

AS A PGA PRO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH DRONES?

Written by: Jim Carroll

Sometime in the next few years, someone is going to arrive at a golf course and have their entire round filmed by a drone up in the air overhead. It will follow them around via a GPS link ; their fellow players might be annoyed at first, but with the ultra silent motor, they'll soon barely notice.

Or will they? Might drone technology present your golf club with the ultimate breach of golf etiquette?

The idea is not far-fetched at all – just visit the Web site for the Lily Camera (<http://lily.camera>), which ships in just a few months. Turn it on, start your round, and it will follow and film your round!

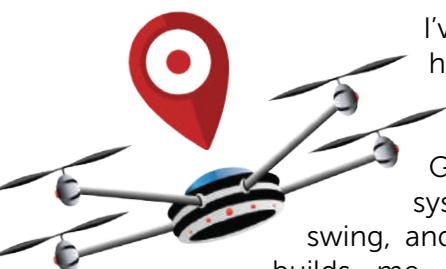


There are a few questions that come with this fast-paced technology:

What will your club policy be? Will you ban drones or welcome them? Might they be a fascinating tool to help grow interest in the game, which all of us know is a critical imperative? Not only that – might they prove to be an invaluable teaching tool at the same time that they emerge as a critical annoyance?

As a PGA Professional, you should be thinking about these issues. Right now, drone technology is where the Internet was in about 1993, and in the next 1-2 years we are going to see explosive growth in both the number of drones as well the sophistication of the feature set they support.

I was thinking about this while out for my latest golf round in Florida a month ago; I'm pretty wired up already, and maybe I just need a drone to complete my wired golf-self.



I've got my GPS watch to help plan the accuracy of my shots, and I'm a very active user of the GameGolf GPS tracking system. It monitors every swing, and at the end of the day, builds me an interactive map of my round with all kinds of useful insight on my performance. I joked to my playing partner: "It provides me with really good insight on how bad I am." Not only that, but the golf cart I was driving had the latest in on-board GPS tech, providing me even more information on the course and hole layout.



That's 3 GPS devices. What's to prevent the addition of a 4th, in the form of a self-flying drone?

Like every sport, golf is bound up in a rich tradition and history. The idea that drones might become part of the game will make some go apoplectic; as did the arrival of golf carts in the 1960's, as did the arrival of GPS shot tracking technology in the 1990's!

Think about what happens when a golfer utilizes a drone to film their round. We're in the era of social networking and it's not far-fetched to think that someone will edit the video highlights of their round to share it with friends; they might even send it to their PGA Professional to help analyze it for training purposes; or they put it some other unimaginable use.

Which leads us to another question: could it be an invaluable teaching aid? Imagine working with an aspiring golfer on the range, trying to fix their slice. Moving beyond filming the swing with your iPad or iPhone, you might now be able to film the student from above and provide them even more insight into their swing patterns, and help them really visualize the nature of a slice. Could it be a good thing, or something rather ridiculous?

I'm sure I don't know – all I know is that drone technology is going to invade the game of golf faster than we might imagine. Already in Japan, there is a course that is using drones to deliver snacks, drinks and golf balls to players on a course!

What's your club policy on drone usage -- do you have one? Have you even thought about this as an issue? And what will you do as a PGA Professional to incorporate this fascinating new technology into your instruction methods?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT!



Jim Carroll is a leading international futurist, speaking at dozens of conferences worldwide. Most recently, he was invited by the PGA of America to keynote the 2016 PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, where he spoke on the challenge and opportunities that new technology presents to the game. He's a high-handicapper with good intentions, and is an active member at Credit Valley Golf & Country Club in Mississauga.