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# **Clone Golf Clubs: Are They Good Enough? A Real World Answer**

**By Eldon Sarte**

# Table of Contents

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## [Clone Golf Clubs: Are They Good Enough? A Real World Answer](#)

- [Introduction](#)
- [Bottom Line](#)
- [Where it All Started](#)
- [Same Quality? Problems?](#)
- [Recommendations](#)
- [A Few More to Check](#)
- [To Do Now](#)

[GIGAGOLF BESTSELLERS](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[TELL YOUR FRIENDS](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

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# Clone Golf Clubs: Are They Good Enough? A Real World Answer

BY ELDON SARTE

You've seen the ads. You've noticed the incredible prices. And you've undoubtedly wondered, "Are they as good as the brand names?" We're talking about golf club clones, of course, essentially *imitations* of brand name equipment that you can buy from various sources for dirt cheap. Well, cheap as far as brand new golf equipment go.

But are they as good?

Bottom Line

For those of you in a rush (who isn't?), here are my conclusions:

**Irons.** I sell lots of used golf equipment on [eBay](#). And you can bet I try and play just about everything of interest that passes through my office. So, the prudent question would be: What would someone like me — who has access to and pretty much can put anything I want into play — have in my golf bag? Answer: The same set of inexpensive graphite-shafted clone irons I picked up from [Pinemeadow Golf](#) a few years back. I kid you not.

**Drivers & Fairway Woods.** Although no longer in my bag, my overall experience with the graphite-shafted driver I picked up from [Pinemeadow](#) is okay; performance and feel were both satisfactory. The corresponding fairway woods (3-wood and 5-wood), both also with graphite shafts, performed just as well, but I personally didn't like the way they felt. This is probably based mainly on sound — I prefer the distinct metallic sound and resulting feel produced by the Callaway Steelheads and Orlimar Trimetals that you'll usually find

in my bag, a sound that I guess I now expect to hear every time I swing a wood — and the Pinemeadows didn't have the sound I wanted.

But to be fair, not many do. Again, they performed as expected. In fact, I once placed third in a tournament armed with nothing more than these Pinemeadow fairways for my woods! Stupid me, I forgot my driver at home and ended up hitting drives with the 3-wood. Now that I think about it, that was probably a blessing, actually, considering how inconsistently wild I can get with the driver (my fault, not the club's). The point is, the fairway woods did their job, and still can — I've kept the pair around as backup or loaner clubs.

I think it's important to note that these comments are based on "older" product. The latest woods releases from [Pinemeadow](#) and others may very well be better than what I've experienced — the current overwhelmingly positive customer feedback on their sites seems to indicate that — but I just haven't personally experienced them firsthand.

**Hybrids.** I can't comment much about clone hybrids either — or even brand name ones for that matter. I just haven't used them yet. My bag's equipped with a 7-wood in place of the more typical 3-iron, and this configuration has served me quite well, enough at least to help me not bother with hybrids just yet. In all probability I'll be jumping on the hybrids bandwagon soon enough. Until then, I obviously can't comment without any real personal experience, except to say that quality-wise, there's no reason to think that clone hybrids won't be on par at the very least with clone manufacturers' woods offerings.

**Wedges.** The clones aren't in my bag (I carry Titleist Vokeys I received as gifts), but I have used them, the classical Cleveland-styled models in particular. Very good clubs and incredible values; I have absolutely no reservations recommending them as worth trying out.

**Putters.** I like to frequently switch and rotate my money sticks around — for example, some days I inexplicably putt better with a 34" shaft instead of a 33", and vice-versa; or some days a mallet just feels better than a traditional blade; and so on — and clone club companies like [Pinemeadow Golf](#) allow me to assemble quite an arsenal of putters to let me do that. I wouldn't otherwise be able to afford such a "quiver of putters" (as my friends call it) with the prices the brand names are asking for nowadays. Of course, you don't have to assemble this kind of putter collection; the point is, they're *good* and *cheap* and definitely worth your while to test.

Read on and learn a lot more about what I experienced specifically, particularly in the area of realizing the importance of choosing the right company to purchase clones from because, quite frankly boys and girls, *sh\*t happens* sometimes.

## Where it All Started

I'm literally going back to the very beginning, when I picked up the game just a few short years ago. As a beginner, I wanted to learn while using a better set than the typical department store variety. But man, paying the big bucks for those Callaways, Pings, or Titleists I fancied just didn't make a heck of a lot of sense then, not when it still wasn't clear whether I was going to stick with the game or not.

So, after doing a bit of research and clicking around online, I went with a set of Acer Sole undercut irons from [Pinemeadow Golf](#). Why?



*Looks.* They looked similar to the original and very expensive Callaway Hawkeys. And — and this is important, to me anyway — the Acers themselves looked spiffy, presentable, and respectable,

something that I wouldn't be ashamed to be seen using, unlike many of the hokey clubs with the cheesy cosmetics I see offered by other clone builders. (To this day, Pinemeadow's selection is up there among the best in the field in the looks department.)



While I was at it, I also picked up the 3-club set of Acer XDS 2 + Stainless Woods (Callaway Hawkeye VFT clones), which included a 10° driver, 3-wood and 5-wood, and the Pure Roll

Series M-1 putter (a Never Compromise mallet clone). Standard Pinemeadow Aldila graphite shafts (steel for the putter) and grips for the lot. I was a beginner, remember, and knew next to nothing about everything, so I figured, play it basic, safe, and *cheap*. If I ended up not liking the sport, at least I wouldn't be out all that much.

## Same Quality? Problems?

Needless to say, I'm now hooked on the game, and I'm doing what I can to try and bring that handicap down to as low a number as I can muster. I've also gotten involved in a number of golf-related business activities, like selling golf equipment on [eBay](#).

Which means at least two things: I now not only know enough about the game to be able to competently judge my clone clubs performance-wise, I also get to regularly play and test out a lot of expensive brand name equipment so that I can actually do decent and fair *comparisons*.

The fact that my [Pinemeadow Golf](#) irons are still in my golf bag as I write this should tell you a lot. It's not that I don't like playing with brand name irons. I do. In fact, I own a set of Cleveland's and a set of TaylorMades for no other reason than that I like playing

occasionally with them (I don't like all Clevelands and TaylorMades, mind you, just the specific models I've kept).

Thing is, I don't play any better or worse with the Clevelands and TaylorMades than I do with the Pinemeadows. Same thing goes with Callaways, Titleists, Hogans, Mizunos, or any other brand name equipment out there. My game pretty much plays out the way it should regardless of what set of clubs I use.

Obvious conclusion: **It's me, not the clubs.**

So, considering that I'm satisfied with the way the clones look, feel, and perform, why in the world would I want to bother with brand name clubs that cost up to 8X as much but don't offer me any additional benefits over the clones?

Even if we could say that there's a slight incremental advantage or benefit to using a brand name set over the clones, we would then have to ask: Would it be worth the extra cost? Yeah, I like keeping an eye on the good old cost:benefit ratio, and based solely on what I've experienced, for players at my level (mid-handicapper) or higher, these incremental benefits do not exist.

How about for better players? Do low handicappers and scratch players realize any benefits to playing with the brands versus inexpensive clone equipment? I'm not good enough to know. But judging from the feedback posted on [Pinemeadow's site](#), it looks like more than just a few low handicappers/scratch players have "discovered" the benefits of going clone.

Do note, however, that I've also experienced **a few problems** with the stuff I got from Pinemeadow:

- Not long after I received my irons and woods, a few plastic ferrules popped loose. Nothing serious, easily fixed by pinprick drops of superglue. But...



- Within only a few months, the plastic ferrule on my 5-iron not only popped loose, but broke off completely. The thing just split open. Then, within a few more days, so did the ferrules on the 3- and 7-irons (back then, I tended to play the odd numbers more often).

Although I probably could have put them back on with more superglue, I figured that this was now in the realm of the strange, and I wasn't too happy about it. So I emailed Pinemeadow immediately. They *quickly* had me ship the whole lot back *at their expense*, even the clubs with the ferrules still intact. They said they'd fix the clubs, but I think they eventually shipped back *brand new club replacements* instead of going through the time and trouble of disassembling and reassembling each of my original clubs just to fix some ferrules. Those clubs I got back sure looked new, shrink wrapped heads and all. I can't obviously say that this is what they do in every situation; I'm just relating exactly what kind of "service" I got.

That was a couple or so years ago. The set has been trouble-free since.

- After a round about a year after purchase, I noticed something new on the Acer XDS 2+ driver head: a very distinct dimple about a quarter of an inch or so in diameter on the toe. *Must've happened on the 3rd*, I thought, when I skied a drive. It apparently didn't affect the club's performance the rest of the round since it went unnoticed. My fault and not a [Pinemeadow](#) quality problem, I concluded.

But I did mention it in an email to Pinemeadow. I wanted to know whether this was common. I was told two things: (a) this was uncommon, and (b) I still had some time left under my original 1 year warranty, a benefit that had completely slipped my mind — only two days left, in fact — so I could send the club back to be replaced! Again, this replacement was made without it costing me a

penny out-of-pocket, shipping and all! Now that was a pleasant surprise.

- That I like Pinemeadow Golf's service and support is an understatement. But I hated their standard grips; they felt cheap to me, and the fact that they wore out and needed replacement very quickly — darned if I got a full season of very casual play out of those grips — reinforced that conclusion.

I wasn't alone with this grip observation. You used to be able to find lots of negative customer feedback on [Pinemeadow's site](#) about those groups. I don't see the complaints anymore, and I hope that's because Pinemeadow's started using much better standard grips.

Even then, I say splurge a little and have Pinemeadow install one of the better brand name grip upgrade options they offer. The benefits far outweigh the negligible expense of going this route.

## Recommendations

It should be plainly obvious that I highly recommend **Pinemeadow Golf**. Excellent products and prices, and even better, absolutely excellent service.



They did however recently stop selling the Acer line and replaced it with their own brand of clubs.

So, if you're looking for Acers (among many other brands and models as well), the place to try is **GigaGolf**. I haven't personally used them myself, but a few friends have, and they report the products and service as also excellent.

## A Few More to Check

Here are more golf club clone companies you could check out. Just note that I haven't shopped at any of these nor do I have any direct feedback from anyone who has. I obviously can't personally recommend them, and am merely providing these links here for your research needs.

- [GolfClubs.net](#)
- [Golfideas](#)
- [Krooked Stix Direct Golf Shop](#)
- [Value Golf Clubs](#)

REMEMBER: Regardless of who you choose to purchase from, make sure you deal with a quality-conscious and reputable company, specifically one that provides **full product warranties** and an excellent **money back guarantee**. If you can't find this kind of consumer information on their website, *ask them about it* before you purchase.

## To Do Now

Visit a highly regarded clone manufacturer like [Pinemeadow Golf](#) now and pick up a club or two — or even a full set of irons — to try out. You'll probably be very surprised at how low it'll cost to get a set of quality clubs custom fit to your needs and specifications (make sure to use their online [Custom Fitting Wizard!](#)). And with their 30-day satisfaction guarantee — “Buy Online; Play them; Return if you are not completely satisfied” — that I *know* they stand behind, this is definitely worth a risk-free shot. **Take it.** You'll likely be really glad you did.

Eldon Sarte is a freelance writer and president of [SketchCo.com](#), publisher of the [HumanGolf.com website](#).

# GigaGolf Bestsellers

Product availability and pricing subject to change. To see all of GigaGolf's current line of the latest in golf technology at affordable prices, [visit the GigaGolf website](#).



## Power Play System Q Driver

Removable weights allow the player to modify the head weight to optimize ball flight. Placing more weight in the heel will give the ball a draw bias, while additional toe weight will help the player who fights a hook. The ports are sealed with an O ring. A 5/32 Allen wrench is included to reposition the weights • From \$88.50

INFO



## Acer XP 905 Irons

Designed with a deep undercut cavity coupled with heel/toe "notch" weighting, the XP 905 offers maximum perimeter weighting and a high moment of inertia (MOI). These features help keep the club head from twisting on off-center hits. A low center of gravity creates a higher launch angle for more carry and solid impact • From \$121.20

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## Acer XP Professional Irons

The Acer XP Professional incorporates several design features that make it the club of choice for better players. The reduced offset heel weighting helps the accomplished golfer "work" the ball to the target. A thinner topline offers a more traditional appearance when the club is in the playing position. Yet the benefits of today's golf club technology are present to keep the ball close to the target on occasional mishits • From \$121.20

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## Bionik 207 Putter

A unique design that features stabilization bars and a sleek mallet design. The alignment aids help line the putt up at address and keep the putter square through impact. Lamkin Crossline pistol grip standard • From \$38.50

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### Pursuit X5 Series Black Wedge

The Pursuit name represents the highest quality available in today's custom club market. Designed to exacting standards, the X5 Wedge Series meets or exceeds the most stringent inspection guidelines applied to even the highest priced brands. Materials are selected with great care. Carbon steel is formed into a classic time tested design and then heat treated with a patented process to seal and finish in satin black. The result is a silky pure feel when the ball is pinched off even difficult lies. Explosion shots from the sand are made easier by the sand wedge's 12° of bounce. With less bounce, choose the 62° model for high lobbs and soft landings • From \$33.55

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and our system will send your pals an email download invitation. That's it! Go ahead, [do it now before you forget!](#)

# Resources

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION (AND YOUR GAME!)

### Callaway Golf Pre-Owned

The exclusive destination for *certified* pre-owned (i.e., used) Callaway Golf clubs. You can even trade-in your old Callaway/Odyssey sticks!



### eBay

Usually our first — and often *only* — stop when we need anything golf-related. Bargains galore! And if you think it's only got old, used stuff, you're due for an eye-opening visit!



### Golfballs.com

Has the largest selection of new, used, custom logo, and personalized golf balls. Their new ball sales and specials are really hard to beat!



### Golf Shoes Plus

Online "branch" of a regular golf shoe and accessory shop offering great prices on top name brands, like Footjoy, Nike, Adidas, Dexter, Etonic, Reebok, Bite, and more!



### Golfsmith

Want to try assembling your own clubs? They've got all the components, tools, and instructions you'll need. Excellent golf retail outlet as well.



### Knetgolf

Home of the half price golf ball! Knetgolf is the direct, reliable source of top quality used and refurbished golf balls. All brands and models available.



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### How to Break 80

Easily learn how to shoot like the pro's and drop your handicap fast.

### Golf Swing Eureka!

How a 37-year-old amateur golfer stumbled on an amazing golf swing secret that let him hit the ball straighter and farther... and cut his average round by 30 shots!

### Instant Golf Slice Cure

Destroy your golf slice in a matter of minutes using this revolutionary new system! Success Guaranteed.



### **Easily Get in Shape for Golf in Less Than 30 Days!**

The Ultimate Golf Fitness Guide with easy tips and techniques to quickly transform your game and add 20 yards to your drives!

### **Play Golf Free and Get Paid to Play!**

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