

Back in the swing

2005 PGA Merchandise Show brings a rush of new products

NEWS

Technically, they don't open the annual PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando to the public. That's a good thing. Because real golfers might just bust the doors down. With more than 1,200 exhibitors, there's more than enough to pique the curiosity of any marginal golfer. Though the show lacked the presence of Titleist, Ping and TaylorMade, others happily took advantage of the spotlight. There were enough mood-enhancing bracelets, putting-green debris sweepers and nanotechnology golf towels to make your eyes glaze over, but occasionally something stands

release timing and other mid-swing positions (smartswinggolf.com). In short, it does for golf clubs what on-board diagnostics does for NASCAR race cars. Here's a look at some other equipment headliners:

BALLS

TITLEIST, whose parent company, Acushnet, posted record sales of \$1.2 billion in 2004, revamped its entire line of golf balls for 2005. In addition to the revised versions of its flagship line of Pro V1 and Pro V1x balls, there are replacements in store for both the NXT and DT SoLo

humans, too. . . . **NIKE's** Ignite driver notched two wins early, and Vijay Singh won with the 460cc **CLEVELAND** Launcher Comp the second week he had it in the bag. . . . Just how hot are hybrid clubs? So hot that **SONARTEC**, whose MD hybrid tied for No. 1 on the PGA Tour in January's Bob Hope Chrysler Classic (with perennial leader **TAYLORMADE** and its Rescue Mid), is considering trimming its 7- and 9-wood production.

IRONS

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"One such memorable device is **SmartSwing**. A seven-inch piece of circuitry inserted into the grip of a driver or iron provides instant wireless computer analysis of launch angle, ball flight, degree of clubhead lag, release timing and other mid-swing positions (smartswinggolf.com). In short, it does for golf clubs what on-board diagnostics does for NASCAR race cars."

— *GolfDigest* April, 2005



The gotta-have-it equipment golfers are talking about (or soon will be)



Thousands attended the PGA Merchandise Show.

out. One such memorable device is **SMARTSWING**. A seven-inch piece of circuitry inserted into the grip of a driver or iron provides instant wireless com-

puter analysis of launch angle, ball flight, degree of clubhead lag,

designed to elevate initial trajectory. . . . **NIKE** started 2005 very quickly, garnering two wins in the first four events on the PGA Tour, first with Nike One Gold (Tiger Woods), then with Nike One Black (Justin Leonard).

WOODS

The first win of the year in the driver category came not from standbys TaylorMade, Titleist or Callaway, but from **BRIDGESTONE**. Stuart Appleby won using the new Bridgestone J33P, a 375cc titanium driver that utilizes a tungsten screw in the sole to lower the center of gravity and an elastomer compound surrounding the screw to dampen vibration. It comes in a 420cc version, the J33R (top) for normal

stepped back into the iron game with its new Morph irons. The set combines three types of heads (blade-like short irons, mid-cavity middle irons and two-piece deep cavity long irons) with three types of specially designed **ROYAL PRECISION** Rifle Flighted shafts. The idea is to position the clubhead's center of gravity at three-quarters of an inch up the face in each iron and match those heads with shafts designed to emphasize a particular club's needs (higher flight with long irons, for example).

Mike Stachura



buzz list

The BUZZ List is our monthly guide to the best-selling, most talked-about products, based on research of sales at Golf World Business' 100 Best Shops and other sources.

BALLS: TITLEIST Pro V1/V1x, CALLAWAY HX Tour.

HYBRIDS: BEN HOGAN CFT, CALLAWAY Heavenwood, TAYLORMADE Rescue Mid, COBRA King Cobra Baffler, SONARTEC MD.

IRONS: CALLAWAY Fusion, CALLAWAY X-18, COBRA King Cobra 3400 I/XH, PING G2, TAYLORMADE rac OS/LT irons.

WOODS: CALLAWAY Big Bertha 454, CLEVELAND Launcher Comp, COBRA King Cobra Comp 454, NIKE Ignite, PING G2, TAYLORMADE r5, TAYLORMADE r7.

OTHER: CLEVELAND CG10 wedges, FOOTJOY Dry Joy P.R.O. shoes, NIKE SP-05 shoes, ODYSSEY 2-Ball putters, PING Crazy-E putters, TITLEIST/Scotty Cameron Red X putters, TITLEIST/Vokey Spin Milled wedges.