



In every sport you can name, the specialised footwear worn by today's athletes looks, as well as performs, better. Better, than say, comparable footwear worn three generations ago. Golf is different in terms of appearance. The idea seems to be to up-date the technology and biomechanics while subtly making the shoe appear as if Howard Hughes or Charles Lindbergh wore it. The untimely death of golf professional Payne Stewart brought on a resurgence of the Plus Fours as another example of traditional "links."

However, underneath those wing-tips, brogues and saddles, it's another story. The most significant change in modern golf shoes is not surprisingly in the sole where "Alternative" and "Spikeless" cleats have largely replaced the traditional screw-in metal spikes. Too bad that President Clinton didn't know that before he fell down the steps outside Greg Norman's house in Florida a few years ago. He could have saved himself a nasty fall and several months of rehabilitation. Alternative spikes today are more user friendly, being lower profile and made as a circular screw-in appendage from thermoplastic polyurethane compositions incorporating a metal flange and thread which keeps the "spike" in the shoe but also makes it easier to remove and replace. The world's leading manufacturers of golf and athletic shoe hardware - MacNeil Engineering in

Massachusetts - produces the most popular style. Offering great traction, comfort and friendly to fairways and greens, the Tred-Lite II is touted to have 23% better traction than its nearest competitor.

Believe it or not many golf shoe soles still have heels. Like the metal spike, they are quickly being replaced by wedge and midsole units, which are now being more technically referred to as "single plane" soles. Foot-Joy, one of the largest golf shoe specialists, still advertises a Goodyear welted construction in its extensive range complete with traditional sole and heel and metal spikes to boot. As noted, tradition dies

hard in this sport. Most of the single plane outsoles are either moulded rubber or polyurethane with small appendages or "nubs" for walking the greens or the clubhouse with equal ease. Wedges are either EVA or polyurethane for lighter weight and shock absorbency.

The biomechanical motion of the swing and drive are accommodated in the sole design that has progressed over the past decade to allow the golfer stability and traction in the stroke as well as walking flexibility over the fairways. Strategically placed triangular ridges at 90 and 45 degrees give "Grip brand" spikeless soles excellent traction without added screw-in appendages.

Many of the performance shoe companies such as Nike, Adidas and Reebok share the



Florsheim.



# Traditional "links" to the grass



*Bite golf sandals.*



*Traditional look by Bite.*

1. Amphibious waterproof leather

2. Patented X-Cross strapping system across upper for firm support

3. Neoprene foam lining beneath leather for added comfort

4. Oversized outsoles for better support, stability and traction

5. Monster drive toe guard for smooth follow through

6. Sculpted midsole provides stability and support all around the foot

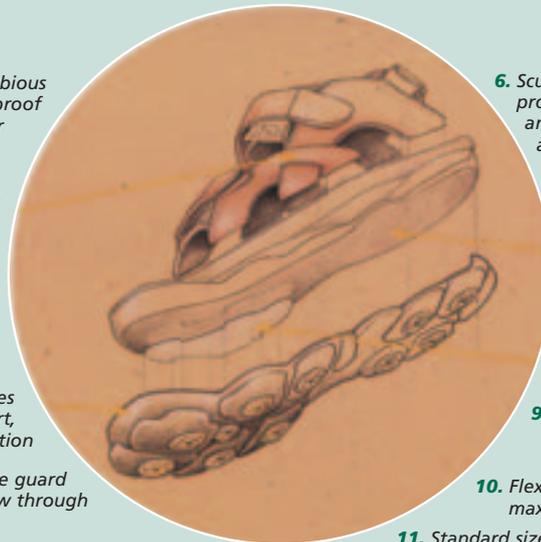
7. Compression-molded EVA midsole for cushioning and lighter weight

8. Flex pad for forefoot spring

9. Green-friendly outsole lugz disperse weight

10. Flexion grooves for maximum mobility

11. Standard size removable spikes



market with the many traditional makers like Foot-Joy, Dexter and Etonic with similar interchangeable spikeless features and traditional "street shoe" uppers, albeit in mostly synthetic leathers. Unlike basketball, where the most outrageous upper designs have been designed, marketed and sold - regularly, more racy athletic upper styling is just not accepted in golfing circles, even by the www.com set. Even the old kiltie (that flap over the eyestay) has survived.

Newer companies such as Bite, Yippi, Sandbaggers and Grip have introduced golfing sandals, which have sold well since their introduction in the mid-nineties. The sole is identical to traditional golf shoes, but instead the upper is replaced with what has become known as the "Sports Sandal" complete with open toe, neoprene and fancy straps for support. This new look in golf shoes fills a need for those golfers who love the game but want shoes that reflect a youthful casual attitude. According to the National Golf Foundation, with Tiger Woods leading the charge (in Nike of course), the number of junior players in the

USA alone has grown by over 50% since 1995 accounting for more than US\$60 million in sales.

Yippi, a branded line from Carlico Inc. in Seattle, WA, follows Nike, Starbucks coffee and Microsoft in the Northwest's great tradition in product and marketing innovation.

Linings have undergone a major renovation since their leather and nondescript backer days. Linings in today's modern golf shoes are featured rather than hidden away inside the shoe. Hang tags and point-of-purchase co-operative advertising from major manufacturers such as Du Pont, W.L. Gore, Texon and Faytex Corp. promote wicking and absorbent linings made to control the temperature during long hours of walking and standing. Brand names like Cambrelle, Dri-Lex Aquiline and the latest from Foot-Joy - ComforTemp, which offers an interactive cooling environment (I.C.E. - nice touch!) are much admired and sought after by the golfer. In fact, phase change materials are increasingly being used in golf shoes. Waterproofing too is important



*Left: Florsheim's Magneforce is constructed with the Tectonic Magnetic Insole. The insole provides a unidirectional application that maximizes magnetic field penetration. The ideal depth of penetration stimulates the effect of natural pain relief, energy and comfort.*



### Golf engineering goes to work on the sole



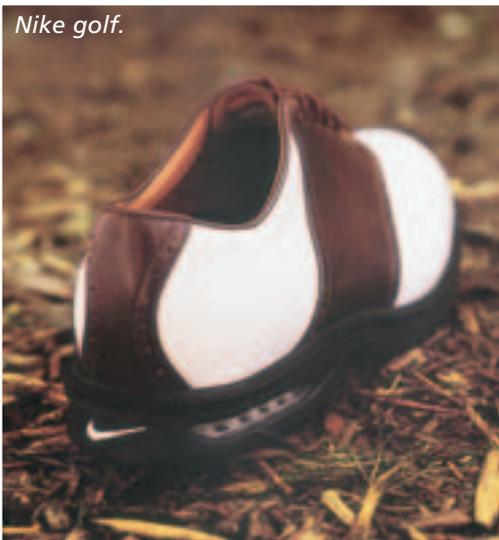
for the "all year round" golfer. In addition to the many synthetic waterproof and water-resistant upper materials such as Nytek from Majilite in the USA, other poromeric synthetics can be treated with silicone or polyurethane coatings. Gore-Tex waterproof membrane has added many happy hours of dry underfoot golfing in damp and rainy climates. All in all, when you add anti-bacterial, anti-microbial and anti-fungal treatments to the many feature linings used in modern golf footwear, the old golf shoe isn't as fuddy-duddy as it looks.

Sockliners are another footwear component where golf shoes shine. Footbeds or feature

sockliners are not stressed in performance footwear mainly because of price competition (people won't pay for a component they don't see) and the wide variety of excellent accessory products on the market. Golf is different again from other performance footwear categories in this respect. Maybe it's the long hours spent in the shoes. It probably isn't the walking - with most US recreational golfers taking the cart these days. However, golf shoemakers like to promote added comfort, support and health benefits associated with famous materials like Polyiou, Poron and Sorbothane in their shoes. Whatever the reason, golf shoes are sold on their inside features as much as their traditional upper styling designs and I can prove it - with magnets!



Nike golf.



An area of footwear performance and comfort completely overlooked by the "lightness conscious" categories are magnets. Golfers have discovered that magnets not only give them relief from pain but seem to improve their strength and endurance on the course as well. Magnetic insoles are so popular with the golfing community (at least in Japan and USA) that Florsheim, one of the oldest, traditional shoe makers in the USA has recently introduced a MagnaForce shoe line with unipolar magnetic insoles permanently constructed into the shoe. They claim it feels great and delivers all the benefits of biomagnetics. Wow! Just when you thought golf shoes were the same old spikes your Dad wore - better look inside next time. 🌐

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