

## **GREEN SIDE BUNKERS**

When I think of the beach, happy thoughts come to mind. Bare feet, shorts, sun, sand castles, water sports and possibly even a margarita. Everything about the beach makes me happy and relaxed! This is not necessarily the case on the golf course.

For many golfers, a trip to the beach can be the most frustrating part of their day. So much so that the relaxed state that they were in will turn into frustration and anger. A perfect round of golf ruined by sand!

Most tour players have no fear when they enter a sand trap. As a matter of fact, they would much rather hit a shot from the green side bunker than from the deep rough that generally surrounds the green. One of the reasons for this is that the surface and the depth of the sand is consistent and as a result the lie you generally have in a bunker will be good. Where as when you hit into the deep rough, you may have a lie where the ball is buried deep or sitting up. As a result it is tough to hit this shot consistent.

Most importantly, tour players and low handicap golfers understand the basic rules necessary to consistently hit a shot out of a green side bunker. These rules include: the stance and ball position; alignment and club face angle; swing path, equipment and finish position. Following these few basic rules will assist you in hitting the ball out and close to the hole.

First of all, you need to take you stance. Line up with the ball forward in your stance (just inside your front heel). Your feet should be approximately shoulder width apart, with approximately 70% of your weight positioned on your front foot.

It is easy to slip in the sand when you make your swing as the surface is much softer than when standing on the grass. As a result you need to dig your feet into the sand to ensure you are grounded properly. Once you have done this you will notice that the bottom of your feet are lower than the bottom of the ball. This is important because if you do not choke up on the club then the tendency is to hit too far behind the ball and as a result leave the ball in the trap. Now you are faced with the same shot as you just had.

Now that you have taken your stance you are ready to hit the ball. Unfortunately, that is not what we want you to do. When you are in a green side bunker, the club does not actually hit the ball. The idea of this shot is to enter the sand approximately 2 inches behind the ball with your club. The club will slide under the ball and exit the sand approximately 2 inches in from of where the ball was. This is an explosion shot! The energy of the club sliding under the ball will project the sand into the ball and as a result will send the ball up and out of the sand.

When you set up to the ball you want to ensure that your body is open to the target (aim left of the target for right handed golfers). Because this is an explosion shot, you want to open the club face to ensure you use the “bounce” of the club to your advantage. As a result if you take you club back on the same path as you would for a normal field shot the

ball will take off to the right of your target (for right handed golfers). Therefore, you need to ensure that when you take the club back so that your path is from the outside to in. In other words, your path should follow your body lines. This will send the ball up and out towards your target.

Distance is determined by how far you take the club back, not how far you swing through the ball. If you take the club back a short distance and swing through to your finish position, then the ball will go a short distance. Taking the club back further and swing through to a full finish position will ensure the ball travels further.

The most important position in golf is the finish position. The finish position consists of all of your weight on your front foot, your body facing the target, the club above your shoulder pointing towards the ground and your back foot rolled up on your tip toe.

Most golfers are afraid to swing through to their finish position because they feel that if they do they will send the ball flying across the green. I can assure you that if you enter the sand 2 inches behind the ball that the only way to get the ball up and out is to ensure that you finish.

Finally, you need to be sure that you have the right equipment to get the job done. A sand wedge is different and unique in its design from the rest of your clubs. Most sand wedges come with approximately 56 degrees of loft, the second most lofted club available.

What is unique about it is that it is the heaviest club in the bag. The extra weight will assist you in swinging through the sand. It also has what we call the bounce. This is the rounded sole of the club and it prevents the club from digging into the sand when used properly. If you do not have a sand wedge consider visiting your local CPGA Golf Professional to ask for their advice on what sand wedges are available.

Applying these swing techniques will ensure the next time you step onto the beach will be memorable and enjoyable!