



Von's Golf: A Real Seattle Gem Worth Searching For

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When choosing a restaurant, do you go for the glitzy Main St. place with all the bells and whistles but disappointingly average food, or the back-alley hole-in-the-wall that has no bar or seating but serves up the absolute best grub you've ever tasted? Would you rather have your house remodeled by a company with a fancy web site and employees wearing spiffy uniforms who do an acceptable job, or a single handyman with paint-spattered overalls and a dented van from the '90s, but also three decades of experience and who does an exceptional job every time he gets a call? If you're in the market for a new set of golf clubs and need to be custom-fit, do you go to the high-volume, highly-visible big-box store that emails you with special offers three times a week and has an eager, young staff fresh off the training program, or do you rely on an old pro whose premises might be a little unconvincing at first but whose expertise, developed over nearly 40 years in the trade, virtually guarantees you walk away with the perfect set of clubs for your swing?



Jim Von Lossow. Credit: Von's Golf

Jim von Lossow's dark, basement shop at the back of his house, tucked away on sleepy 48thAve NE in Seattle might not be what the first-time customer expects exactly. But those in the know, those that have worked with von Lossow before, see past the modest workspace and are confident they have the

most suitable set of tools available to make them a better golfer and enjoy the game more. "When you first arrive in his backyard you think 'what is this?'" says Greg Stark who first met von Lossow in 2000 and has been a satisfied customer ever since. "It's not exactly the inside of a hi-tech fitting studio. But it's relaxing, and you soon discover it's all Jim needs to build you the perfect set." The workshop at von Lossow's place measures roughly 6'x25' and appears to belong to a scatter-brain scientist who never received the memo on de-cluttering his cubicle. Grips, shafts, drills, tape, saws, knives and a variety of other tools and machines litter the worktops, and sets of clubs waiting to be picked up by golfers fortunate to have made von Lossow's acquaintance lean against any available surface. Out in the backyard is a net, a mat, hundreds of golf balls, more shafts, a load more seemingly random clubs and, in the middle of it all, the one piece of equipment which suggests to the new client that this guy might actually know what he's doing – a Trackman. These days, a teaching pro or club-fitter obviously needs something like this to remain credible. "Jim combines old-school experience with the latest technology," says Stark a former executive at Russell Investments who lived and worked in New York, Paris, Tokyo and London before returning to Seattle late last year. "It's a great mix. He knows what the numbers mean, but doesn't overdo the science. He probably doesn't need it, but it obviously makes life easier." Von Lossow, now 63, was born and grew up in the Emerald City, attending Garfield HS before moving south to Citrus College in Glendora, CA. He had first played golf in his early teens at Jackson Park, Jefferson Park, West Seattle and Snohomish, and began shooting par while at college. From Glendora, he moved to Roseville near Sacramento where he worked at a golf club and began dabbling in club repair. "I was a bit of a Jack of all Trades at the time," he says. "But I liked to fix things so became interested in repairing golf equipment."

In 1979, von Lossow qualified for the PGA Tour, but at a time when few, if any, players were exempt into any field, he had to gain entry to every tournament via a Monday qualifier. He made it to Thursday morning 18 times, but only twice to Saturday morning. He may not have enjoyed much success on the PGA Tour, but von Lossow did get to play with the likes of Tom Weiskopf and Tom Kite, players whose skill he was in awe of. "I saw how those guys hit the ball and was just amazed at how cleanly they struck it," he says. "I was a pretty good player, but they were just at a different level." He returned to California and took a club pro job at Table Mountain GC in Oroville, 70 miles north of Sacramento. He was there for six years, during which time he became very adept at club repair, establishing a reputation as something of a go-to man in the area when your flag-wrapped graphite shaft snapped or weird-looking steel driverhead came loose. In 1986, Lossow got married and returned to Washington, eventually becoming the head pro at Alderbrook Golf & Yacht Club. He maintained a pretty trustworthy game too, and was able to win a number of pro-ams as well as the PNW PGA Professional Championship at Olympic CC in '86. Soon after, he opened the Redwood Driving Range in Woodinville with a distant relative but, after three years there, the call of full-time club-repair became too loud to ignore and he set up Von's Golf, headquartered at his house.



Miura Golf CB 57 Irons

Von's Golf just celebrated 25 years in business, the last six of them as the Northwest dealer for [Miura golf clubs](#), a Japanese brand known for its quality, craftsmanship, and attention to detail. Formed by Matsuhiro Miura in 1957, the company still forges its superlative irons heads in its own factory in Himeji, about 300 miles west of Tokyo. Miura's North America business is run by Bill Holowaty in Burnaby, B.C. who first met von Lossow in 2009. "We were looking for US dealers and needed someone in the Northwest," says Holowaty. "We approached Jim because he had a fantastic reputation in the Seattle golf community and beyond." Leery at first of applicants who did not work out of an established business/retail location, Holowaty decided to change the company's policy to make room for von Lossow and, although not a pre-requisite to sell Miura clubs, the fact he could really play the game didn't hurt von Lossow's cause. "Jim can talk about Miura clubs on a number of levels," says Holowaty. "He's a Class A PGA professional, and a member of the Washington State PGA. He therefore has the ear of a unique demographic in Washington State, and he's constantly representing our brand in sanctioned events in the region. Our visibility in Washington is therefore very strong." Von Lossow also has a connection to the history of the game, adds Holowaty. "He respects the past and how designs have evolved through the years. He is very much on the same page as Mr. Miura in that regard." Holowaty now rates von Lossow and Von's Golf as one of North America's most successful accounts. "We are very proud to have such a great representative in our area," he says. "Jim is committed to Miura, and we will be committed to Jim for as long as he's in the game. He is exactly the type of dealer we love to have." In 2012, Miura-San crossed the Pacific to visit the USA's top five Miura dealerships, one of them Von's Golf. Von Lossow hosted a backyard barbecue, and Greg Stark took them all out on Lake Union in his boat. Mr. Miura left well pleased with what he saw apparently, and was only too happy to extend his company's relationship with von Lossow. That is great news for Pacific Northwest golfers as not only are they able to purchase some of the world's finest golf clubs in their home town, they can also have a master of the trade custom-build them a set following a session in the guy's backyard. All you have to do is find it.

"How long have you been playing these clubs?" On my first visit to Von's Golf, I, like everyone else, wondered if I could possibly have the right place. After double-checking the address and seeing only a small, but tidy, suburban house on a quiet suburban street, I was about to turn round and make some phone calls when I spotted a small sign on a fence. It said 'Von's Golf' and pointed down a path

that took the lost, unsuspecting soul to the right of the house and through a gate, eventually leading to Jim von Lossow's humble, backyard operation. After he greeted me and we talked about what clubs I had used in the past and what level I had reached, von Lossow had me hit 20 balls or so into the net while he monitored the results on the Trackman. His first observation was that, at 6'3" I needed shafts at least an inch longer than standard. So he found me a longer shaft and I immediately started hitting the ball better and further, nearly ten yards further with a 7-iron! Next, he had me try different shaft flexes and, within a few minutes, had deduced that, because I was no spring chicken (44) and played much less golf than I used to (dodgy back, young family, etc), a whippier shaft gave me significant yardage gains over clubs with stiff shafts. He took a close look at the size of my hands, and recommended much thicker grips than I had previously used. Within half an hour or so, von Lossow had changed my club prescription entirely. I now had a beautiful set of Miura CB57s an inch and a half longer than my previous set, with softer shafts and thicker grips. And I was hitting the 7-iron close to 160 yards, a remarkable distance for someone who had struggled to reach 150 with that club before. He could have taken much longer to complete the fitting, but von Lossow is not the type to waste your time by telling you everything he knows. He will fit you for the ideal set of clubs efficiently and professionally, and you will go away with double the enthusiasm for the game because you can't wait to hit clubs that fit your swing, and which are bound to make you a better golfer.