

# *Reflections on Playing the Sterling Single Length Set of Irons*

*A personal message from company founder and designer, Tom Wishon*

All of the major hit testing of the Sterling single length irons was completed last fall, a few months before the cold and snow of winter hit down here in southwest Colorado. While some more isolated robot checks were done through the winter to verify some tiny tweaks I made on one of the head models, we finished the test work on the Sterling heads in October 2015.



Two weeks ago the golf course at which our R&D test center is located re-opened for the season. Being no different than any other golfer suffering from cabin fever and a case of “cold turkey” from the game, upon arriving home from work, I quickly grabbed my golf bag and jumped on a cart to get in as many holes in as I could before dinner.

In my bag, left from the final days of hit testing, was the final pre production set of Sterling single length irons (which just happened to be built to my current iron specs!) Long story short, by the 2nd hole I began to remember from final hit testing how much fun this set was to play on course. By the 3rd hole, I began to skip the tee shots and drive straight to the fairway to drop balls at different distances so I could hit more shots with the Sterling irons.



I began playing the game at the age of 12. In between then and now are 53 yrs of playing conventional incremental length irons. During the past 7 yrs I played one of the final test sets of the 560MC forged cavity back irons. But my iron set makeup during this time had been a 3, 4 and 5 hybrid followed by the 560MC from #6 to A Wedge. Why no 5 iron? Because I followed my own fitting advice and declared the break between hybrid and irons at the lowest loft iron I felt comfortable playing – that being the 6 iron.

Sure, I can hit a 5 iron. My game has deteriorated a bit from age, but I am still a 6-7 index and have days when I do hit the ball very well in terms of shot shape and shot quality. But over the past several years if you ask what is the lowest loft iron I can hit with full confidence and no doubts in the back of my mind, it would be the 6 iron. Hence the 27\* loft #5 hybrid in my set makeup.

But there in my bag on opening day this year was this final prototype set of #5 to gap wedge in the Sterling single length. And I have to say I found myself dropping balls in the fairways at 180 and 195 out from the greens just so I could have more chances to hit the Sterling 6 and 5 irons because they were just so *much fun to hit!*

The 565MC #5 iron I dropped it to make room for the 5 hybrid has a loft/length of 27\*/38", the 6 iron is 31\*/37 5/8". The 5 iron brought enough doubt in the back of my mind that I dropped it to add the 5 hybrid. But yet the other day when I was out there dropping balls all over the fairways and hitting Sterling irons, I was consistently hitting the 23\*/36.75" #5 iron and 27\*/36.75" #6 iron with good height and good distance for my 78mph swing speed with an in between 7 and 8 iron length.



I actually found myself chuckling as I dropped more balls. Sure, I started to over amp a swing here and there and missed a couple of shots. But if I just started the swing with the thought I am hitting an 8 iron, it was a whole lot of fun.

On March 31st the first orders for the Sterling irons begin to ship. I wish all the clubmakers and their golfers to have good fun with fitting and playing this very interesting set of irons. Let us know how it goes because we'll be curious and interested to hear! As always, best wishes in this great game!

And now on to some more technical information to help you do the best job possible in fitting your golfers with the new Sterling single length irons.

## *Fitting Single Length Irons*

Since announcing the upcoming Sterling single length irons, we have received a lot of questions asking for guidance and information about fitting the Sterling irons to golfers. Let's start with a basic point - many clubmakers are concerned there is more to fitting single length irons than fitting conventional incremental length irons. We'd like to begin this technical discussion by making it very clear that fitting single length irons is actually easier than fitting conventional irons. In the most simple form, if the golfer likes his current 7 or 8 iron, you can simply use the same shaft, same shaft tip trim, same swingweight, same lie angle, same grip model and grip size and you will have covered the bases for effectively fitting the golfer for his single length irons.

Of course there is a little more to it. But not much. Perhaps the best way we can continue to guide your education in single length iron performance and fitting is to share the answers to a number of the questions we have fielded from clubmakers. If you want to know more about working with Single Length irons, please read and study the following information. Of course, whenever you have questions, do not hesitate to ask us either by phone (+46 703 190 596) or email ([peter.qvarfordt@wishongolf.se](mailto:peter.qvarfordt@wishongolf.se)).

**1. Most other single length iron sets are made to be 37.5", the length of a 6-iron. Bryson deChambeau's single length set is 37.5" in length. Why is the Sterling iron design based on an 8-iron or optional 7-iron length when everyone else seems to be saying a 6-iron length is the way to go?**

The shorter the length, the easier it will be to hit shots more consistently solid and on center. The longer the length of an iron in relation to its length in your current set, the farther you may hit it, and with less control and accuracy. The shorter the length of an iron in relation to its length in your current set, there could be a loss of distance unless something is done with the head design or set makeup to prevent that from happening.

A 6-iron length of 37.5" evolved as a primary length for single length iron sets as a way to prevent losing as much distance with the lower loft irons in the set. It also evolved at a time when the average 6 iron loft was not less than 32\*.

Most golfers will have a slower clubhead speed with their shorter length irons. The reasoning behind a 6 iron length was that it was still long enough that the player would not see as much of a drop in clubhead speed from his normal 4 or 5 iron lengths, and thus not as much of a distance loss, especially if the 6-iron single length set's 4 and 5 irons were made with a lower loft.

But a 6 iron length is 1.5" to 2" longer than most conventional #9, PW and gap wedges. With that much more length can come a higher clubhead speed which hits the ball farther than the golfer is used to hitting the high loft irons/wedges, as well as the chance for less control and worse accuracy.

A very good player may have the ability to adjust and adapt to the longer length high loft irons and wedges far more than an average to higher handicap player. This is why Bryson deChambeau has no distance or accuracy issues with his 37.5" high loft irons and wedges. But for all the rest of the golfers, 37.5" #8, 9, PW, GW and SW can mean real problems with distance control and accuracy.

We chose the Sterling 8 iron length (or optional 7 iron length) for these reasons: 1) 36.5" will be easier for virtually all golfers to control and hit a higher percentage of on center hits than will a 37.5" length; 2) 36.5" reduces the chance of too much distance with the 8, 9, PW, GW and SW compared to a 37.5" length; 3) Wishon Golf's high COR iron face technology is proven as a way to bring back ball speed and distance on the lower number irons that otherwise could be lost when playing a 36.5 to 37" length for the 5 and 6 irons.

In short, we know how to make high COR irons. The other single length companies either do not, or they choose not to for whatever reasons. 8 iron length IS easier to control and hit more shots on center than is a 6 iron length. If you can get more consistency, more on center hits, better distance control and accuracy with the high number irons while not losing any distance with the low loft irons, then why would anyone use a 6 iron length in a single length set?

## **2. What about the single length iron set makeup? Should all golfers be using a #5 through Sand Wedge?**

No. Not all golfers play with a #5 or even #6 iron in conventional length irons, so the same applies to single length set makeup, but with a little tweak. Note the **lowest number iron the golfer** can hit

with reasonable height and consistency in their CONVENTIONAL IRON SET and make that the lowest number iron in the Sterling single length set. Just as there are a lot of average golfers with average to below average clubhead speed who cannot hit a 5-iron or sometimes even a 6-iron consistently well enough to have the irons in their bag, the same thing can apply with a single length set.

Because of the shorter 7 or 8 iron single length coupled with the higher launch angle of our thin, high COR face, the positive effect of the shorter length on shot consistency *could* make it possible for the golfer to hit one number of iron lower than they can in their conventional iron set. COULD be possible. Not WILL be possible in all cases.

The lower number irons in the Sterling design are designed with a high COR face and a little lower loft to achieve proper distance at the shorter 7 or 8-iron length. As with low loft irons in conventional length sets, players with a lower clubhead speed may not be able to hit these lower loft irons high enough to gain full distance for their clubhead speed. This is a good reason to be sure to have demo Sterling irons for all your golfers to hit and test.

As a general guideline, if the golfer's 38"/5-iron clubhead speed is under 75mph or handicap over 18, don't always expect to include a 5 iron in the set makeup. If the golfer's 38"/5-iron clubhead speed is under 65mph or handicap is over 24, that may mean no 5 and 6 iron in the set makeup. Of course these are simply guidelines. The actual set makeup decision should be made on the basis of the results of the golfer's test hits with the 5 and 6 iron.

For the wedges, it is OK for the golfer to keep their present SW and LW, especially if they have a high level of confidence in the clubs. From our research, we believe strongly that a real benefit of single length comes from the consistency of having the same exact swing feel in every *full swing club*. Yes, golfers may hit full swing shots with the SW and LW, but for most players, the vast majority of shots they hit with the SW/LW are less than full swing shots. That plus the fact many golfers may have a real sense of confidence in their SW and LW means if they want to keep these clubs, it won't detract from the swing consistency benefit of single length.

### **3. How should I decide whether to fit the golfer in the #5 hybrid or in the #5 iron to begin the single length set?**

The Sterling 5 Hybrid is simply designed as an option for the golfer to choose if they prefer the shape and look of a hybrid and they are not comfortable with a 5-iron. Some golfers are more comfortable with the wider sole and lower CG of a hybrid. Keep in mind, the 5 hybrid and 5 iron are the same club from the standpoint of the set makeup because they have the same loft and are intended to be built to the same length. The golfer should not try to play with both the 5 hybrid and 5 iron in his Sterling set makeup.



This is an either/or option for the golfer to choose based on their preference with a very slight bit of trajectory help from the lower CG of the hybrid.

### **4. What about the other clubs in the set? Should we be thinking about single length for the hybrids or fairway woods above the first Sterling single length iron?**

Fit the other clubs in the set above the lowest loft Sterling iron the same way you would fit the rest of the set above the lowest loft in a conventional set of irons. Note the distance the golfer hits the lowest loft iron he can hit with reasonable consistency and height. Add 15 yards to that number and look for the hybrid or fairway wood at a normal but not too long of a length that allow the golfer to hit the ball that far.

Then add 15 yds to the distance of that first hybrid or wood above the lowest loft iron chosen for the golfer, and keep working your way back from that point to the driver.

Regarding the potential for single length hybrids or woods, at this point we do not yet see the level of potential benefits for single length hybrids or woods that we do for the irons. A big reason for our belief is because with the single length irons, the golfer would have 5, 6, 7 or even 8 clubs that all would possess the same exact swing feel. During the course of repeated rounds over weeks and months, the golfer will hit more combined shots with the set of single length irons and wedges than with the hybrids and woods.

That means more of a chance for the duplicate swing feel of all the irons to have an effect on shot consistency.

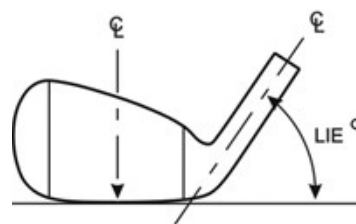
With hybrids and woods, the golfer may only have 3 or 4 total clubs. Distance being of high importance with the woods means one single length for all the hybrids and woods could result in a loss of distance with the woods.

In short, it's not impossible for a version of single length hybrids and woods to be able to evolve, but it would take a bit of work to determine the length and the lofts to make such an addition of tangible benefit to golfers.

**5. Should we perform a dynamic lie fitting test with every iron in the set? Or does the fact all irons are the same length mean we can just do one dynamic lie test and bend all the irons to that same lie angle?**

In a perfect world of clubfitting, a dynamic loft test should be performed for every club in the bag. But that takes a long time, and for 98% of all golfers, getting the lie within 1° of being perfect is going to be just fine for ensuring that an ill fit lie could never cause shots to be missed far enough off line to negatively affect the score.

Let's put it this way. Since every iron will be the same length and same swing feel and used with the same stance and posture, it's not likely that a dynamic lie test done with each single length iron would result in different lies. But because we golfers can do different things with different clubs in our swing and set up, it would not be a bad idea to do a dynamic lie test on at least two or three of the irons to see if they are close enough to being the same to allow you to forego lie testing with all the irons.



**6. How do I decide what length the single length set is to be built for each golfer?**

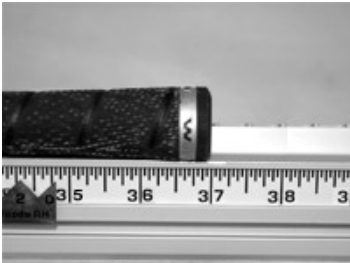
Sterling single length irons are designed to be built to either a 37" (7 iron), 36.5" (8 iron) or any fraction in between, as desired by the

golfer or recommended by the clubmaker. Our primary choice in the design is the 8 iron length, but with the 274g headweight that all Sterling heads are designed to spec, this will allow the set to be built to either one of those two lengths and still come out within reasonably normal range of swingweights (or MOIs).

If the golfer wanted a 37.5" 6-iron length, the 274g headweight will cause that length to result in higher than normal swingweights which would be too head heavy for most golfers. However, at 37.5" length, it is possible to use our 55g S2S Blue iron shafts and achieve a normal swingweight, providing of course the Blue 55 iron shaft fits the golfer.

The choice between 37" and 36.5" can be made on the basis of either, 1) the golfer is just more comfortable with his stance, posture, spine angle at one length over the other; 2) 37" may offer a very slightly higher clubhead speed which could help the golfer achieve a higher flight with the #5 iron/5 hybrid in the Sterling design; 3) a player with a greater wrist to floor measurement (>36") could be more comfortable with the 37" length.

Don't be fooled by a player being tall or with a greater wrist to floor measurement to make you think you must go with a single length that is longer than 37". In rare cases as for a person with a >38" wrist to floor measurement, perhaps that may be necessary to achieve comfort over the ball. But not always.



Keep this in mind – for a golfer who is well fit into a +1" over length conventional set, 37" is the length of his 9 iron. So there is no reason to jump to immediate longer lengths for players who have been fit into longer length conventional iron sets.

## **7. Can I convert any other iron set into a single length set?**

No. Not unless you are very skilled in welding, iron head grinding, and iron head polishing/finishing. Whatever length you may want to build the single length set dictates which heads would need weight added and which heads would need weight removed from a conventional set. Not to mention the heads may or may not allow



bending the lie of some of the heads by the amount required to fit the golfer. Single length iron heads are designed and manufactured so every iron has the same head weight and the same lie. In the case of the Sterling irons, all the heads are 274g with a 63\* lie.

Conventional iron head sets are made so each head has a different lie angle and different head weight, with the weights graduating through the set by 7 grams. Let's say you wish to make a set from #5 to gap wedge to have a single length of 37" (7 iron length) for each iron. All heads below the 7 iron will need weight added. All heads above the 7 iron will need weight removed. Not only that but the amount of weight removal for the #9, PW and gap wedge would be between 14 grams to over 30 grams, depending on the designed head weight of the wedges. Grinding that much weight from an iron or wedge and then restoring the finish would be very difficult. In short, you can't convert a conventional set of iron heads for use in a single length assembly.

What about doing it in ¼" increments? If you do that, you can't achieve the exact same potential fitting and performance benefits of a true single length set for the golfer – same length means same shaft weight, same total weight, same head weight, same swingweight, same MOI, same balance point and from this, the same exact swing feel for each iron. Any other length set up changes the majority of these specs which control the weight feel of a golf club.

We realize most clubmakers who asked this question did so because they have golfers who are hesitant about spending the money to buy a single length set before having the chance to hit shots with the clubs. OK, that's completely understandable. Single length irons are a big change from incremental length irons. This is precisely why we have urged clubmakers to get a #5, 7, 9 or a #5 and 9 or a #7 and 9 as demos for the golfers to try before they buy. Because we're talking a 7- or 8-iron length for all the irons, those lengths are so short that the demo clubs do not have to be super close in fitting specs for most golfers to discover if they could adapt and like the single length concept.

In other words, if you make your Sterling demo irons to a length of 36.75" ( in between 7 and 8 iron lengths) with an S2S White R flex shaft at D1 swingweight with a V-Series +1/64" over size grip, that combination is not going to be so far off that the majority of average golfers would not get a very good impression for the performance of

the single length irons. If you have good players with higher clubhead speeds who may be interested, build another group of demos with an S2S Stepless S flex shaft at D1-D2.

### **8. Is there a special shaft that performs better in a single length set? How are shafts to be trimmed for installation in a single length set?**

Any iron shaft that fits the golfer can be used in the Sterling single length set. The choice of the shaft is done to FIT THE GOLFER. Not with any consideration of the assembly being to a single length.

Once you choose the length of either a 7 iron (37") or 8 iron (36.5") for the golfer, you trim all the shafts the same for each iron. If the set is to be of a 7 iron length, you note the correct tip trim for the shafts for a 7 iron and you tip trim to that spec. If the length is to be an 8 iron, you tip trim all shafts for an 8 iron.

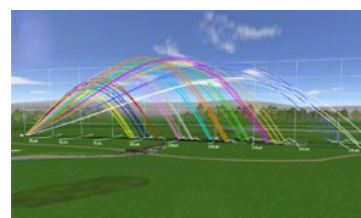
### **9. How do I know the Sterling irons will hit the ball as far as I am used to with my current set of irons?**

How would you know if ANY new set of irons will hit the ball as far or different distances as your current set? For that matter, before single length irons ever came to a golfer's mind, did the golfer even think about this when looking at a new set of conventional irons to upgrade or replace his current set? Doubtful.

There are several things that determine how far a golfer will hit each club in a set of irons. A) clubhead speed and angle of attack; B) what are the lofts and the lengths of each iron in one set vs the other; C) what is the face design of the irons, high COR or conventional;

Think about this – with the ongoing trend for companies to lower the lofts of irons over the past 30 yrs, how many times has a golfer hit a new set of irons and found he hit several of the irons longer than his current set, including the 8, 9, PW, gap wedge? Does he question this? Is this a problem for golfers "to get used to"?

We've worked very hard to engineer the lofts and the face designs of the Sterling #5, 6 and 7 iron heads to be sure at the 7 or 8 iron length they would not hit the ball shorter than



what the vast majority of golfers are used to for these same number irons in their current conventional set. We believe our hit testing shows we accomplished this goal.

To be honest, we're betting that most golfers will hit the Sterling #5 to PW irons a little longer than they hit the same number irons in their current set, with the gap and sand wedges being very close to the same distance.

As with ANY custom fitting situation, the golfer needs to hit test a #5, 7, 9 or even a #7 and 9 to become more comfortable with this very different Sterling single length design.