Golfing Without the ‘‘Golf’’

An activity which I like very much is playing golf. It is a hobby I picked up my freshman year of high school and I have been playing since. Golf is something I find to be very relaxing. I love being out on the course or on the driving range on a nice day; the atmosphere is very calming. Additionally, golf is something I can always keep doing and improving. The feeling of beating my best score or doing very well on a hole is something I don’t really get with anything else. I originally got into golf because I wanted to play a fall sport in high school, but soccer and cross country did not hold my interest very well. Eventually, I went out to try playing golf over the summer and fell in love with it. I by no means consider myself to be good, but I still enjoy playing whenever I get a chance.

One technology that I feel has really started to change the sport is something called a golf simulator. A golf simulator is essentially what it sounds like, a very advanced machine which provides a way to virtually play golf indoors. There are many components which go together to make these golf simulators work. The first, and most obvious, part of the simulation is the screen. The screen projects a large, realistic image of a driving range or golf course anywhere in the world, in any type of weather conditions, so as long as it has been programmed into the simulation. The screen is also what the person will be hitting the golf balls into. The next component of the simulation is called a “swing pad.” This is what the person will hit the golf ball off of, straight into the screen. The swing pad is usually very similar to golf mats which are set up at driving ranges; they are mats which have fake grass on them to provide a realistic hitting environment and simulate actually being out on the course. Connected to the swing pad and screen is a very expensive, high-tech computer. This computer uses various sensors placed around the room to calculate everything that happens from the second the club lifts off the mat to the moment the ball hits the screen. These calculations include information such as, “speed, shot angle, distance, spin, trajectory, and so on” (George 2010). Using a combination of all this information together, as well as
other factors such as simulated wind, the computer is able to project an image of the ball’s flight path onto the screen. Eventually the ball lands and accurately bounces along the fairway/green based on all the previous information. There is even a mechanism that allows for simulated putting using a process similar to the aforementioned hitting process.

I personally feel that golf simulators have had an incredible impact on the game of golf. They allow for someone to play an entire 18-hole game of golf wherever he/she wants, whenever he/she wants. If there is rain/snow outside, it is now possible to go indoors and play golf. It allows for someone to practice without driving all the way out to the course if it is far away. Golf simulators have had a positive impact on my game as well. My sophomore year of high school, I was looking to purchase new golf clubs and take a step up from the beginner clubs I was using my freshman year. I did some research online to see what kind of clubs I thought would be good for me and I was able to narrow it down to three different sets, but I was still uncertain about which one. Thankfully, the store where I went to purchase my clubs had a golf simulator. I was able to practice at the simulator using all three different kinds of clubs. I saw how each different kind of club affected my distance, my accuracy, my speed, etc. The instructor was even able to help fix my swing from time to time because he saw exactly where it was getting messed up based on the computers statistics. In the end, I picked the most comfortable club, which was also the one with my best hitting averages out of the three. Without the simulator, it would have been much more difficult to figure out which set would have been better suited for me.

Given how prominent golf simulators have become, I think that they are going to change the way the game of golf is played throughout the world. Already, I see a lot of professionals using them on the TV to practice. They use the data the computer provides to improve their game, much in the same way I did. I could envision entire compounds full of golf simulators where people could go and practice in the not too distant future. I’m sure it would be a viable alternative to playing in the snow or rain during the winter in places on the east coast and Midwest. For all these reasons, I feel confident that golf simulators will continue to evolve the game, just as they have been doing.
The Office is one of my favorite television shows ever. The show focuses on the everyday lives of a group of people who work for the Scranton, PA branch of Dunder Mifflin, a paper sales company. The second episode of the fourth season, “Dunder Mifflin Infinity,” focuses on technology and how it is starting to change the way that the company is going to be run in the future. In the episode, Ryan, Dunder Mifflin’s Vice President of Regional Sales, comes to the office in Scranton and explains to everyone that the company is going to be completely redone in terms of how things are run. For example, he introduces the members to a new company website, he explains how everyone will be connected using new company Blackberries, etc. Michael, the Regional Manager of the company’s Scranton branch, is opposed to all these changes as he feels the company is unfairly trying to get rid of all its older members. In retaliation to these changes, he and Dwight, Michael’s Assistant to the Regional Manager, set out to give gift baskets to previous company client’s in an effort to win them back and prove to Ryan that the company doesn’t need new technology to in order to be successful. Unfortunately, they have a difficult time accomplishing this task, as each client states cheaper costs or easy-to-use websites as reasons for leaving Dunder Mifflin for other suppliers. Eventually, Michael and Dwight get in the car to drive to one final client. Michael begins to follow the directions from a newly installed GPS. Soon, the pair get to point in the road where the GPS’s directions become unclear as to whether they are meant to “bear right” or “turn right.” Michael, being the driver, ultimately chooses to “turn right” and consequentially drives straight into a lake, emphasizing his frustration with technology. The episode ends with Michael explaining to Ryan how he will refuse to follow the company’s new way of doing things, given that technology just tried to kill him.

While this episode of The Office focused on a multitude of different technologies and their impact on business, the device I will focusing on is the GPS, or The Global Positioning System. Today, GPSs can be seen everywhere. They exist in our phones, cars, computers, and even physical GPS devices still. However, not too long ago, this was not the case. As with many things, the GPS was a technology that developed as a result of research from the United States Military, and as such, the technology used to be nearly exclusive to them. Even when it was released for civilian use, the government used to degrade the
accuracy for non-military purposes ("GPS Accuracy" 2017). This feature has since been removed, but it illustrates how far the technology has come in such a short period of time. Now, as long as someone has a satellite signal, he/she can see exactly where he/she is located, anywhere in the world. That said, finding locations is just the beginning of possibilities for GPS uses. GPSs can be used to give directions, display speed and velocity, calculate time, and perform other similar functions. For these reasons, GPSs help to make everyone’s day-to-day lives much easier, but this is not without drawback.

While GPSs certainly have their advantages, they are not without flaw. As stated on gps.gov, “GPS only gives you the blue dot. It does not provide the map!” ("Help with Address, Route, and Map Problems in GPS Devices and Apps" 2017). This quotation refers to the blue dot displayed on most GPS maps which represents the user’s location. It just goes to show that a GPS is only as good as the map which has been coded into the system. If there are any types of flaws in the GPS’s map, it can become very difficult to properly find a location, and as shown in The Office, one could even possibly end up in a lake. In addition to inaccuracies within the system, there are many concerns regarding user privacy. As stated on the same website, “GPS is operated and maintained by the U.S. Air Force.” This means that the United States Government has the ability to see where someone is and know where he/she is going every time he/she accesses a GPS. I’ve personally noticed this issue to have recently become much more prominent in the media among overall worries of personal privacy.

Even with the possibility of unethical surveillance, GPS is not a technology I ever see going away. GPS is used every single day by so many different people all over the world. I only see advancements in the way people use GPS five to ten years in the future. Perhaps GPSs will be able to accurately measure altitude in personal devices, or even be able to calculate destinations times much more precisely based on the location of other users, like current apps such as Waze are beginning to do. Whatever the case, I only envision the technology advancing even further and having a greater impact on society than it already does today. GPSs have changed the way people travel and get around and will continue to do so for many, many years to come.
Works Cited


