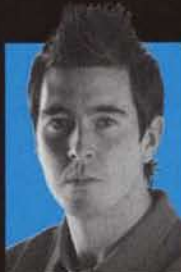


FEEL TEST

We've tested the balls for distance, spin and dispersion... the one thing missing is the feel. We blindfolded our testers, took them to the putting green and asked them if they could feel any difference

One of the most important aspects of buying a ball is the feel you get on the putting green. After all, putting accounts for a third of your score, so playing with a ball you enjoy the feel of will help. Yet few of us bother to try a few different balls out before we buy. The question is, can you really notice the difference between a ball designed for distance, another designed for feel or one supposedly manufactured to offer the best of both worlds?

We blindfolded TG's three testers so that they couldn't see the ball they were hitting, gave them three putts with each ball, and asked them to rate each for feel. The results were fascinating...



Dan Frost PGA PRO, SWINGERS GOLF DRIVING RANGE, CAMBS

"What a difference a blindfold makes! I was amazed that my top two ranking feel balls were brands that I have never chosen off the shop shelf to play with before. Now that I've felt the difference I'll definitely give them a go."

I found it easy to identify the lower spin balls like the Srixon Z-URC and Titleist Pro V1x as they stood out for their slightly firmer feel and faster exit off the clubface. Every golfer should try this test before buying a ball."

TOP 3 FEEL BALLS: Wilson Staff Px3, Srixon Soft Feel, Titleist Pro V1



Carly Cummins TG INSTRUCTION EDITOR, 3 HANDICAP

"One of the most interesting findings that came out of my test was that some of the distance balls I least expected to feel great... did. I really liked the response from the Precept Distance, Nike Ignite and Callaway HX Hot – balls that are all primarily

pitched at the player seeking added length off the tee, but in all three cases distance doesn't come at the sacrifice of feel. The Wilson Staff Dx2 Soft was my standout favourite. It offered a buttery soft feel off the putterface that simply couldn't be matched."

TOP 3 FEEL BALLS: Wilson Staff Dx2 Soft, Srixon Soft Feel, Titleist NXT



Jonathan Greathead STAFF WRITER, 8 HANDICAP

"I normally play with a slightly firmer ball so I was looking forward to seeing how much softer in terms of feel the 'softer' balls really were. And while most of them did feel considerably nicer off the putterface, there were some that didn't measure up for me. One such ball was the Ben Hogan Apex Tour Deep. It made a really distinctive sound, but not in a good

way. I also didn't really warm to the Nike One Black. The one ball that I really did like the feel of was the Wilson TX4 Pro. It felt soft, but at the same time I didn't feel I had to give it a whack to get it to the hole. When I took the blindfold off at the end of the test, I discovered I really liked the look of the ball's unique dimples as well."

TOP 3 FEEL BALLS: Titleist Pro V1, Srixon Soft Feel, Wilson Staff Tx4

SIX THINGS WE LEARNED

■ Different players have different impressions of what feels good. Just because one person finds a ball soft, doesn't mean another golfer will do too.

■ Sound plays a huge role in our perception of feel. If the ball sounds firm off the putterface then we interpret this as a hard ball. To counteract the influence of sound we put headphones on our testers and asked them to putt.

■ The type of putter you use will play a big role. Our testers chose blade-style putters without inserts in order that a soft putter insert didn't affect their impression of the feel of the ball. If you use a putter with an insert you may find that some of the firmer balls still feel good to you and get a completely different result.

■ Distance balls aren't all firm. Several

of our 'long drive' balls were actually surprisingly soft and responsive off the putter. Don't assume that because a ball is designed to fly a long way off the tee it won't feel great around the greens as well.

■ Tour standard spin balls don't necessarily feel soft – another surprise. We all assumed that the 'top dogs' of our test, the Tour players' balls of

choice would be the best-feeling balls. In fact, once we'd donned headphones and blindfolds they got a mixed review.

■ Some of the best-feeling balls we tested were also some of the best value. There's a misconception that the more expensive ball is the better its feel or spin response. That's not always the case. Do this test and make your own mind up.