

WORN GRIPS VS. NEW GRIPS

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Introduction

Minimal research and understanding about golf grips has led to many players using worn grips. Golf Pride® provides tips on how to recognize wear and suggests changing your grips every year or after 40 rounds of golf [1]. Professionals within the golf industry have assumptions and observations from individual players on how worn grips influence their game [2, 3]. However, there have not been large quantitative studies conducted to determine average performance changes in different levels and types of wear on a grip. Therefore, the objective of this study, and future studies, is to categorize real world levels of wear on a golf grip and quantify players performance and comfort levels with various types of worn golf grips.

Methods

Participants used a Titleist 7 iron MB fitted club with 3 identical Project X (F-Flex) shafts cut to the standard Titleist 7 iron length (37"). Each shaft had 3 different Golf Pride® tour velvet standard size grips. One new grip, and 2 exposed to ultraviolet (UVA/B) light. The UVA/B exposed grips were placed in a QLab QUV Accelerated Weather Tester chamber [4] for 8hrs (UV1), and 24hrs (UV2). Tests were conducted in the Fitting Studio at Golf Pride® headquarters in Pinehurst, NC, USA. Participants hit 10 shots with each grip on artificial turf. TrackMan® 4 launch monitor was used to collect performance data. Participants were asked to sign a consent form and were given a survey to gather information about their demographic and golf background. After each grip was swung, players were asked how secure the grip felt in their hands and how worn or slick the grip felt while swinging. Each question was rated on a scale of 1-4, with 1 representing not secure or not at all worn or slick, and 4 being very secure or very worn or slick. The data was evaluated using a python script and excel.

Results and Discussion

Eighteen (18) right-handed male golfers aged 24-59, with handicaps below 9, participated in this study. The UV2 tested grip compared to the new grip showed significant ($p < 0.05$) differences in ball speed ($p = 0.02$) and carry length ($p = 0.02$). The UV2 tested grip average ball speed dropped by 1.3 mph (new grip avg: 116.6 mph) and the average carry length dropped by 2.0 yards (new grip avg: 161.0 yards). The face impact location for the UV2 tested grip had a 25% increase in dispersion in the x-axis compared to the new grip. This demonstrates the possible slippage or rotation of the grip in the players hands during their swing. Eighty nine percent (89%) of the participants felt the new grip was secure to very secure and not at all to somewhat worn or slick. Whereas for the UV2 tested grip, 72% said the grip felt not at all to somewhat secure, and 56% said the grip felt fairly to very worn or slick. The main take away from this initial test is grips exposed to UVA/B light from the sun, negatively influence players performance and confidence level during their golf swing. From these initial findings, if a player sees their average ball speed or carry distance have decreased, and their dispersion of impact location on the club face has increased, they should replace their grips with new Golf Pride® grips. This research will also encompass evaluations to correlate real world grip wear with laboratory created wear. Additionally, wear on a grip is not just defined by UV wear, but also physical abrasion marks, and loss of tack. Additional studies will be conducted to investigate these forms of wear and their impacts on player performance and comfort level.

Significance

Golfers around the world and of every skill level have played with worn grips. Many players do not understand the benefits of new grips or when to replace them. This research will benefit players, coaches, and fitters to recognize when and why players need to regularly change their golf grips. Identifying grip wear and when a player should change their grips, will no longer be solely based on an opinion. Research based golf grip performance will greatly benefit the golf community and will provide a new understanding into grip material performance.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Greg Cavill, lab technician Richard McNeill, software developer Daniel Zucchetto, and my place of work Golf Pride®, for their support and providing the necessary equipment to conduct this research.

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