



Resolutions for a Counterfeit-Free New Year

With the golf season approaching, consumers will undoubtedly be shopping around for the best deals on hot items – including golf clubs and apparel. Americans spend trillions of dollars at retailers annually, and a growing percentage of that shopping is ecommerce. In fact, during the holidays, Deloitte estimated that more than half of that shopping was done online¹. Consumers will come across counterfeit products online – especially golf products – even if they don't know it. These counterfeit golf products are dangerous to golfers and their game – they are sold by criminals who may gain access to personal information, and often manufactured using sub-par materials that at best perform inconsistently, and at worst shatter upon first ball strike. They may be cheap to buy, but cost so much more in the long run.

Consumers need to be extra vigilant when shopping online to make sure they are only purchasing authentic products. Heading into the 2018 golf season, consumers need sharp shopping senses to spot counterfeits when looking for deals online. Below are four resolutions that can apply both to shopping season and your golf game in 2018.

1. Keep Your Head Down and Your Eye on the Ball

It's the first thing your golf instructor will tell you – “head down, eye on the ball.” This advice is all about focus, consistency and eliminating distractions to establish a fluid swing. When shopping online, it's equally as important to stay focused on what's directly in front of you – the product – as opposed to the flashy deals that the retailer may be offering. Deals that seem too good to be true can distract consumers from some of the subtle red flags in online listings. For example, listings selling counterfeits often feature obscured logos (blurred out or hidden from view) to get around the websites' counterfeit policies.

Even with additional focus, it's still very hard to spot a counterfeit from only an online listing. Consumers should give themselves a crash course in counterfeit golf products (here's a good resource) before doing any online shopping to understand why it's an important issue and how to avoid buying counterfeit products.

2. Know the Hidden Hazards

The fifth hole at Augusta National Golf Club (“Magnolia”) features two nasty bunkers on the left side of the fairway. Most golfers

can see those bunkers as they tee off. What golfers can't see from the tee shot is the uneven, potentially treacherous green that makes the hole one of the hardest on the course. When it comes to counterfeit products, the true impact goes beyond only product quality and performance. Those are hazards most people can see and understand. But with counterfeits, consumers are buying products from criminals who also gain access to sensitive personal financial information. In this era of cybersecurity, consumers need to pay attention to these additional risks when purchasing products online.

3. Make a Smart Approach

Professional golfers have a caddy to help plan each shot during a round. When they reach the aforementioned fifth hole at Augusta, it's their caddies' job to point out those hazards. Consumers don't usually have the same level of advice when shopping online. They need to be prepared ahead of time. You can always contact the individual manufacturer to locate authorized retailers, or to check on a particular site or seller so that you can shop with confidence.

4. Warn Others of Errant Shots

“Fore!” might not be common parlance around Augusta National, but the phrase has been a way for golfers to warn each other at courses around the world. Online shoppers should do the same. Warn other consumers that a particular retailer may be peddling counterfeit products. If you see something, say something. It's tough to tell real from fake – especially online. You can help by reporting the website to the U.S. Golf Manufacturers Anti-Counterfeiting Working Group here, or by contacting the individual manufacturer of the products. Either way, you'll be doing your part to protect your fellow golfers.

Make the Next Shot Your Most Important One

Hall-of-Fame Golfer Ben Hogan famously said: “The most important shot in golf is the next one.” The next time you go to buy golf products or apparel online, make sure that your most important shot is with an authorized retailer. That's the only sure-fire way to make sure that you're buying the real deal.

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/holiday-retail-sales-consumer-survey.html>

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