

THE HACKER

3 The Honeymoon Strip

Fellow hirsute golfers out there will be well familiar with the latest technological advances in personal grooming - the aloe vera easy glide comfort strip - designed to give you a smooth, gliding shave. Ever determined in their pursuit for the marketing edge the manufacturers push the boundaries, how long before we get to shave with the silky aid of quadruple blades with a dual comfort strip of butterfly sweat and monkey's tears? Now my problem with this isn't how do they intend to collect the sweat, it is instead focused on the testers they give away. They are sublime and feel like you're shaving with a feather dipped in honey, resulting in you galloping down to the shops to buy a years supply. But you then discover that, for some reason, the product just never shaves as well as the tester. Why? Because they're not the bloody same!

So does this ring any bells with any other products? Yep, you guessed it, the demo driver! There you are innocently browsing through the racks and rails of the club pro-shop when the assistant pro wanders over and waves this gleaming, iridescent blue piece of driving technology under your nose.

"Just come in," he whispers in an awed whisper. "Guaranteed to make you hit further and straighter." Yeah right. You've been here before and you know sales speak when you hear it. "Honestly, if you don't believe me take it out for a round, we've been sent this one as a demo."

Well, where can be the harm in this? You can't use a driver anyway so you may as well have a bit of fun. So you stroll onto the first tee and pull off the head cover and feel a flicker of excitement as the peacock blue strip on the shaft reflects off the early morning sun. A little half turn of the shoulders and CRACK! with the sound of a shotgun that sends local pheasants scattering for the bunkers, the ball arrows down the centre of the fairway and disappears into the distance. And so it continues; hole after hole, drive after drive, fairway after fairway – you couldn't miss a fairway if it was one stripe wide.

So you stumble into the clubhouse and whip out your credit card and chip and pin like a pro. Now at this stage all may not be lost, as long as you walk off with the demo club! Under no circumstances buy a new one – remember the razor – your new driver just won't be the same, they can only afford to make monkeys cry for testers! But of course, they never let you and so you walk out clutching a gleaming new driver convinced you are now only half a dozen medal rounds away from being a golfing God.

Now this is the moment I let you into a lesser known industry secret. Do you remember the aloe vera strip? Well I'm convinced they build one into new drivers. A lubricated strip of Jojoba or other such exotic oil that runs the length of the shaft to ensure that for the first few rounds you swing like Tiger Woods. I call it the honeymoon strip, great to start with but it wears off. So shot by shot, the strip slowly dries out and your drives start to have a hint of shape. Round follows round and you start to miss fairways, and then you start to lose balls until you realise that the driver is utterly useless, the strip has dried to a bone dry husk. The club is now worthless and eventually is resigned to a corner of the garage until you sell it for 50p on e-bay.

So do yourself a favour, next time the assistant pro creeps over and waves the latest demo club under your nose, remember the razors, smile back politely and whisper "No thanks, I'm growing a beard."