

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

## Sandology

The tendency from a downhill lie in a bunker is to swing up on the ball too abruptly in order to get it in the air. Unfortunately, this causes you to straighten up as you swing back to the ball, a sure way to hit the ball thin and drive it into the bank of the bunker or send it running over the green. But by following a few simple prescriptions, you can amaze your friends (and yourself) as you extract your ball in a professional manner from this seemingly impossible position.

### The Technique

Play the ball farther back in your stance (practice will tell you exactly how much) — the more downhill the lie, the farther back the ball. Since the ball is below your back foot, the lowest point of your swing will be just back of center and that's exactly

where you want your clubhead to enter the sand — behind the ball, ensuring that you hit the sand first.

Next, make sure to draw your rear foot back a bit so that your stance is slightly closed to the target. This will set your hips and make your lower-body posture as normal as possible under the conditions.

Check to make sure that at least 85 percent of your weight is on your front side — exactly where it should remain throughout your swing. The key here is to rotate your shoulders and hips, but not shift your weight.

### ABOUT THE WRITER



Dr. T.J. Tomasi is a teaching professional in Port St. Lucie, Fla. Visit his website at [tomasigolf.com](http://tomasigolf.com).



If the slope were steeper, I'd position the ball farther back and drop my back foot even more. But here the problem is catching the lip on the downswing, so I've adjusted my setup to solve the lip problem.



To make sure I clear the lip, I steepen my swing by swinging my arms more directly up and tilting my shoulders to match the slope.

### TEEING OFF

## The only foursome that really counts

The sudden disappearance of a golf game has always been part of the sport. In 1911, at age 19, Johnny McDermott won the U.S. Open, then repeated in 1912, but serious mental problems assured he would never win it again. Ralph Guldahl was one of the best players in the world from 1936 to 1940, winning the Masters and two U.S. Opens, then he suddenly went from the best player to someone who couldn't play at all — so he retired.

The mysterious disappearing golf game syndrome even struck the King. Arnold Palmer probably made more clutch putts than anyone, but the drainage stopped in 1974. The winner of seven majors and 92 tournaments worldwide, he never won again on the PGA Tour.

Johnny Miller was the dominant player in the world from 1973 to 1975, but in 1976 he changed his body by working on his ranch, after which he no longer stiffed the irons that made him a winner. That, in turn, left him with longer putts and his nerves collapsed. Ian Baker-Finch changed his swing to get 10 more yards after he won the British Open in 1991; it didn't work, and he tinkered his way into the announcer's booth.

In 1999, David Duval was No. 1 in the world, but he developed vertigo and then spent too much time during the winters in Colorado with no practice. His game went poof, as did Lee Janzen's, who between 1992 and 1998 won two U.S. Opens plus six other tour-

naments. Enter the Tiger.

Tiger's game disappeared when his short game faltered. He had always been able to score, even when he was changing swings, because of miraculous chipping and pitching. But when the short game goes, too much pressure is placed on both the long game and putting, which then follow suit.

A rule of thumb is that it's tough to keep your entire golf game in good form because the big four — long game, short game, putting and mental game — are so interconnected that when one goes, the others are affected.

Another rule of thumb is that mistakes magnify in meaning as you get closer to the hole — in other words, recoverability drops as you close in on the target. You can recover from a bad drive layup by making a good pitch, you can recover from a bad pitch with a good putt, but you can't recover from either if you hit a bad putt. Tiger played many a hole when he was a scoring machine like this: Blocked drive into the right trees, punch out to 70 yards, wedge to 12 feet and make it for a par.

The key to scoring is to make your mistakes early in the hole, and this is also the key to the mental side of a good golf game, the centerpiece of which is the art of mental juggling — keeping three balls constantly in the air at the same time: short game, putting, long game. One wag described it as having three girlfriends at the same time — at any one point it's hard to figure out if you're in paradise or in hell.

### GOLF BY THE NUMBERS

## Point at a cow and call it a racehorse

Tiger Woods now has three consecutive missed cuts in major championships. That's four missed cuts in his last five majors. In 2015, Tiger is losing 1.4 strokes per round to the entire field from his ball striking, tee to green, and yet he keeps telling us how close he is.

Tiger Woods' description of his 2015 performance suggests he is in denial. If you listen to him describe his Thursday round in the PGA Championship, you might think the only problem he has is a problem almost everyone has — just

make a few more putts. Tiger said he hit it "great," and when one of the greatest players ever says that, you can usually take it to the bank. But in this case, don't try to cash the check because it'll bounce.

In the round he described as great, Tiger hit only seven of 14 fairways and 12 of 18 greens, which isn't bad for an average player, but it's certainly not great. And the six greens he missed were with short irons.