a shot I just hit. I could simply glance at it and know that I had 143 yards to the middle of a green. I can't consistently hit 143 yards, but that battle is for another day.

- My favorite device was the Garmin Approach G5 (\$349.99). It's a smart, waterproof handheld GPS device that gave me all the features I could want.

It had thousands of free, detailed golf course maps preloaded into memory, gave me accurate yardage for shots and allowed me to keep score for multiple players. Best of all, it's a touch-screen device with a brilliant display and intuitive menus.

The Garmin S1 merely provides yardage numbers. The G5 device gives you everything, in a detailed graphic display. It was easier and faster to input scores and plan shot strategy with Garmin's G5 than using the Callaway device, which has a similar feature.

To plan my shots, I used my thumb to move a red circle on the screen to my desired landing spot on each hole at Stonemount. I could quickly measure my shots and log distances into the device's memory. After the yardage was measured, I simply tapped an on-screen button to select the club I used. It only takes a few seconds.

After my round, I went home and connected the Approach G5 to my PC. I saved scorecards for each round and displayed them on a Web page. Garmin's free software (PC or Mac) also tracked the number of putts I tapped for the round (many), the number of greens I hit in regulation (few) and the average distance I hit with my clubs.

- The Callaway Diablo Octane driver (\$299.99) is made of a composite material invented by Callaway to make the clubhead lighter and stronger. If my tests at the range and on the course are any indication, the engineers did quite well.

The company says the new composite material results in a random arrangement of fibers that make the club lighter and stronger, which allows it to maintain more of its power through impact with the ball.

The sole and face of the clubhead are titanium, but the guts are composite.

Farther, or just farther left? I sought to find out.

After I got warmed up I hit some pretty pure drives, farther than I've ever hit. I was soon banging them out to the fence at the far end of the range, something I don't normally do at this particular driving range. I also felt I had a good amount of control over the slight fade I tend to hit. My accuracy improved with each swing for the fence.

On the course, the results were also mixed - after all, there are trees out

there, and narrow fairways and people watching your shots. But when I hit them good, my shots with the Callaway driver went farther and straighter than with my aging TaylorMade driver.

The Callaway driver was no cure-all for off-center hits or bent-arm shanks into the woods. But I was able to control the plane of my swing better because the clubhead was lighter than I'm used to.

Nonetheless, I won't be shooting under 80 any time soon. Too many three-putts. Too many misfired fairway irons that trundle into the trees instead of soaring high toward the flag.

But I loved the raw power of the Callaway driver and the full repertoire of features that the Garmin Approach G5 provided. Those were the two best additions to my golf bag for this test.

More information:

<http://www.garmin.com>

<http://www.callawaygolf.com>

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Review: Technology helps golfers fine-tune game (2011, January 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-01-technology-golfers-fine-tune-game.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.