

# Overhauling The Golf Club's 'Engine'

PHOTO BY SCOTT A. MILLER

## German Engineer In Winter Park Invents 'Tri-Edge' Graphite Shaft

Andreas Stultz, top, with his Tri-Edge Nano Arrow Shafts. The triangle shape, right, runs 11 inches up from the tip of the shaft.

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BY MICHAEL A. BOSLET

“German engineered.” When you hear that phrase, no doubt your mind conjures up images of Mercedes-Benzes, BMWs or Audis, some of the best-built automobiles in the world. What makes them such great cars? Simple: “German engineering.” Say “Italian-made clothing,” “Swiss watches” or even “Chicago-style pizza” and everyone knows you’re talking about quality.

Automotive parts engineer and Winter Park newcomer Andreas Stultz believes he has applied the adage “German engineering” to the graphite golf club shaft. The Stultz Tri-Edge Nano Arrow shaft was born from the mechanical engineering premise that a triangle is more stable than a circular sphere, the shape of all golf shafts up until January. That’s when Stultz Golf Technologies introduced the Tri-Edge shaft at the PGA Merchandise Show & Convention at the Orange County Convention Center.

The triangle shape runs 11 inches up from almost the tip of the shaft, reducing bending, Stultz says. Stability in the shaft results in improved accuracy and potentially more distance, he adds.

Stultz, 46, who relocated in 2001 to Winter Park from Hamburg, Germany, where his father founded an international auto-parts manufacturing business, owned Golf All Mighty in Winter Park. The store, which recently closed, specialized in club fitting, a craft that



shaft in December. Bryant, 51, says he made the shaft change on the advice on Santiago Mari, the club fitter at the David Leadbetter Golf Academy at ChampionsGate Golf Resort. On his 27th start on the senior circuit – the Toshiba Classic, March 17-19 – Bryant won for only the second time since joining the PGA Tour in 1978. His previous victory was at the 1995 Walt Disney World/Oldsmobile Classic.

“It just seemed to work really well,” Bryant says of the shaft. “I think that it’s a little more stable. I’m actually playing a shaft that’s less stiff than I usually play.”

“From a statistics standpoint, I’m driving the ball about the same. But with the new shaft I have more confidence in it. I feel like when I’m swinging well I will hit the fairways.”

Bryant says he isn’t paid to use the shaft, and Stultz says his start-up company doesn’t pay for professional endorsements.

Mari, Bryant’s club fitter, has a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering. He says the Stultz Golf shaft is based on sound engineering principles.

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led Stultz to seek a better way to match shafts to players’ swings.

“It took us too long to match the club shaft with the swing characteristics of the golfer,” says Stultz in his thick German accent. “It took forever. I said, ‘There must be a better way to do it.’ My biggest problem was the side movements of the shaft during the swing.”

“The shaft bends forward and backward and always moves sideways as well. It took me as much as two hours to find the right shaft.”

In late 2004, Stultz met with engineers in the Stultz family’s auto-parts manufacturer in Frankfort, Ky., to discuss shaft design. None of the engineers played golf, but many were German, Stultz says.

“They looked at (a golf shaft) and said, ‘The round shaft doesn’t make any sense physically. A triangle has much better bending characteristics.’ Then we started building prototypes.”

Stultz Golf has developed 72 different kinds of Tri-Edge shafts, ranging in stiffness, bending characteristics and flex points. The shafts can be used on any club, says Stultz.

PGA Champions Tour player Brad Bryant, a longtime Windermere resident who recently moved to Lakeland, had a driver fitted with a Stultz Tri-Edge

“The concept they had is the concept you think of as a engineer,” says Mari, 25. “It’s a great concept. The way the shaft is designed it seems to be so stable. Because the shaft is a lot more stable at impact, the ball tends to go where you aim. If you have a square clubface, the ball tends to go straighter. We’ve tested it against other shafts using the same clubhead and it’s been better.”

“In the end, the engine of the golf club is the shaft,” he says.

Bryant says he believes the Tri-Edge shaft will catch on with pros, but because it’s so new and has an unusual design there is resistance to trying it.

“We haven’t seen what I think is a big leap forward in shaft technology in years,” he says. “We’re about due for something to come along that really works and I believe that this may be the next thing.”

Says Mari: “From what I’ve seen, I think it’s the kind of shaft that could help anyone. It might help the higher handicap more than the lower handicap.”