

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN SZURLEJ

THE BASICS

GolfDigest®



SAND PLAY



CAUGHT IN A TRAP

BY PETER MORRICE

A GUIDE TO GOLF'S MOST FEARED CONDITION

Golf doesn't present much physical danger, but it's the mental equivalent of running with the bulls. And we're guessing nothing gets your heart jumping like seeing your ball disappear into a bunker. Try pushing back on your fear. "Approach the shot with a little attitude," says golf psychologist Dr. Morris Pickens, who works with such tour players as Stewart Cink and Zach Johnson. "Tell yourself you're going to make the crowd go wild." As they say, fake it till you make it.

CHANNELING KEVIN BACON

BY PETER McDANIEL

Sometimes sand-a-phobia grips you the night before, and you spend the wee hours wrestling with the sand monster (think Kevin Bacon in the 1990 film "Tremors"). Then you fail miserably your first time back in a bunker—and it only gets worse. If this is you, Jim McLean can help you slay the monster.

"First off, you have to swing aggressively and from the proper angle. Steep is better than shallow," McLean says. "Remember, this is one of the few shots where you're not hitting the ball, so use this practice drill: Draw a sinister smiley face in the sand two inches behind the ball, and try to wipe the smile off that face. Accelerate through the sand to a full finish. The only grin left will be yours."



TOUR PROS TELL

Q What's the one piece of advice you'd give the average golfer for greenside-bunker shots?

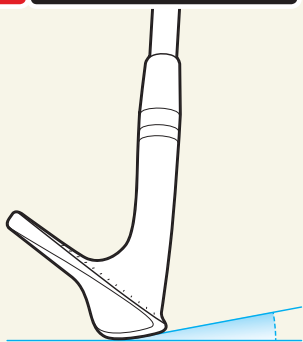
A "Swing all the way to the finish."
—LUKE DONALD

A "Keep your wrists loose during the shot."
—MATT KUCHAR

A "Don't swing harder than normal."
—MARTIN LAIRD

A "Don't let your arms fold when the club hits the sand."
—JASON DAY

A "Set up with your hands and knees lower than normal, and hit behind the ball."
—IAN POULTER



WHY YOU NEED **BOUNCE**

BY MIKE STACHURA

Picking the right wedge in the sand is like high-school French on that first trip abroad: You don't know what you thought you did, and what you do know can hurt you.

TRANSLATION: The bottom of the wedge is more important than the face, so consider the bounce angle instead of the loft. Bounce refers to how the trailing edge hangs below the leading edge (left), which helps the sole work through the sand.

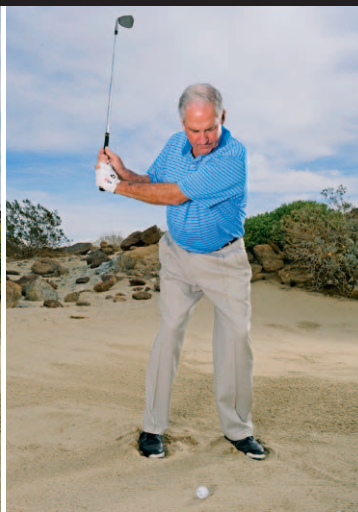
In fluffy sand, a 56-degree wedge with 12 to 14 degrees of bounce is better than a 60-degree with 8 degrees. Packed sand? Go with the 60. As they say in France, "C'est facile, oui?"

TWO TECHNIQUES

DAVE STOCKTON **VS.** STAN UTLEY BY MATTHEW RUDY



⬆️ **STOCKTON** Tall posture, with both feet angled to the target. Ball centered; shaft leaning forward.



⬆️ Going back, the weight stays on the front leg, and the shoulders turn only slightly.



⬆️ Coming down, the legs drive forward, and the clubhead passes the ball through the sand.



⬆️ The club swings down the target line to a high position, and the weight finishes on the front leg.



⬆️ **UTLEY** Wide stance, with both feet flared out. Ball forward, clubface open and shaft leaning back.



⬆️ The wrists hinge abruptly, with very little lower-body movement or shoulder turn.



⬆️ The hands and arms drive the downswing; the body doesn't shift toward the target.



⬆️ The handle of the club stays low and finishes around to the left, with the shaft vertical.



THE THUMP AND OTHER GOOD IMAGES

BY MIKE STACHURA

ERNIE ELS: Make the club go *thump* through the sand. **BYRON NELSON:** Think of it as slicing a bit off an apple. **DAVID LEADBETTER:** Cut a dollar-bill-shape divot with the ball in the middle. **GARY PLAYER:** The action through the sand should be crisp, like you're striking a match. **TIGER WOODS:** Blast the ball out on a cushion of sand. **CLAUDE HARMON:** Imagine you're making the swing with only your right arm.

3 SHOTS YOU NEED

BY MATTHEW RUDY



Let's say you've mastered the standard explosion shot from a good lie. That's great — but golf isn't played on a perfectly groomed practice area. Golf Digest 50 Best Teacher **Randy Smith** offers these solutions for three of the toughest greenside shots.

THE LONG BUNKER SHOT Don't try to pick the ball with your sand wedge from 25 or 30 yards out. Make your standard explosion swing with a gap or pitching wedge. Much easier.

THE BURIED-LIE SHOT You've probably been told you need to dig with

the leading edge. Instead, swing down steeply, hit two inches behind the ball and try to trench the sand with the heel. You'll get under the ball and pop it out.

THE CLEAR-THE-LIP SHOT Speed and clubface loft produce height. Make a big backswing, and picture the back of your right hand facing the sand at impact. Keep up your speed to a full finish.

THE CHUNK + THE SCREAMER

BY RON KASPRISKE

The two most common mistakes in greenside bunkers are leaving the ball in the sand and skulling it over the green. Here's Rick Smith with a few easy fixes:

FAT SHOTS Think of it as skimming the top layer of sand—like the dollop on your cappuccino. Smith says try this when you practice. “Draw two parallel lines in the sand five inches apart and perpendicular to your target line. Place the ball in the middle, then forget about it. Your goal is to touch down on the back line but also cut a piece out of the front line. Erase the lines, and you'll take out the right amount of sand.” Oh yeah, and the ball, too.

THIN SHOTS You're either scooping or swinging too shallow, too much around your body. “If you're shallow,” Smith says, “you're going to hit the ball with the leading edge and blade it.”

Instead, he says take an open stance, with some knee flex and your weight left. Maintain these positions as you swing. “Swing back and down along your foot line,” Smith says. You'll become a digger in no time.



BEST **BUNKER** DRILL EVER

BY RON KASPRISKE



One great method for learning to hit greenside bunker shots is practicing off a two-by-four.

“Jack Lumpkin started using a block of wood back in the early ’80s,” says Golf Digest Teaching Professional **Chuck Cook**. “Soon all the Golf Digest Schools instructors were doing it.”

HERE'S HOW: Get a two-by-four, preferably painted white, and bury it in a bunker so the top is barely covered by sand. Without a ball, Cook says, try to hit the sand that's on the board onto the green. Then cover the board

again and place a ball on it. Try to knock the sand under the ball onto the green; this time the ball will come out with it (left).

Then cover the board again, and put a clump of sand on top, where the ball was. Knock that clump onto the green.

“You'll notice the sole of your wedge will start getting white paint on it,” Cook says. “Good. You're using the club's bounce to skim it through the sand.”

Finally, remove the board and hit shots imagining it's still there.

DON'T **SMASH** THE GLASS

BY PETER MORRICE

Thin is almost always better than fat out of fairway bunkers. **Butch Harmon** has a great tip for avoiding fat contact: Imagine your ball is sitting on a pane of glass, and try to pick it off without breaking the glass.

HERE'S HOW: Take an extra club, and stand tall at address, your chin high. During the swing, focus on your lower body staying quiet. This will keep you level, which promotes a clean strike. The tall posture will produce a more around-the-body swing, which also helps with contact. Then just try to clip the ball off that imaginary glass. Remember, if you don't catch it perfect, you want it thin.

