

Spin-Balanced Golf Balls

12/27/02: We all knew that balance-oriented golf balls flew and rolled better than their non-balanced brethren. What we did not know was whether their performance improved enough to make all of the inconvenience associated with them worthwhile. We guessed that they did not. We were wrong. Read our Comparison Review.

Spin-Balanced Golf Balls - Do they really work better?

12/27/02: Weight is distributed in, through and around a golf ball as uniformly as individual manufacturing techniques allow, but still, no golf ball is perfectly balanced when it leaves the factory. The Wilson True balls come close, but even they are not perfect. "Spin balancing", as described in this article, attempts to compensate for these irregularities in weight distribution. It is a process that does not actually change the balance of a golf ball. Instead, it is a procedure that adds a line around the equator of a golf ball to indicate that individual ball's optimal flight alignment.

This subject originally seemed to be a simple one, but this comparative review turned out to be a lengthy one. Those readers with no pro-brevity biases may wish to begin with a page of Notes and Explanations. This page concerns terminology, testing variables and info on other types of "balanced" golf balls. Those who wish to cut to the quick may click here for The Summary of Conclusions. For a review of the Technasonic Check-Go Sweet Spot Finder device used to spin balance the balls described in this comparative review, please click here: [Technasonic Check-Go Review](#)

Now, on with the main review:

The Testing Procedure:

It can be assumed that properly aligned, balanced-oriented balls will fly and roll more consistently than randomly aligned balls that are not balance-oriented. There is no point to arguing otherwise. What can be debated, however, is whether unbalanced golf balls are so far out of balance that average players can actually notice the performance differences in regular play. After all, balls can be aligned by hand only on tee shots, before putts and when lift, clean and place rules are in effect. The rest of the time, in the fairway or in the rough, balls have to be left as they are. When not aligned by hand, the markings on a ball not only become irrelevant; they can actually serve as negative distractions for some players.

In order to find out if using spin-balanced balls does result in strokes shaved from the scorecard of the average golfer, we used a very simple and very non-scientific approach. We took a mix of forty golf balls of comparable hitting length - Pinnacle Gold Distance, Wilson Ultra, Top Flite XL and Maxfli Noodle - and we divided them into two, evenly matched teams of twenty balls each. We then spin-balanced and marked one batch using the Technasonic Check-Go ball-spinning device. We left the other batch as they originally were - unspun and unmarked.

The two teams of balls were then hit head to head in four, different types of comparison sessions: 1.) Putting from 13' on our True Board synthetic surface. 2.) Short/Mid Irons to a 150-yard pin 3.) Long Irons (no specified distance) 4.) Drivers (no specified distance) In all ball-hitting sessions, the balls were placed on tees. In total, 440 balls were hit. 64 balls were putted.

All input for this review is based upon sessions at the GCR range. There was simply no way for individual playing rounds to be realistically factored into this review process. The benefit that results from using balance-oriented golf balls comes from the accumulation of small, subtly defined positives. Whether an actual score would have been a stroke or two higher or lower had any round been played with identical, but unbalanced, golf balls instead of balance-aligned balls would have been pure guesswork.

Putting Session Results

There simply is no doubt about it, balance-oriented balls roll better than randomly aligned balls. We did not have to putt for long to realize this. On our dead-level, synthetic surface, the differences were readily apparent to the eye. The balance-aligned balls rarely ever fell off left or right at the end of their roll. With good strokes, they always tracked true through to the end of the last rotation. In bocce-ball putting rounds, it was no contest. Putting was much more precise with the balanced balls.

In comparison, the non-aligned balls displayed typical rolling characteristics. Sometimes they stayed true; other times they curled off at the end of their run. When poor balance alignment coincided with a weak stroke, they could curl off, or "bleed", precipitously in their last few rotations. They could veer anywhere up to ninety degrees. Even with a good stroke, they could plop over an inch or so left or right at the very end. These tracking vagaries occurred to a very, very limited extent with balanced balls.

Our GCR testers, just like everyone else, tend to blame all deviant roll behavior on their putting strokes, or on the putting surface's break, even when no break exists. With the presence of balance-oriented balls in an alternate-shot rotation, the putting characteristics inherent to the golf balls being used became very apparent. This reduction in the tendency to curl off at the end of the roll produced dispersion patterns for the balance-oriented balls that were two to three inches closer to the center of our grid on average than those of the non-oriented balls.

These seemingly small differences will not make much difference to a lousy putter, but they certainly will to a good one. The poor putter is just as apt to have his putts break towards the hole as they are to break away from it. Not so with the player who generates a solid putting stroke and routinely keeps the ball online. His putts will track truer and roll stronger. He will experience fewer lip-outs, curl offs, near misses and putts that die right in front of the cup.

On heavily used greens, or ones that have their cups changed infrequently, slightly elevated "donuts" occur around the cup. It will be here that balance-oriented balls impact putting efficiency most. Those horribly annoying putts that seem to "change their mind" at the very last moment will occur less frequently.

A player with a poor stroke may never realize much benefit from the use of balanced balls on the green, but a good putter should be able to reduce his handicap by close to a stroke with careful and sustained use of balance-oriented balls. If he is also adept at using the alignment lines on the ball to aim his putts, he may save substantially more than a stroke around.

Some of our testers had blasé attitudes about balance-orientation, but when the pressure putts came in our bocce-ball putting contests, they all made dead certain that that alignment line was aimed precisely at the tiny 5-point cup. The fact that comma-shaped putts rarely ever occurred with properly aligned, spin-balanced balls had eluded none of them.

How did the spin-balanced balls compare to the saltwater-balanced balls we used in our True Rollers putting comparison earlier this year? We saw even more improvement in roll characteristics using the spin-balanced balls than we did with the saltwater balls. With the saltwater balls, we resorted to rolling them off of a ramp to ascertain just how effective they were. With the spin-balanced balls we did not have to. The differences were readily apparent. This is not a totally apt comparison, however. The spin-balanced balls have straight alignment lines on them that assist in aiming. The saltwater balls had just a dot on one side.

Irons Results - Long Iron Sessions

In our initial range sessions, we allowed testers to use any long iron they wished. Their assignment was to hit balls straight out over a pattern of measuring stakes that were placed in the middle of the range. No set end target or distance was specified. Their only assignment was to hit the ball straight. Problems arose immediately. Most testers were too accustomed to working their irons into a specified target.

If a human tester routinely hits a fade or a draw, he is, of course, not aiming directly at the target. Should he align the ball's marker line at the pin, or on the line down which he intends to swing the club? Should he align the ball with his stance, with his clubface or with his swing path? Everyone had a different opinion. One of our faders actually aims and aligns a full fifteen to twenty feet to the left of the pin at 150 yards. One drawer of the ball hits from a closed stance with a pronounced in to out swing path. His clubface aligns to the left of the pin.

To end the deliberation, we initially insisted that all testers align the ball's marker line directly down the center at all times. This caused considerable consternation for some testers as they tried to swing down the line dictated by the ball's marker line. Their muscle memory and ingrained swing mechanics fought against them. Consequently, three different testers had the results of their first sessions discarded completely. Their shot patterns were just too erratic. One could not adjust at all and did not continue to test. The other two did make adjustments, or more accurately, they learned to ignore the marker line and swing normally.

Asking our testers to become human Iron Byrons and to mindlessly swing long irons down the center of the range turned out to be unproductive. Casual warm-up sessions worked well, but when the scoring began, swings became generally stiff and awkward. Testers invariably tried to "stay down the line" too long in an attempt to hit purely straight shots. Consequently, they became less accurate, not more. (Having a scorekeeper standing behind them making "tsk-tsk" noises and commenting upon their swing mechanics didn't help, either.)

Another problem presented itself. If the alignment line on the ball is not precisely oriented, the entire purpose of using balanced balls is nullified. Unfortunately, players cannot accurately align the marker line toward the pin from address position. It must be done from behind the ball, and even then, the player must step well back from the ball to check on his alignment. Impatient testers had trouble doing this every time. We are sure that impatient players will not do a good job of this during playing rounds. As one tester said, "I hate anything that slows the game down." For him and one other, we placed the nub of red tee in the ground eighteen inches in front of where they were hitting. They used the tee nub as a quick reference point.

The upshot of these initial sessions was that the balanced balls registered marginally tighter left-to-right dispersion patterns with the longer irons, but overall patterns were too erratic to be realistic. We abandoned this approach.

Short & Mid-Iron Sessions

Next, we moved to a standard par-3 distance of 150 yards. This allowed testers to use a comfortable short to mid-iron, and to maintain a consistent and easy swing. Also, our 150-yard target green is a naturally shaped green of good size and is complete with traps and berms. It simulates on-course conditions well. If balanced balls are to shave strokes off of a handicap, many of the strokes saved must come from birdies that result from shorter first putts on par-3 holes. Par-4 and par-5 approach shots are irrelevant since balls cannot generally be picked up and realigned in the fairway.



General
Fade Alignment



General
Draw Alignment

Our testers were much more comfortable with this par-3 approach. They now had a specific target. We also allowed them to "cheat" on aligning the marker line on the ball. They could adjust it left or right a bit to suit their swing needs. They soon found that aligning the ball directly at the pin was not the answer for most. Swing path direction was generally the optimum choice – faders to the left and drawers to the right. However, for those with exaggerated motions, a compromise line was best. For example: With a

pronounced out-to-in swing path and a very open club face, the most desirable alignment direction was midway between the target line and the swing path line.

In six sessions, results were mixed, but the advantages of using balance-oriented balls began to become apparent. Testers generally noticed that their most errant shots seem to come from the unbalanced balls. After all shots were charted and tabulated, the balanced-oriented balls turned out to be four feet closer to the pin on average than the randomly aligned, unbalanced balls. (Actually, it was 3' 11 7/8") In addition, the patterns of the balance-oriented balls were marginally longer, as well.

Four feet may not seem like much at first glance, but over a full season, that distance will account for an awful lot of birdie putts holed. A good putter sinks less than fifty percent of their putts from seven feet. From three feet, they sink more than ninety percent of their putts. This gain in accuracy has to impact the scores of better players. Higher handicapped players will see very little advantage, however. A chip from forty-four feet is not measurably much more difficult than one from forty feet.

Driver Sessions

It was during the driver sessions that the balance-oriented balls began to shine in terms of both accuracy and overall length gained. Using the average dispersion variable of 4' seen at 150 yards, we surmised that using balance-oriented balls with drivers would produce patterns that were 5 1/2' to 7' closer to the center of the fairway depending upon how far an individual drive carried. That estimate turned out to be conservative. Precise measurements are not possible on our asymmetrically contoured range, but a left-right dispersion improvement of 6' to 10' was our final estimate. The tightness of dispersion patterns varied from driver to driver, tester to tester. There are a number of reasons for this: Different drives go various distances. Different players impart different spin rates. Lateral spin rates increase with lower-lofted driver heads. Poor balance orientation can exacerbate sidespin and increase inaccuracy to a disproportionate extent for those who hit trajectories with pronounced curvatures – hooks, draws, fades and slices.

Another factor widened the disparity of patterns of Balanced versus Unbalanced in our driver sessions. Randomly aligned balls sometimes happen to set up in proper alignment position. When this occurs, they perform just as the balance-oriented balls do. To eliminate this variable in the driver sessions, we spin-balanced all of the balls on the Unbalanced Team and then made certain that every unbalanced ball was teed up completely out of whack. Consequently, variations in the resulting driver patterns were exaggerated beyond those that the average golfer would see in day-to-day play.

During the earlier iron sessions, the differences between the balanced and unbalanced balls were only slightly apparent to the eyes of our testers. Some could see no differences at all during their sessions. Until their shots were charted and tallied, they did not feel as though any substantial performance differences existed. Such was not the case with drivers. It did not take long to see that the balance-oriented balls were flying stronger and longer. The benefits were surprisingly obvious. The balls carried better, flew straighter and rolled hotter after landing.

The balance-oriented balls not only created patterns that were six to ten feet closer to the center of the fairway, they created longer patterns, as well. How much length was gained depended upon the length and trajectories of the individuals hitting the drives. The balance-oriented balls easily produced the longest drives in every session. The longest of all balance-oriented balls hit was more than seven yards longer than the longest non-balance-oriented ball. The balanced-oriented balls accounted for sixty-five percent of the longer half of the balls hit in the driver sessions and conversely, just thirty-five percent of the shorter half.

In regular ball-testing sessions, we always eliminate weak shots from consideration – it's not fair to a ball manufacturer to include the results of bad swings. In this case, however, we eliminated only very, very poor hits. We counted the weak hits to see if balancing improved the behavior of wayward balls. It did. In each session, the shortest drives (the head-shake inducing clunkers) came from the unbalanced balls.

Some straight-hitters will see little or no actual yardage gains on average as unbalanced balls can turn some straight drives into longer draws and some straight drives into shorter fades. That aside, it is realistic to expect that the typical player will gain an average of at least two yards in distance by using balance-oriented balls. Longer hitters will see as much as five yards in gain depending upon the nature of their drives. How much straighter and farther will depend upon how much out of balance a ball had been, and upon what type of trajectory and amount of spin was imparted to it. Balance-oriented balls create

more neutral and consistent results for those who work the ball in either direction. The sidespin that can cause a pronounced fade to nose off and die at the end of its flight is substantially reduced. Power fades land and run hotter. Draws are less apt to become hooks.

There turned out to be no physical way for us to measure how much balance orientation influenced the amount of sidespin that occurred in slices and hooks. Visually, the differences were obvious, but there was no way to ascertain the initial launch direction of the hooks and slices. Where the ball landed depended greatly upon the tester's initial stance alignment. Also, our test range is not balanced and symmetrical, itself. Severe hooks are snagged by a berm covered in heavy rough. Distance deviations to the far left can only be surmised. In spite of this, it can be safely stated that unbalanced balls do exacerbate slices and hooks off of a driver and that mistakes are noticeably less damaging with balance-oriented balls. While watching alternate-shot sessions, testers could actually see the differences in flight between balance-oriented and intentionally misaligned golf balls. Into a head wind or quartering wind, the difference became even more obvious.



General
Fade Alignment



General
Draw Alignment

One of our shorter fade-hitters was particularly appreciative of the improved flight characteristics of balance-oriented balls. He would tag an unbalanced ball well and would be certain that it was destined to end up out there with the best balance-oriented balls. It would appear to be flying strong and long, but at the very end of its flight it would lose steam and curl off downwards to the right. It would land softer and not run as the balance-oriented balls would do. He saw substantially better penetration to his high, soft trajectories with the balanced balls.

Another tester, one who suffers from the occasionally disastrous hook, pointed out that excessive sidespin from an unbalanced ball is just as apt to help correct a hook (or a slice for that matter) as it is to exaggerate it. A balance-oriented ball will keep a ball from going more to the left by neutralizing sidespin. Consequently, it can never make the hook go more to the right as the unbalanced ball might do. This is true. However, if the standard hook costs a player about one half of a stroke on average, a hook made more severe may result in the loss of two strokes since it is more apt to go into the water, the woods or even out of bounds. A moderated hook is apt to benefit a player less than one made more severe will hurt him. Those catastrophic hooks (and slices) not only cost multiple strokes, they demoralize, as well. One can change the nature of an entire round.

As with irons and putters, accurate drivers will benefit most from using balance-oriented balls. The landing zones on most fairways are anywhere from 100' to 180' wide. Left-right deviations in ball flight of 7' or so will often be an irrelevancy for those players who are inaccurate to begin with. For players of all skill levels, however, any number of fairway traps will inevitably be avoided over a full season and far fewer drives will end up nestled just off the fairway in those pesky, first-cut grasses. How these benefits impact a player's handicap will depend upon the individual player.

A factor that almost all players cannot dismiss is the added distance advantage gained from driving with balance-oriented balls. The extra yardage is not to be sniffed at. Best hits will be noticeably better with balanced balls. This will occasionally mean that a player is hitting one less iron to the green – a 7-iron as opposed to a 6-iron. As stated, our best test drive with the balance-oriented balls was seven yards longer than our best with the unbalanced balls. And it should be pointed out that we did not use our longest hitter

in these sessions. We keep him away from our test balls. He sends too many OB left – way left – off the range and into the neighboring tennis courts. We would extrapolate that he would see best-hit gains in the vicinity of ten yards. We also extrapolate that he would see a reduction in damaged tennis players of approximately eight percent. We mention this last factor only in passing. We certainly do not intend to suggest that any serious golfer should ever factor the welfare of tennis players into his equipment selection process. That, of course, would be heresy.

Summary of Conclusions:

Our GCR testers all entered this comparison review thinking that spin-balanced balls would play a bit better than unbalanced balls, but that the difference would not be enough to justify the time and aggravation that went with spin balancing. By the end of the review process it had become obvious to all that balance-oriented golf balls performed decidedly better than their unbalanced counterparts, and that these differences were great enough to make balance-oriented balls well worth the effort required in playing them. Our crew became converts.

Spin Balancing manifests its advantages in three regards: 1.) Longer and straighter drives, 2.) More accurate tee shots on par-three holes and 3.) Better-rolling and more accurate putts. Each of these three individual factors could, in and of itself, knock a stroke off a player's round. Conceivably, it is possible that all three aspects could come into play during the same round. If that happened, multiple strokes could fall from a score. A score of 80 might become a score of 78. A score of 71 might become a score of 68. It's not impossible.

In spite of its improved tendencies, a balance-oriented ball can still slice or hook. When pushed or a pulled, it will still fly right or left. Balancing does not eliminate these mistakes. No internal homing device becomes mysteriously imbued into a ball by the balancing act. It will fly straighter, but it's still a golf ball and will resort to bad behavior if not treated properly. What balancing does do is eliminate some degree of counterproductive sidespin throughout a ball's flight. As a result, most hits fly a bit stronger. They go longer and straighter. The severity of mistakes is reduced.

There is a downside to using balance-oriented balls. Some players will not have the time and discipline needed to mark all of their balls. Others will not have the patience required to align their balls precisely before every tee shot and putt. Still others will find the marker lines they place on the ball to be ugly and distracting.

Lastly, ball balancing cannot tell a player how to align his ball. With experimentation, an individual can learn exactly what alignment variation will work best for his game. If he then follows a routine and aligns the ball precisely the same way every time, he will see performance that is much more consistent. There is absolutely no doubt about that. In our opinion, the consistent use of balance-oriented balls can shave a stroke or two off of the handicap of any player who possesses reasonably solid fundamentals.

Notes and Explanations:

Terminology

It should be noted that throughout these articles the terms balanced balls and balance-oriented balls are used interchangeably. Neither is really quite accurate. Spin-balancing does not "balance" a ball. Spin-balancing only provides a visual indication of the axis upon which a golf ball will tend to spin best. The distribution of mass in a golf ball is not changed the way that it is in a tire when balancing weights are added.

The term "balance-oriented" is more accurate, but it must be remembered that orienting a ball towards a target does not make a ball fly in an oriented manner in and of itself. The swingpath of the club and the angle of the face must both be properly oriented, as well. No magic occurs during the spin-balancing process. All that the player gets from the procedure is an equatorial line on a golf ball. He's got to do all of the real orienting himself.

In reality, the term weight distribution axis-indicated balls would be more appropriate than either of the above-mentioned terms. For obvious reasons, we have not used that clumsy phrase.

Technasonic uses the term, Sweet Spot Finder. This is misleading. The word "sweet" may be applicable to how well an indicated ball might fly or roll, but the dot added to a golf ball by this process is not the spot

where impact is to be made. No "sweet spot" is defined in the sense generally used in reference to golf club faces, tennis racquets and baseball bats.

Degrees of Imbalance

The Technasonic Check-Go device (see review) used in this review cannot realistically indicate how much a ball might be out of balance. Some balls will benefit greatly from "balancing". Others will see virtually no benefit. Degrees of imbalance will vary from one brand of ball to another. No company intentionally manufactures unbalanced balls, but some degree of imbalance is inevitable. Even balls from the same line will vary from ball to ball.

For anything close to legitimately balanced golf balls, the only options are the Wilson True balls. While Wilson's competitors enthusiastically point out that the Trues certainly are not technically perfect either, they remain the only balls that can claim to be truly "Balanced".

Wilson True Balance

We included the Wilson True Distance balls in a number of comparative sessions to get an indication of how truly balanced balls performed in comparison to balance-aligned balls. The Trues behaved in a very neutral and accurate manner. They produced consistently good patterns. They did not, however, generate the strong, penetrating types of trajectories we saw in the spin-balanced balls. The explanation for this is simple: Spin balancing reveals the line upon which the heaviest segments of a golf ball will align while spinning. This creates a straighter and more powerful flight. The Wilson True balls feature very evenly distributed weight patterns. Hence, they fly in a much more neutral manner. We actually preferred the flight characteristics of the spin-balanced balls.

Note: The use of spin-balanced balls with balance orientation lines drawn on them does not violate USGA rules. It is perfectly acceptable in all instances. To intentionally manufacture a lopsided ball that flew best upon an indicated line would be violation of USGA rules.

Saltwater Balancing vs. Spin Balancing

It should be pointed out that spin balancing and saltwater balancing are different procedures that yield different indications. Balls tested using each procedure end up with two different top spots – and the differences are not always constant from ball to ball. As one astute reader quickly pointed out after our True Rollers putting review last spring, saltwater balancing yields a lightest segment up result. It does not reveal the axis upon which a ball will best spin or roll. It cannot be assumed that a ball's lightest segment is the polar opposite of its heaviest segment. Weight and mass can be dispersed in any number of oddly distributed patterns. For putting purposes, saltwater testing may be a preferred technique, but for hitting (flying) purposes, spin balancing is the obvious choice.

Saltwater-balanced balls leave a player with a visible dot on the lightest side of the ball. Spin-balanced balls leave a player with a visible line on the equator of the ball. Some players are going to appreciate this; others are not. If the use of that line suits a player's style and mechanics, and if a player is well-disciplined and takes sufficient time to accurately align the marker line on his ball every time it is permissible to do so, then immediate benefits will befall him.

We did not test saltwater-balanced balls in any regard other than putting. The opinions of most outside sources validate what common sense dictates: Spin-balanced balls will outperform saltwater-balanced balls when it comes to flying through the air.

Testing Procedures

Some of our more analytically minded readers may be tempted to point out to us that a more accurate testing procedure would have included the placement of phony alignment lines on the unbalanced balls. This would have eliminated the visual input variable caused by the alignment lines on balanced balls. We considered doing just that, but decided that the primary concern of the test was whether a player benefited from playing balanced balls, and such balls do, by necessity, have marker lines on them. Unbalanced balls used in play will generally have no marker lines on them. These black alignment lines can exert either a positive or a negative influence on a player depending upon how he is disposed. The use of a clean, unmarked ball is a primary factor in deciding which kind of ball to play. A couple of our GCR regulars have real aversions to any logos or markings on a golf ball. The marker lines on the balanced balls looked as ugly as sin to them.

Some of our more analytically minded readers may also want to point out that this testing procedure may have been handled better by an Iron Byron. They may be right on this point. It certainly would have been

less frustrating and time consuming. But again, the test was to see if human beings benefited from using spin-balanced balls. An Iron Byron would have been oblivious to the visual impact that the alignment lines had on a human golfer's game. The nuts and bolts of the primary dilemmas that haunted some of our testers would have eluded Mr. Byron's mechanical psyche completely.

Technasonic Check-Go Sweet Spot Finder

12/27/02: Technasonic Electronics is located just north of Chicago in Lincolnwood, Illinois. The company has been producing the Check-Go Sweet Spot Finder since the late 1980's. Unfortunately, not that many players knew about it until the release of the Wilson True golf balls. All of the attention (and debate) that Wilson brought to the performance characteristics of balanced balls also brought the Check-Go into the limelight.



The Technasonic Check-Go is a compact, little device that spins golf balls at very high RPM's. After a period of fifteen to twenty seconds, the ball settles into a constant position as it spins within the Check-Go's cradle. At this time, the user takes a small marking pen (included with the Check-Go) and makes a dot on the top of the ball. He then inserts the pen into a side porthole and creates a thin line around the equator of the ball. This equator indicates the weight-distribution axis that will allow the ball to carry longest, strongest and straightest.

Though the company calls the Check-Go a "Sweet Spot Finder", the device does not actually locate any one sweet spot on a ball's surface. Instead, it locates a preferred alignment direction upon which the ball will best fly. The "spot" that is marked on a ball faces the player at address position. Impact is supposed to be made at the equatorial marker line. This line points down the desired path of the ball's upcoming flight. The equator may be rotated to any position along its 360-degree path.

We did not have much doubt at GCR that spin-balanced balls were effective to some degree or another. Common sense dictates that they would be. What we did doubt was whether a simple, little mechanical gadget such as this one could possibly do a reliable job of spin-balancing golf balls. It turns out that the Check-Go is, while not perfect, more than up to the task at hand. For an inexpensive device, it manages to do a very fine job. When the spinning process is applied repeatedly to the same ball, an identical equator is always found. At least the equator is identical in relationship to the casing of the device. Human hands can tilt the marking pen at slightly different angles to create equatorial marks that trace a bit off center. An off-center line can be visually annoying, but it does not actually affect performance in any way. The ball still sets up in the appropriate position.

Aside from the leeway allowed by the pen, other problems can occur. Too much pressure applied to the pen point as it presses against the spinning dimples can damage the pen. This happened with our test unit and the pen soon became a little gooey and messy. We recommend that users of the Check-Go exercise a very light touch when making their lines. They can darken the line after they have removed the ball from the device.

Another small problem arose in that the small cup that holds the ball got a touch out of register. It still made the ball spin just fine, but the top mark on the ball (which becomes the side indicator at address) registered a few degrees off kilter. Again, this did not really affect performance.

Aside from these minor problems, the Technasonic has managed to spin an awful lot of balls for us, and there seems to be no indication that it will not continue to do so for a long time to come. The main drawback to the Check-Go, now and forever, is the planning and discipline required to make certain that all of a player's golf balls are properly marked. It takes less than five minutes to spin and mark a sleeve of golf balls. The trouble is, the spinning and marking can't be done properly in a haphazard manner. Solid concentration has to be maintained. Many players grab a sleeve or two of golf balls at the pro shop before rushing off to the first tee. Many also cannot resist the temptation of playing golf balls that they glean during the round. In either case, the odds are slim that they are going to find a nicely level bench where they can conscientiously spin-balance their golf balls, even if they have remembered to pack the Check-Go in their bag in the first place.

The Check-Go will always be most productive for those who buy their favorite balls by the dozen, mark them carefully at home, and then make certain that every ball in their bag is a spin-balanced ball. Let's face it; the average golfer has trouble remembering to check their bags for tees and ball markers. They aren't going to be able to sustain the level of conscientiousness required by the Check-Go. That's shame, because this little gadget really does work well. It can save anyone a bundle of strokes over a season. Thoroughly cleaning the grooves on all irons and wedges works wonders, as well, but a depressingly low number of players manage to do it regularly. Even fewer carry one of those handy, little carbide-tipped groove cleaners in their bag. Most just use a blunt, wooden tee for the job.

Summary:

Balance-oriented balls perform noticeably better than randomly aligned balls. We at GCR now swear by them. (See our Featured Comparison Review) The Technasonic Check-Go is really the only option available for spin-balanced balls. It works very well. It. Every golfer above the level of Hacker will benefit from spin-balancing their golf balls. If you are lazy and disorganized, forget it. If you have a modicum of self-discipline, get a Check-Go right away, and take the time to make certain that all of the balls you play are balance-oriented. A score of 80 shot with randomly aligned balls will almost certainly become a score of 79 or 78 with balance-oriented balls.

Note: Technasonic's Check-Go is available to distributors in an unlabeled, unadorned state. Consequently, it may be found with other brand names affixed to it, or it may have no brand name at all. As far as we know, all of the little spin-balancing machines out there are the same item described above.

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