

DAVID OWEN / STUFF I LIKE

GEAR YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

My week at golf's annual trade show

EVERY AVID GOLFER struggles with the Hat Problem—the steady accretion of sweat-related grunge that turns the inside of a beloved cap or visor into a habitat for the Ebola virus. Recently, I discovered a solution: the **BandZorb**, a 1.5-inch-wide, self-adhesive brow-band liner, which acts as an absorbent buffer between my forehead and my hat, and, among other things, keeps my sunscreen from running into my eyes.

The BandZorb was invented by Terry Zebouni, a retired teacher and school administrator. I met her at this year's PGA Merchandise Show, in Orlando, and asked her whether the BandZorb's resemblance to certain feminine-hygiene products was accidental. She said that it wasn't. "I found out that tough Canadian hockey players were sticking panty liners in their helmets," she said, "and that got me to thinking." Zebouni's hopes for BandZorb extend to virtually all hat-dependent activities, including the fighting of wars, and last year she introduced her invention to an international audience, at a trade show called World of Wipes. BandZorbs cost about \$7 for a pack of six.

The recession has been hard on golf, especially in Florida, but an abundance of fresh

thinking was evident at the Merchandise Show, suggesting that things might be turning around. In fact, quite a few of the products I saw constituted solutions to problems that hadn't previously been known to exist. Among them: the **Bunkerstamp**, a heavy rubber mold that can be used to press corporate logos or other designs into bunkers (\$700 for a six-square-foot stamp); the **Club-Vue**, a golf bag that lets you identify, remove and

put back seven of your golf clubs through the side of the bag rather than from the top (invented by a retired dentist; \$245); the **Crosshairs Ergo-Tee**, a 3.25-inch tee with a curved midsection that can be used as a guide for drawing aiming lines on golf balls (\$8 for a pack of 10); and **Insta Golf Shoes**, which are crampon-like pull-on spikes that turn any shoes into golf shoes (\$45 at Golfsmith).

The PGA of America and Jack Nicklaus used the show as

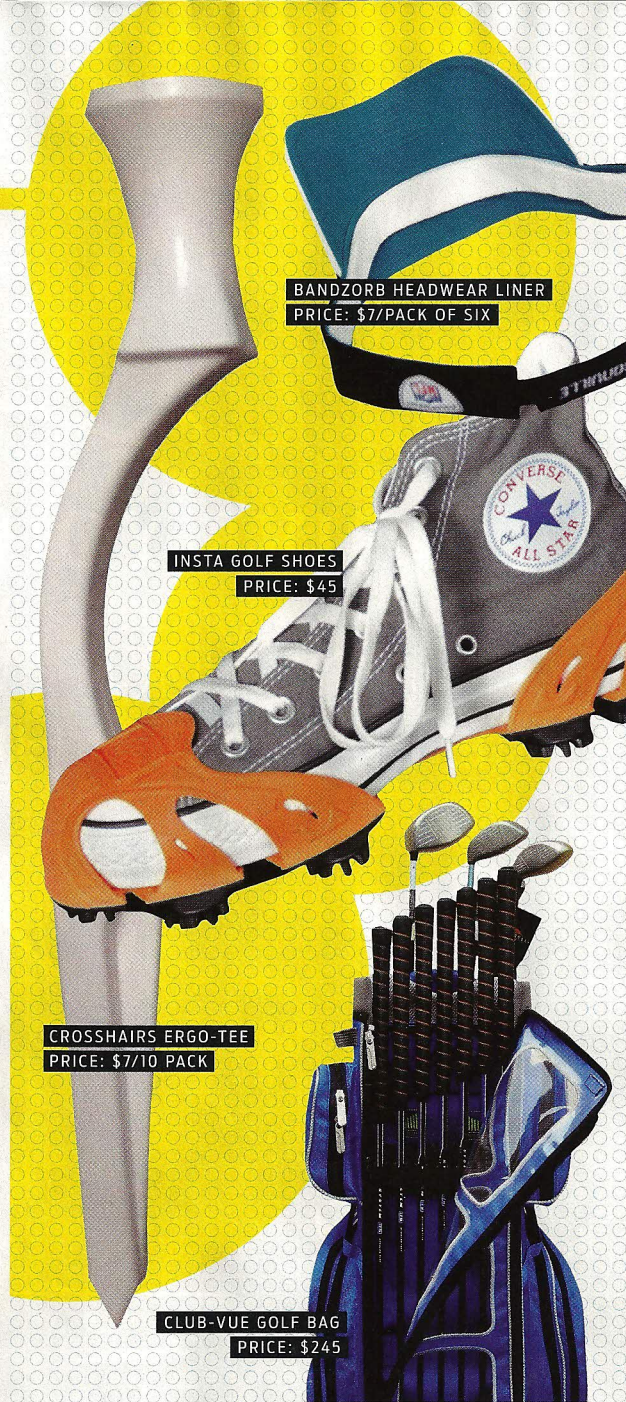
an opportunity to inaugurate a strategic campaign called Golf 2.0, the primary purpose of which is to retain current players and, eventually, attract a few million new ones. One obvious focus is children. Appropriately, several exhibitors offered products that were aimed at introducing youngsters to the game without immediately turning them into bitter, frustrated choppers like you and me.

SNAG—which stands for **Starting New At Golf**—was invented by a pair of pros in the 1990s, at the beginning of the Tiger Era, but it's well-suited to the current campaign. It employs scaled-down plastic clubs, miniature tennis balls and Velcro-covered targets, and it can be played indoors—a fact that has made it popular in physical-education programs. (It's used in 8,000 schools worldwide, including every school in Trinidad, and is the subject of a television program in Japan.) At the Merchandise Show middle-age men elbowed actual children out of the way for chances to hit pitch shots at a guy wearing a helmet and a colorful, padded jumpsuit. A basic set at snagolf.com sells for \$100 and would brighten almost any living room. ♣

PRACTICE FULL SHOTS AT HOME

If you'd prefer to take full swings at real balls inside your house, you might consider the **Swingbox**, an ingeniously compact indoor practice target that stops balls dead and returns them gently to your feet. The unit looks like an oversized folded-up card table. Check out iswingbox.com for pricing and availability.

DAVID OWEN attending golf's annual trade show at golfdigest.com/go/owenvideo.



BANDZORB HEADWEAR LINER
PRICE: \$7/PACK OF SIX

INSTA GOLF SHOES
PRICE: \$45

CROSSHAIRS ERGO-TEE
PRICE: \$7/10 PACK

CLUB-VUE GOLF BAG
PRICE: \$245