

FAIRWAY BUNKERS

A walk in the park as golf is sometime referred too, this is as good as it gets. How can you go wrong, you spend a few hours with friends or colleagues outdoors, enjoying the beautiful surroundings, wildlife, and fresh air that exist on all course. Golf may be the excuse but the serenity of it all is the reason.

Every golfer's motivation to play this game is different. Some play for the social aspect, others play for the exercise while some are attempting to compete at a high level to test them. Regardless of your motivation, we are all faced with the same task at hand. This task is to hit the ball down the fairway and then on to the green in as few of strokes as possible. Sometimes easier said than done!

Although each and every golf course has a different look and flow to them, the one constant that each of these has are hazards. These hazards are designed to penalize the golfer for hitting a poor shot and as a result drive up your score. One of these hazards appears in the form of a fairway bunker.

In some ways we are fortunate not to have the British design golf courses over here, or at least not many of them. Keep in mind that hazards are designed to penalize you for hitting a poor shot. Many of the courses in Britain's fairway bunkers come in the form of pot bunkers. These are deep holes with sand in them. As a result, generally, the only option a player's has is to pop the ball out into the fairway and then hit their next shot to the green. In most cases this will cost you at least one stroke every time you venture into one.

Most of the North American designed fairway bunkers will provide you an opportunity to recover from a misplaced shot. Although penalizing, in most cases you can see the green from inside a fairway bunker and as a result you have a chance to advance the ball to your target. Sounds easy enough, but if you have ever hit a ball from a fairway bunker you understand how tough this can be.

Understanding the basic principals of hitting a shot from a fairway bunker will assist you in making solid contact every time and advancing the ball out and towards your target. Some of these principals include: the swing; the stance; and club selection.

First of all let's assume that the ball is sitting in the middle of the fairway bunker on top of the sand. This is generally what you are faced with in a fairway bunker. If the ball is up against the edge or plugged deep in the sand then you are likely faced with a shot that resembles hitting out of a greenside bunker. This shot is different as it requires an explosion shot not a pick shot.

The basic idea of hitting a ball out of a fairway bunker is to swing in such a way as to pick the ball off of the top of the sand ensuring that you hit the ball first and take as little sand as possible.

First of all we have to take our stance. Start by stepping up to the ball and dig your feet into the sand. This will assist you in becoming more stable throughout your swing. Be sure that the ball is positioned in the middle of your feet. By doing so will assist you in catching the ball before your club hits the sand.

You will notice that once you have dug your feet into the sand, that the bottom of your feet are lower than the bottom of the ball (in most cases). To accommodate for this you need to choke down on your club (position your hands further down the grip) to ensure that you do not hit the sand first.

The swing is the same as you would use for a regular fairway shot with a few exceptions. The idea is to keep your lower body as still as possible in the backswing to assist you in making solid contact with the ball. We do this by taking a three-quarter backswing ensuring that you swing smooth to your finish position. Taking a full backswing and swinging hard into the ball will most certainly ensure poor contact.

The final point is to choose one more club than you normally would for the distance you need to travel. This is important because you are making a shorter, smoother swing into the ball to ensure solid contact. As a result you need more club to get the ball to fly to your target.

The main goal of any golfer when faced with a fairway bunker shot is to get the ball out! Using these swing fundamentals and practicing them will not only assist you in getting the ball out of the bunker but will most certainly allow you to hit the ball out and onto the green.