

Met Methods

From Woods to Wedges

Spend more time on these crucial clubs, and watch your scores go down

BY KAMMY MAXFELDT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEONARD KAMSLER

Your home course is likely still closed, but perhaps you've started to get the pre-season itch. Maybe you've swung a club in your backyard or visited a heated driving range. You are readying yourself for the day when the flagsticks are back in and winter rules are a distant memory. If you want to make that extra work really pay off, focus on your woods and wedges to start off the season.

Especially here in the Met Area, you rely on your woods and wedges more than any other clubs in your bag. Our courses demand accuracy and a finely tuned short game for you to go low. So spend the majority of your practice time on these important clubs, and you'll be raring to go when your scores start to count.



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Woods: Swing from L to L

Even in the mid-season, it helps to have a go-to “control” swing off the tee, so you can hit the fairway on tight driving holes. Start grooving it now by practicing the L-to-L motion. Take the club back so that your left arm and the club form an L (*above, left*). Then follow through to the same point, so your right arm and the club make an L (*above, right*).

Hit 10 or 15 balls this way, and you’ll build confidence because the shorter, more controlled motion will help you swing the club on the correct inside path to the ball (*below*). This path will help you square the clubface at impact for maximum accuracy.

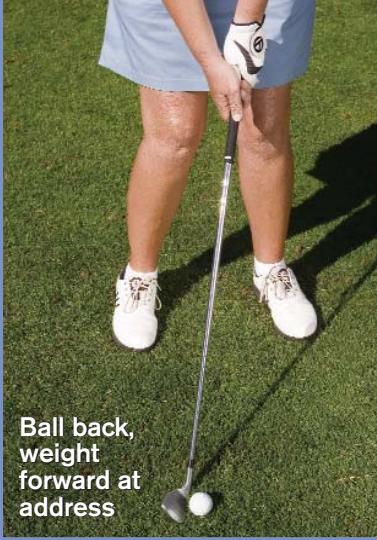


Once you get comfortable with this swing, add some wrist hinge and swing back a little farther, until you eventually move to full swings. The path you ingrained with the L-to-L swing should carry through. If you start spraying your drives, go back to the shorter swing until you get the proper feeling back.

Wedges: Go Lower

Here's a piece of advice you've probably heard before but don't always follow: Play your pitch shots with the lowest trajectory possible. If you try to pull off the Tiger or Phil super-flop shot, chances are you'll be unsuccessful. So in most cases, you can leave your sand or lob wedge in the bag and play a higher-percentage, lower-flying pitch shot. It's especially helpful now, before your touch and feel have rounded into mid-season form.

Many of you play the ball too far forward in your stance on pitch shots, which causes you to scoop at the ball and suffer inconsistent contact. Play the ball at the midpoint of your stance or even a little bit back (*top left*), and set your weight forward just a little bit. As you swing back, make sure you turn your body rather than just lift your arms (*middle left*). This will help you set the club in position to make a forward strike on the ball – so your club strikes it before it hits the ground (*bottom left*). Follow through to about waist height and watch your shot fly at a medium trajectory and roll partway to the hole.



Ball back,
weight
forward at
address



Follow through to
waist height on
pitch shots.

Manage Your Game

When it comes to scoring, course management is as important as your swing. Especially on tee shots, a consistent pre-shot routine will help ensure that you are lined up properly. Here's a tip that Mark Calcavecchia once told me: When setting up to the ball, your left foot should be the last thing that moves into place. First pick out an intermediate target, and then align the clubface to it. Next, keep your body behind the ball as you position your right foot (*inset, right*) and get into your posture. Only after the clubface and your right foot are set should you step toward the target with your left foot (*far right*).



Bonus Bunker Tip

On a fairway bunker shot that is longer than 30 yards, keep your sand wedge in the bag. Use your pitching wedge and make a shorter swing. Play the ball in the middle of your stance, with your hands set slightly forward at address (*inset, left*). On your through-swing, make sure your right knee rotates forward to your left knee (*left*). You'll find this a lot easier than a full swing with a sand wedge. ■



Kammy Maxfeldt is the head golf professional at Birchwood Country Club in Westport, Connecticut.