UNEVEN LIES

Addictive may be the best way to describe the game of golf! For those of you that have been bitten by the golf bug, you know exactly what I mean. This game knows no boundaries, has no prejudices, few physical limitations and no age restrictions. In short, it is truly the greatest game in the world!

Compare this to virtually all other sports and its no wonder why golf is the number one growing sport in the world. This game is unique in many different ways but the one that stands out in my mind is that we all can play the game the way it best suits our personality. Some enjoy the walk, others enjoy the social aspect while others are there to test their skills and compete to the highest level possible.

Golf is one of the few games if not the only that there is no referee. You are the referee. Yes, there are rules that we play the game by, but you are the one that will govern this throughout the round. Calling a penalty on yourself would never happen in any other sport because we are trying to create an edge… to win the game. In golf, for those of you that know the rules, happen quite frequently. This is called integrity which is the foundation of this game.

Golf differs in many other ways compared to all other sports but the most noticeable one is the playing surface. Virtually all other sports play on the same surface day in and day out. Sure the location may change and for the outdoor sports the weather may change, but the playing surface is always the same.

Golf is very different! If you travel from course to course you will notice that the playing surface is different at each location and most noticeably is the slopes of the terrain. Being consistent from shot to shot is a daunting task but when you add an un-even playing surface it becomes even more difficult.

Learning to hit shots when you are standing on uneven ground will assist you in becoming more confident, therefore lowering your overall scores and having more fun when you are on the course.

When it comes to uneven lies, there are four different situations you can run into. There are uphill, downhill and side hill lies. When faced with these different situations there are a few fundamentals that you must apply to ensure your contact is consistent. These fundamentals include: ball position; setup; swing tempo and club selection.

UPHILL AND DOWNHILL LIES
To properly hit an uphill or down hill lie you have to start in the proper setup position. The setup is the same as if you were hitting from a level lie with the exception of your weight distribution. When hitting off of a level lie, the proper weight distribution should start 50/50 (50% of your body weight on both the front and back foot). Due to the slope, when hitting an uphill shot your weight will be positioned primarily on the back foot and

on a down hill lie your weight will be positioned on your front foot. How much of your weight will be on the back foot depends on the severity of the slope.

Now that you have addressed the ball you need to ensure that you shoulders are parallel to the slope that you are standing on. Most golfers will position themselves in such a way that their shoulders are level as if they were standing on flat ground. This is generally one of the most common mistakes and will cause a miss hit shot.

The next step is to ensure that your ball position is correct. When you are hitting a shot from a level lie, your ball position should be approximately 2 inches inside your front heel. On uneven lies, the ball position will change depending on the severity of the slope. On an uphill lie the ball position will be forward in your stance and on a downhill lie it will be further back in your stance. Take two practice swings and where ever the club grounds out, choose this for your ball position.

Finally, swinging in balance will help ensure you make good contact. It is difficult to swing into a full finish position on uneven lies therefore make a shorter backswing and ensure you swing smooth and in balance.

SIDE HILL LIES
First of all you want to address the ball as if you were standing on a level lie. Swinging in balance is critical for any shot and is no different when hitting a shot from a side hill lie. Therefore when on a side hill lie make a shorter backswing and swing through to your finish position.

What is important to remember whenever you are hitting a shot from a side hill lie is that the ball will either be below your feet or above your feet. When it is above your feet you need to choke down on the club to ensure that you do not hit behind the ball. This is a very common mistake golfers make. When the ball is below your feet you need to ensure you bend your knees more in your address position. This will assist you in getting closer to the ball, therefore making consistent and solid contact.

Ball position is also important. The ball should be in the center of your stance for both of these side hill lies. Moving the ball in the middle of your stance will assist in consistent contact but can affect the direction the ball travels.

When the ball is above your feet the tendency is for the ball to draw or hook (move to the left for right handed golfers). When the ball is below your feet the tendency is for it fade or slice (move right for right handed golfers). Keep this in mind when you are setting up to hit this shot and aim properly.

Finally, you must be sure to take a smooth swing. Balance is critical for all shots and especially important for the side hill shot. Due to the uneven nature of this lie, the body can easily be thrown off balance as you swing the golf club. Therefore you must ensure that you take a three-quarter backswing and swing smooth to your finish position to assist

you in staying in good balance. Too many players tend to swing too hard when faced with this type of shot.

Club selection is an important part of this process. Whenever you are making a smaller swing than normal, club selection is important. Be sure to take one more club than normal for the distance you are traveling to ensure you hit the ball the distance you are intending to go.