

Adios to Anchoring Putts

By Megan Coghlan

In 2012, the USGA and the Royal & Ancient Golf Club announced it would be proposing a major change to the Rules of Golf that would outlaw a putting stroke that they worried was taking skill out of the game: anchor putting.

“The anchoring has generated serious division within the game and among players about whether those who anchor play the same game and face the same challenges,”

-Former USGA President Glen Nager stated in 2013.

The common misconception is that the long-shafted putters, better known as “belly putters” are being banned. However, it is not the putter style that is soon to be prohibited,

but the “anchored” stroke that is most often associated with belly putters.

Rule 14-1b of the USGA handbook will prohibit putting while using an “anchor point”, which exists when a player intentionally holds the club or a gripping hand in contact with any part of his or her body, whether it be the chest, forearm, a forearm against his side, or even in some cases, the chin.

The 2015 golf season is coming to a slow close and the rule officially goes into effect January 2016. This means professional and amateur golfers who use belly putters will have to reevaluate their putting stroke for competition, if they haven't already. Because it's not totally common for a golfer to use a belly putter without anchoring it, we

are likely to see less, if any of them on the course.

Long putters typically aren't the favored choice anyways among golfers today, but their decline in sales over the past few years is notable. Their appearance has become rare at the PGA Merchandise Show as equipment makers have faced the inevitability that the anchoring ban is going to happen.

Online golf distributor Globalgolf.com has shown a steady decline in belly putter sales since June of 2014. For those looking for an alternative, Alan Unruh from

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globalgolf.com recommends a counter balance putter.

"This has a similar feel as a belly putter and more forgiveness than a traditional length putter," Unruh said. Not to mention, Golfshot Pro members can get [\\$20 off](#).

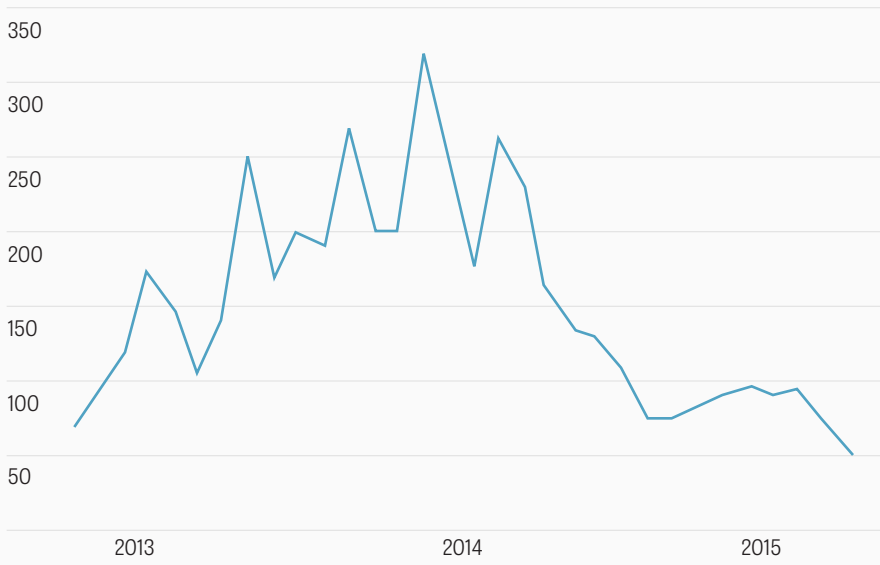
The golf governing bodies' suspicions that the belly putter provides an unfair advantage

doesn't come out of nowhere. As much as any other club type is a matter of preference, a lot of golfers who have tried the belly putter understandably don't want to switch back. At the same time though, we don't see the majority of golfers using them.

On average, less than 10 players per week on the PGA Tour use a belly putter – roughly 6% of the field. Plenty of those pros disagree with the ban, but will have to conform if they still want to win. PGA Tour veteran Bernhard Langer said in 2013, "For three decades nobody won a major with one. And now because three have, they're illegal? I'm sorry, don't accept that argument whatsoever."

2013 Masters winner Adam Scott plans to use his belly putter for as long as it is still allowed*. Once January 2016 comes, he will keep his putter "millimeters" from his body, which will give officials

Belly Putter Sales



something to cringe over. It is worth noting that his putting statistics have not improved.

Major championship winners Keegan Bradley and Webb Simpson have switched this year from their belly putters, though neither has improved his putting statistics either.

Phil Mickelson is not a belly putter, but he has experimented with it. He has been known to say banning them would be “grossly unfair”.

On the other hand, there are players like Ernie Els, whose stance on it is, “As long as it’s legal, I’ll keep cheating like the rest of them.”



*UPDATE: Adam Scott is reportedly switching to a short putter for the 2015 President's Cup, admitting it might be a nice forced change since his putting has not been improving.