



**SWING FITTING
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GOLF ALL YEAR LONG WITH THE PERFECT FIT FOR YOUR SWING

by Bonnie Williamson

Tiger Woods is known for being incredibly good at the game of golf. He made his first hole-in-one at the age of eight. He once said, "I get to play golf for a living. What more can you ask for, getting paid for doing what you love."

Woods is an inspirational figure to John Hutzler who shares the same sentiments, although it's not playing golf that pays the bills for him, but creating the golf clubs, which is so essential to the game. And he's doing what he loves.

Hutzler started SwingFit, a family owned business, two years ago at 1751 Quarry Rd., Bunker Hill, West Virginia. The business is located deep in the rural hills where Hutzler lives. It's on his property, close to his home and close to his heart.

However, the ground work for SwingFit began 12 years ago in Hutzler's garage.

"It started out as a hobby," Hutzler says. "I wanted to learn everything about building golf clubs so I

could change not only how the club performed, but how it felt to someone so they could play better. At the time, I had no aspirations for a future business. It was just my passion. I kept at it for five years, building golf clubs for friends, family members and friends of friends, basically anyone who needed club repairs or work done. Sometimes it would take us three or four times before we got it right. If it were not for discovering how a launch monitor could help us build clubs smarter, I would have surely given it up."

Golf launch monitors are specifically designed to track a person's golf shots and give instantaneous and detailed feedback on those shots. It tracks the effect of any adjustment that a golfer may choose to apply to his or her swing while also understanding how the golf club they're using can influence the shot outcome.

"The data not only helps me understand the specific way I need to build the golf clubs but it also takes out the guess work, so I only

have to build them once. It was sort of the chicken before the egg. It opened my eyes to a different approach, club fitting," Hutzler says.

Club fitting is where a club fitter will analyze and review the data captured from the launch monitor to determine how a specific golf club needs to be configured in a specific way to help someone execute a specific swing. Hutzler became certified as a club fitter, following six months of training.

For the next five years, Hutzler moved his business from his garage to the basement. The move not only provided more space, but it also allowed his customers to hit golf balls inside.

"They would practice shots into a homemade archery net," Hutzler says.

He began to prove himself as a club fitter and gained not only a name for himself in the community but with manufacturers with well known brands as well. Two of those sports

equipment companies are Srixon and Cobra.

"Each year, we would continue to grow. As more people visited our little basement setup, we knew that at some point we would have to expand again. That point came in the spring of 2018 when we decided the foot traffic was too much. Luckily, at that exact moment, a tenant of ours decided it was time for retirement and a property became available," Hutzler says.

That property was an old Pole Barn right next door that had been used for storing farm equipment.

"It's a stone's throw from the house and when compared to the cost of going into a shopping center or strip mall, the move just made sense. The work required a lot of renovation and three additions. After six months, we finally moved in to our new 2,900 square foot facility, becoming the area's first indoor golfing performance fitting center," he says.

Since the move, Hutzler has partnered with even more brand sports equipment companies to become a true brand agnostic fitting center. With more than 400

shafts and 190 plus golf club heads available in the fitting matrix, he's positive there's something for everyone regardless of age or skill.

Just a few details: golf clubs consist of three very important pieces: the club head, which interacts with both the golf ball and ground; the golf shaft, which is considered to be the timing mechanism to help someone hit the ball more consistently; and the golf grip, which ultimately completes the connection of golfer and club.

Golfers are permitted to carry 14 clubs per bag.

Hutzler says he takes pride in finding the best set of golf clubs to help his customers find 14 favorite clubs as opposed to just one or two. He emphasizes that one size does not fit all and what works well for one golfer may not work well for someone else.

"And fitting without the use of technology is nothing more than someone's best guess," he says.

The launch monitor is a key tool for SwingFit and the establishment's name reflects that: the swing is as

equally important as the fit of the clubs.

And, golfers can perfect their swings and learn strategies for their games all year long. SwingFit has three dedicated bays with 4k projectors and 13 x 7 foot impact screens to play simulated rounds of golf on one of 100 virtual courses from all over the country. The launch monitor tracks their "balls" and shows them data and feedback on every aspect of the game as they play.

"So whether you want to practice, play or get fit, our facility has been designed to help you do so 12 months out of the year," Hutzler says.

With a full build shop on-site, golfers can have their clubs repaired at SwingFit. SwingFit also offers golf club inspections and swing evaluations. Clubs should be inspected about every two years and considered for replacement about every five years.

As previously stated, SwingFit is a family owned and run business. Hutzler's two other employees are his son Dakota, 22, who's been building clubs for Hutzler for the past





6 years and is now also taking the lead role of social media manager, and Hutzler's nephew Andrew, 19, who's their lead putter fitter and shop manager.

Hutzler says the interest in golf seems to be growing.

"Of course, with the pandemic, it was one of the few activities you were allowed to do," Hutzler says.

Many families are gravitating to the sport because it's a good way to spend time together.

"We see a lot of fathers and sons out on the golf course, using the time to stay connected. Recently we're seeing a trend where mothers and daughters are also taking an interest in golf as well," he says.

Hutzler says many girls in high school are pursuing the sport as another avenue to acquire an athletic scholarship to offset their higher education costs. More females outside of school are becoming more

frequent customers, too.

"Some of our female customers who are close to retirement have told us they wished they would have started golfing earlier. It's a great alternative for playing bridge. Anyone can learn how to play golf, regardless of their age," Hutzler says.

Another important aspect of Hutzler's business is building relationships with customers. Tiger Woods isn't the only golfer he admires. Arnold Palmer is right up there not only because of his skills in golf but also because of how he related to his fans.

"He took customer service to a whole new level. He personally responded to every piece of fan mail he received, up to the point where he could no longer do it himself. Mr. Palmer believed that if someone cared enough to write him a letter, then he should be kind enough to respond back. This trait is something I try to emulate every day through our fitting experience. I believe that

by understanding what the goals, challenges, and desired outcome may be is first and foremost, then we can help our customers make a more informed decision by sharing our knowledge and experience. So if all we sold was information and nothing more, then I would be just as happy," Hutzler says.

Hutzler continues to work in other areas besides SwingFit. He laughingly says it's not his "day job." He does IT work for the federal government, which also gives him an appreciation for how technology can and has helped SwingFit.

"I encourage anyone regardless of skill, experience, or familiarity with the sport who has the desire to learn more about club fitting, golf in general, or more about our services to visit our YouTube channel to see what we offer," Hutzler says.

Anyone interested in scheduling bay rentals or fittings can go online to the SwingFit website at swingfit.net.