



STROKESAVERS WITH
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PERFECT PITCHING

Part 1

How to hit the low, spinning wedge shot

The world's leading players like Phil Mickelson have made an art out of hitting perfect pitch shots with low launch, high spin and great distance control. This article will look specifically at some of the key factors that help to control the movement of the club as well as trajectory and spin on your wedge shots, which will ensure maximum spin and control when attacking those tight pins.

Growing up on firm fairways in Australia, I was always told that if I wanted to spin the ball I simply attack the ball on a steep angle and punch down sharply into the shot. Well, I found that this worked pretty well on a firm surface but was not great when you're dealing with either a really tight lie or softer ground like we can be faced with here in the warm climate of South East Asia.

I have since understood through the use of Trackman and other radar devices that the professionals are launching a half wedge (50 metres) at less than 30 degrees with a spin rate of greater than 6500rpm. With those types of numbers, you'll be a match when attacking any flag.

So how do they hit their half wedge shots with low launch, high spin and minimal divots?

WHAT CONTROLS THE PITCH SHOT?

First, let's look at what controls the pitch shot. The motion of the body and how it moves and rotates is really the engine of great pitchers of the golf ball. Note here in the set-up position how the body weight favours the target side with as much as 60 to 70% weight on the lead leg and how the grip end is leaning towards the target also. It's important to pre-set the weight on the forward leg for two main reasons – the first, a pitch shot does not require the full rotation and length of swing like a full shot, and second, it helps to get the club and body aligned into a solid striking position.



BODY WEIGHT SHOULD BE 60 TO 70% ON THE TARGET SIDE



EXERCISE

When learning to develop the correct body motion for pitching, it's important to have a clear feel and understanding of what the lower and upper body's roles are.

Here's a little exercise to get you started. I've placed a shaft across my lower body and upper body to represent firstly the starting position and the amount of movement I'd like to see for a half pitch.

It's important to note that when hitting a short pitch there's no real weight transfer going back, so you should be essentially pivoting your weight into your lead leg. Note also the minimal amount of hip rotation compared to the upper body.



On the forward, it's important to note that even on a short pitch you should feel an increase of weight pressing into the lead leg as the lower body opens up toward the target. This post-impact finish shows how the lower body begins to open up relative to the lower body on a short and medium length pitch shot.

Working on correct body form will lay the foundation for a solid pitching action.

In the next issue, we'll cover the role of the hands and arms in achieving a consistent impact position and controlled ball flight.



SHORT PITCH

MEDIUM PITCH



Australian PGA AAA-rated professional **Steven Giuliano** is based at the Impact Elite Golf Academy at The Mines Resort & Golf Club as the Director of Player Development & Education. He is regarded as one of the top instructors for developing amateurs and professionals in the Asia Pacific region. For more information, log on to www.sggc.com.au or email steven@sggc.com.au