

DEREK MURRAY

THE GREAT WHITE

Get past the looks and this is one serious performer



There are a few moments in the history of golf equipment that will always be remembered, and the

arrival of the Taylor Made R11 and Burner Superfast 2.0 is set to become another.

The Golf Stig arrived at ForeGolf HQ with all the seriousness of a crime scene pathologist and we headed over to the truck in complete silence as the gleaming white heads were analysed from every angle.

Firstly, we need to address the look of the club. The obvious white head is divisive – you will either love it or hate it, it's that simple. Golfers are remarkably set in their ways and a bit like the square heads of a couple of seasons ago (which were great and very forgiving) if you don't like the look of it then the possibility of owning the club stores there.

If it floats your boat, read on. The R11 is by far the most advanced driver on the market in terms of adjustability, but there were some aspects of the clubs that were surprising for our tester. We were sent the 9-degree driver head with the Fujikura Blur 60 in stiff flex and the first thing we noticed was that it was longer than normal – at 45.75 inches.

The first adjustment we made was with the hosel, with the FCT (flight control technology) shaft tip. As you rotate the head on the tip the loft changes and so does the face angle, in fact, this is the same tip as on the old R9 head but its been changed to just make you think its the loft that's changing.

Then there are the two weights in the toe and heel that allow you to move the centre of gravity to make the club draw or fade.

At the beginning, the numbers were surprising, as even set up with the 10.5-degree head we only managed 9.8 degrees of launch. Then we thought the shaft was perhaps causing the head to over-rotate through impact so we swapped it out for an Aldila NV ProtoPype 60 Stiff and the launch angle dipped to 7.1 degrees. We came to the conclusion that this driver has been a direct fusion of the R9 and the R9 Superdeep – with the introduction of the new soleplate, the screw-in weight normally found at the back of the club has been designed out of the club, greatly affecting the launch angle.

So what does that mean to you? Well, this driver stays so low at impact that it suits more the strong hitter, but when hit hard it stays remarkably low. It also is great for



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the golfer who needs to keep the ball flight flat at the top of the flight but it means the choice for you if loft is critical in order to beat your old club. It also means a soft tipped shaft will be the way to go in order to help launch the ball for the normal golfer. This bolt of white driver will set you back around the €375 mark.

We then moved onto the Superfast 2.0 but in our case we got the TP model in 9.5-degree. Now, TP stands for Tour Preferred and normally has aspects of what the Tour players like. By this time we are over the white colour and this little brother driver was matched up with a Matrix HD-6 X Flex at 45.5 inches long. It sat a little open at address but unlike the R11 this driver can only be adjusted in the toe weight to make it more or less fade biased and rid the dreaded snap hooks that the better strikers and draw hitters hate.

Now this is a serious driver, the Stig squared up to this club like an epic prize boxer about to knock out his opponent. The numbers were so much better with speeds of 171mph from the ball and a

launch of 10.3 degrees with backspin of 2900, we managed to reach the long grass at the bottom of the range which is impressive yardage (the only other club to ever do that was the original Burner TP). The slightly coned shape did little to dampen the mode of this club and it is by far the better head for distance and the deep faced design with low centre of gravity flushed ball after ball like a cheek-full of minty mouthwash. This TP version will need roughly €350 of your hard earned notes and the ordinary version will need around €295 to end up in your golf bag.

Have a look at taylormadegolf.com for more details also check out thedrivertour.eu to test the driver somewhere near you this summer.

TaylorMade are definitely ahead of the game in terms of technology and these two drivers are by far streets ahead of anything out there but in an attempt to be better have they just made themselves very different? Without a black head in the range, I hope it's not remembered for all the wrong reasons.

DEREK MURRAY, Ireland's leading golf club technician and clubmaker, offers consultation on the correct golf club for golfers of all abilities from his base Fore Golf in Naas, Co. Kildare and also for the world's top players on The European Tour. He is the 2010 GCA World Clubmaker of the Year.