

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

Fairway metal gives loft to greenside chip

When your ball lies just off the green and there's no obstacle between you and the pin, the play is to chip with a fairway metal, especially if you've drawn a difficult lie. A fairway metal (5, 4 or 3) is an excellent choice here as it has enough loft to lift the ball out of difficult lies, and its long shaft allows you a compact swing that's low to the ground.

To chip with a fairway metal, use your putting grip, assume a slightly open stance and tilt the shaft of your club until it's upright with the ground. You'll have to stand erect to accommodate the length of the shaft, but be careful to keep your weight anchored on your front foot so you

don't sway as you make your stroke.

Follow this list of basic mechanics:

1. Put weight on the front foot;
2. Position ball off your shirt logo;
3. Slightly elevate the clubhead at address to avoid catching the ground first;
4. Assume a narrow, open stance;
5. Choke down to the steel;
6. Use a putting stroke with no wrist break.

ABOUT THE WRITER



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Use your putting stroke, keeping the right wrist angle formed at address throughout the swing to avoid a wristy stroke.



Note how the ball gets in the air immediately because of the club's loft, ensuring that it starts on line.

TEERING OFF

Caitlyn Jenner sharpens her short game

Under the category of "things you wouldn't have guessed in a million tries," two come to mind immediately:

No. 1: I happened to be in New York City on Sept. 10, 2001, and that evening, about 10:30, on the way back to my hotel, I stopped at the foot of the Twin Towers. I looked up at those incredible structures, thinking they looked like they would last forever. The next morning they were both gone!

No. 2: The transformation of the world's best male athlete in 1976, Bruce Jenner, winner of the Olympic gold medal in the decathlon, into a female 40 years later.

According to TMZ, Caitlyn Jenner was recently spotted at a golf course practicing her short game. She was still using a golf bag embossed with "Bruce Jenner," who was a 5-handicap and regularly drove the ball 300 yards. His nickname was Bruce the "Bruiser."

Caitlyn joked, "I'm not doing this so I can hit it off the women's tee," but it will be interesting to see the kind of scores she shoots as she moves up. Of course, at 65, Ms. Jenner is not talking about turning

pro, but it certainly would be exciting if she did compete in tournaments at the national level as an amateur.

The first transsexual male-to-female in pro golf was Mianne Bagger. The Australian Ladies Professional Golf Tour made her a member in 2004. An athletic-looking 5 feet, 10 inches, you'd think Bagger would kill it off the tee, but that is not the case. She averages a modest 210 yards, but has a sound overall game. Starting at age 8 and achieving a men's handicap of 4, she subsequently won the South Australian women's amateur championship three times before turning pro.

Her lack of distance off the tee may have helped her gain acceptance on the pro tour. A former man who drives it 320 yards and hits 180-yard 7-irons would be a tough sell no matter how just her cause might be. But there is probably not much chance of that because, as Bagger says: "When you undergo sex-change surgery, the physiological changes include losing muscle mass and strength. It's a false assumption that I am more powerful."

GOLF BY THE NUMBERS

Stats reflect aggressive games on tour

The scoring average on the PGA Tour at the end of the 2015 regular season was 71, while driving distance was 289 yards. Three out of the top five longest hitters were also in the top five in scoring, and No. 3, Brooks Koepka, was not far away, in the seventh spot in driving distance.

It's well known that the game has changed as bigger, stronger and more daring players join the PGA Tour, employing the "bash and gouge" strategy off the tee. There are so many more power players today that, statistically, the odds are that one or more of them are going to be hot on any given week.

Add to that the impact of the modern ball (it curves less and stays in the air longer) and the new wedges (players spin the ball more), which encourages the power players to be fearless in choosing a driver off the tee. And the purses are so big that if a player gets into trouble one week, there's always next week.

This is why the driver weakness in Tiger Woods' game is so detrimental. In the past, when Tiger was dominant, the field was not as aggressive; he could lay

back and still win, but not today. With the growing number of aggressive long bombers, the strategy has changed.

PGA TOUR YEAR-END RANKINGS

SCORING AVERAGE

- 1 Jordan Spieth
- 2 Bubba Watson
- 3 Brooks Koepka
- 4 Jason Day
- 5 Dustin Johnson

DRIVING DISTANCE

- 1 Dustin Johnson
- 2 Bubba Watson
- 3 Jason Day
- 4 Adam Scott
- 5 J.B. Holmes

Boomer Henrick Stenson, the 2013 FedExCup champion, outlined his tour strategy: "I take a little bit more aggressive position maybe, and when the rough is that thick, if you can get it inside 150 yards off the tee, then even if you're in the rough, you have a chance."