



BUNKERS MADE EASY

[BY SCOTT SACKETT • PHOTOS BY COLLEEN MINIUK-SPERRY]

Most amateurs are terrified of hitting their balls in the sand and are subsequently poor bunker players for one reason: They do not know how they are supposed to play a bunker shot. Conversely, tour players will aim at a bunker on a long shot into the green versus hitting it in the rough. If the ball is in a greenside bunker, it is much more predictable than hitting from the greenside rough. The best tour players get up and down more than 60 percent of the time from a greenside bunker. On a straightforward bunker shot, that number goes up to almost 80 percent. Once you understand how the sand wedge's design can help you hit a bunker shot, all it takes is a feel of how to release the club head into the sand, and you will get the ball out every single time.

Everything that I teach about a bunker shot, from setup to swing, is designed to get the bounce working in an effective manner. What you need to get a crystal-clear understanding of is what happens on the initial downswing. The move is clearly different than any other shot in golf, next to hitting a wedge shot with bounce. What has been overdone in the bunker is the following: a) ball too forward; b) stance aiming too far left; c) clubface pointing at one o'clock or to the right of the target; d) the overall swing plane too vertical or too upright; and e) swinging left through impact. To play a successful bunker shot, the setup dictates what can and cannot happen.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GREENSIDE BUNKERS



1
Setup

- ✓ feet wider than shoulder width
- ✓ knees slightly bowed out
- ✓ ball under left armpit (forward of middle)
- ✓ light grip pressure, around 3 or 4 on a scale of 1-10
- ✓ clubface square to slightly open
- ✓ stance square
- ✓ both feet will be slightly open
- ✓ weight on forward foot 65/35
- ✓ setup relatively far from the ball



2
Impact

- ✓ neutral grip
- ✓ hands in line or slightly behind the ball
- ✓ hands lower than with a normal shot
- ✓ grip slightly behind the ball
- ✓ shoulders will stay level (right shoulder will feel high)
- ✓ swing the club along your stance line



3
Follow-through

RESULTS OF GOOD BUNKER PLAY

Once you have a true understanding of the function of the sand wedge, you've taken the first step in becoming a more confident bunker player. When you hit your ball into the bunker, your primary objective is to get the ball onto the green. It is obviously best if you can get the ball close to the pin. A great thought that will help you become a proficient bunker player is this: If you can get the sand onto the green, then the ball has a pretty good chance of also getting on the green. **N**

CONTROLLING DISTANCE IN THE BUNKER

One question I'm asked a lot is "How do I control the distance of my bunker shot?" I hear everything from "Hit farther or closer to the ball," "Open the face or close the face," "Take a shorter backswing," or "Stand farther or closer to the ball" in reply. But there is a much simpler way: Learn to control the length of your follow-through. Keeping it simple: The shorter you want to hit it, the shorter you make the follow-through.

BURIED LIES

This is a shot that is not difficult once you make some setup changes at address. Changes are as follows: club face closed, ball back in the stance, grip more firm (around a 6 on a scale of 1-10). The club now becomes a digger; conversely, when you are hitting a normal bunker shot, the club bounces into the ball.

Set the face at 11 o'clock and take your normal grip. Short follow-through.



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