

TAYLORMADE R7 DRAW

STREET PRICE \$300. LOFTS 9, 10.5, HT (13.5).

KEY TECHNOLOGY A 55-gram, soft-tipped Fujikura RE*AX shaft and extra weight in the heel help prevent a slice. The face has TaylorMade's inverted-cone technology, which stretches the size of the area on the clubface that produces maximum or near-maximum ball speed. **PANELIST COMMENTS** "Nothing special unless you like distance and accuracy. This is powerful. . . . Felt heavier in head. . . . Draw is what it is. I couldn't fade it." **JUDGES' VERDICT** It has a classic TaylorMade look; heft and feel with a genuine left-tendency. **HOT** Sounds like a driver should, even one for choppers. **NOT** Unless you slice it 90 percent of the time, there might be better options.



If you hit it right with this, then give up the game.

BUZZ



PERFORMANCE



TECHNOLOGY



PREFERENCE



VALUE


taylormadegolf.com


TOUR EDGE BAZOOKA GEOMAX

STREET PRICE \$200. LOFTS 9, 10.5, 12, 14, 16.

KEY TECHNOLOGY Its head depth is near the USGA limit on higher-lofted models, but to control trajectory, its lower-lofted versions aren't as deep. The long shape is designed to raise the MOI. A tungsten sole weight is designed to lower the CG. **PANELIST COMMENTS** "Can't believe it, but I'd put this in my bag. Every ball was out there with the best. . . . Not wild about the extended head, but off-center hits seemed to hold their line. . . . Not for me, but for my 15-handicap buddies." **JUDGES' VERDICT** Could be the clubhouse leader if you're going to dollar-cost average your MOI number. **HOT** Cheers for high lofts. **NOT** Launches too high for some.



MOI number drops on lower-lofted models.

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THE GREAT MOI RACE

NEW SHAPES AIM AT MAKING MISSES BETTER

IT'S A RACE TOWARD AN UNKNOWN destination. But finding a way to maximize moment of inertia (resistance to twisting on off-center hits) has become the rage, largely because U.S. Golf Association rules now limit MOI to a specific number (5,900 gram-centimeters squared).

Getting there has many manufacturers departing from traditional shapes. Nike and Callaway lead the trend, starting with the nearly five-inch-square Sumo² and the boxy carbon-composite Fusion FT-i. Several other drivers that will debut in the marketplace after our Hot List deadline of February 15 are similarly making a run at the USGA's number and its size rules that restrict drivers to a five-inch square shape. Cobra will unveil the Speed LD (top) in March, which stretches its size to more than 4.7 inches from face to back. TaylorMade's engineers are tinkering with a new bullet-like shape for its new Burner driver (also out in March), which is 4.8 inches front to back. Even Titleist will unveil a triangle with the 907D1 (bottom) to go with a conventional pear-shape 907D2, both out later this spring.

It's difficult to say shape or MOI alone optimizes driver performance. It goes beyond a number, and includes every-



thing from face design and thickness to a player's swing. Expect to see longer, lighter shafts as a way of increasing the potential for generating clubhead speed, too.

Martin Brouillette, a member of the Golf Digest Academic Advisory Panel and a professor in mechanical engineering at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada, theorizes that the largest performance gains based on MOI have already been achieved. Even if a driver's MOI were to increase slightly beyond the USGA limit, it might result in a 3-percent gain on off-center hits for higher clubhead speeds.

Cobra, Titleist are among those to take aim at limit dimensions.

"For slower swing speeds, the relative benefits are the same," he says, "but they approximately double for a one-inch mis-hit." TaylorMade chief of research Benoit Vincent

says the trend of longer heads is really a way of better utilizing the 460 cubic-centimeter size. But it's only step one. "To make the jump to over 5,000, you have to go longer," he says. "But beyond that, to pick up additional ball velocity and real performance benefits, it's got to come from somewhere other than MOI."

Mike Stachura