



TaylorMade lost exposure when Funk flipped his lid.
Photo: J.D. Cuban

Company men?

PGA Tour players come up short when it comes to pitching product

By E. Michael Johnson
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Moments after Vijay Singh won the Sony Open in Hawaii last January, he spoke on national TV about how well his new driver performed. Yet he never mentioned it was a Cleveland Golf driver -- despite the fact he is paid several million dollars annually to play and endorse Cleveland Golf products. "That sure doesn't happen in NASCAR, does it?" said a tour official.

Although viewers may have wanted to know what Singh was using, it's doubtful they're eager for tour players to turn into the kind of hat-switching, company name-dropping pitchmen NASCAR drivers have become. Still, for some equipment manufacturers, the lack of support has become an issue. Ping, for instance, often talks with its players to reinforce the fact its tour program is there to promote the brand and to validate its products. "But we don't coach them on what to say," said

Chance Cozby, the director of the company's tour program.

Too many players probably require coaching nonetheless. Although it is difficult to legislate emotion, TaylorMade had to cringe when Fred Funk won the Players Championship and flung the hat bearing the company's name off his head in celebration.

Even the tour has recognized that its constituents could use help, hiring a public speaking authority, The Speaking Specialists, to address players earlier this year.

"We told them to remember they're always on, and to take advantage of every opportunity to talk up their sponsors," said Sue Castorino, president of The Speaking Specialists. "Sometimes they take [the sponsors] for granted."

Winner's Bags

Lucas Glover

Ball: Titleist Pro V1x

Driver: Titleist 983K

3-wood: Bridgestone J33

5-wood: Callaway War Bird **Irons (3-PW):** Titleist 735CM

Wedges: Titleist Vokey (54 degrees: Titleist Vokey prototype (60 degrees)

Putter: Scotty Cameron by Titleist prototype

Jay Haas

Ball: Titleist Pro V1

Driver: Titleist 983K, 9.5 degrees

3-wood: Titleist 904

5-wood: Titleist 904

Hybrid club: Cobra Baffler, 20 degrees

Irons (4-9): Titleist 690CB

(PW): Titleist 695 prototype

Wedges: Titleist Vokey (54, 60 degrees)

Putter: Scotty Cameron by Titleist Studio Design