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Hitting Golf's Toughest Shots

By Jack Moorehouse

Always going for broke can cost your strokes and inflate golf handicap. Still there are times when

going for broke is called for—like when the club championship is on the line or you need a birdie to break 70 or 80 for the first time. If your luck's like mine, that's usually when you face a pretty tough shot.

The six shots described below are among the toughest going. They're extra difficult for amateur golfers who aren't accustomed to hitting shots under pressure, especially for those with high golf handicaps. But using your head and following the advice given below will improve your chances of making a successful shot.

Bunker Shot with Water Long This shot is among the hardest in golf. You need a really good lie; otherwise, play it safe and hit toward the fat part of the green. If the lie is good, however, go for it! Start with a full turn and don't be skittish about blasting out of the bunker. Remember you're displacing a couple of pounds of sand, so you'll need plenty of momentum. Don't try to lift the ball, as some students do in their golf lessons. Instead, hit down and through into the sand a few inches behind the ball.

Cutting the Dogleg I won't take a risk unless I'll gain a full shot in the process—a strategy I've discussed in my golf tips articles. So think before deciding. If the gives you a chance to make the green in two on a par 5 or to drive the green on a short par-4, then don't feel intimidated and go for the shot. Before hitting you need to know exactly how far to carry your shot or your tee shot won't reach the fairway, forcing you perhaps to take a penalty shot. Also, stay relaxed with this shot. Waggle your club a few times to relieve tension in your hands and take several fast practice swings. You'll slow down when it comes time to tee off.

Approach over Water If you're like the players who listened to my golf instruction sessions, you're probably terrified of water. Some years back a GOLF MAGAZINE survey of recreational golfers tabbed this shot the most terrifying. If you miss you not only lose the ball, you add a penalty stroke to your score. Here's how to hit it. Take several practice swings until you've identified the shot, then step up to the ball and repeat the swing. Don't hesitate. It lets too many negative swing shots enter your mind.

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Keep your posture steady, letting your shoulder pull you through impact. Picture your belt buckle facing the target—a positive image that will help you accelerate down and through the ball.

Escape through Trees Ever try to make up for a bad shot only to dig yourself deeper in a hole? Resist the temptation to hit a miracle, after you've hit a bad shot, like hitting into the trees. Instead, focus on hitting the next shot well. And the shot after that. And the shot after that. Hit enough good shots and you'll make up for the bad shot.

When you find yourself in a clump of trees, resist the temptation to hit a miracle shot. Your goal is to get out of the trees and put your ball back into play, even if it means hitting side ways. Examine your lie closely before hitting, then choose your club based on the lie. Choose carefully. If you need to hit a 140-yard low trajectory shot, don't play the ball back in your stance while using an 8-iron, hoping to keep it down. Instead, use the 3-iron or the 4-iron and make a long chipping motion. You'll stay relaxed and reduce the chances of a mis-hit.

Long Fairway Bunker Shot Long irons are probably the hardest clubs for recreational golfers to hit, especially out of a bunker. Instead, try the comfort of a fairway wood. The club's loft and wide sole helps the clubhead slide through the sand, making the shot easier. In addition, make two small adjustments to your swing to encourage a descending arc on the swing. Open the clubface slightly for a little extra bounce and play the ball back in your stance an inch or two. Also, dig your toes not your heels into the sand. Take a normal swing and you'll make ball-first contact.

Greenside Lob Over a Bunker This shot is my personal favorite. The lie determines how aggressive you can get with the shot. So take a close look. Try to get a sense of how much grass is behind the ball and how much air is underneath it. If the lie is tight, you won't be able to get the club under the ball. If it's its too fluffy, you might flub landing into the bunker. Make a nearly full backswing and then drop the club to the ball to pop it up. Keep the clubface pointing to the sky and use a short follow-through. Keep your head stable and centered.

You probably won't face these shots more than a couple of times a year. But you can bet that somewhere along the line, you'll have to hit one at crunch time in a round, match, or tournament. But if you keep your wits about you and commit yourself to the shot, you may be surprised how many times you'll pull one off.

Jack Moorehouse is the author of the best-selling book "

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." He is NOT a

golf pro, rather a working man that has helped thousands of golfers from all seven continents lower their handicap immediately.

Is Your Golf Driver A Little Dusty?

Hitting Golf's Toughest Shots

By George Gabriel

Playing good golf requires the knowledge and use of every golf club in the bag. I don't know how many times I've seen a golfer leaving their driver in the bag when teeing it up on the tee box. I always ask the same question over and over again, and get the same answer. "Why do you leave the driver in the bag on long golf holes?" "I cannot hit my driver off of the tee box." Has always been the same response. Typically they duff any other club they choose, but blame it on a bad swing. A bad golf shot with a driver has always been because of the golf club, never the golf swing. Why is that?

It is a matter of confidence. Hitting the driver off the tee box, is no different than hitting any other wood or iron off the tee box. As a matter of fact, the club head is bigger and should be a lot easier to make contact with the golf ball. Golfers, who do not hit their driver off of the tee box, simply have convinced themselves it is too hard to do. They have convinced themselves to a point that any other club selection is the right choice, therefore when a player hits a couple good shots off the tee box with their 3 wood or 2 iron, it justifies leaving the driver in the bag. There will be golf holes with tight fairways, and you will consider anything but a driver off the tee box that is easier to control, but to give up on any one golf club, should never be an option.

Do not give up on the driver. It is not as hard to hit as you think. Take the same golf swing as any other golf club you would choose. Accuracy will come with every other attempt. The only difference with the driver and any other golf club is the set up position in relation to your distance from the ball, because of the length of the golf club. Stand a little further back and take the same golf swing as you would with any other golf club. Practice with different golf ball positions and keep your confidence level high.

For greater confidence, practice hitting the driver off of the fairway without a tee. It will help you reach those long par fives. Practice with the ball positioned in the middle of your stance, and you will soon be lifting them off the fairway. Keep your golf swing as normal as possible. Do not try to scoop the ball off of the fairway. With proper ball positioning in your stance and a good straight arm on the way back and through, the driver clubface will lift it off the fairway as if you had it teed up. Lifting the ball off of the fairway with a driver only requires a good lie and a confident golf swing. It will rise off the fairway like any other fairway wood, but you will get more distance.

Take a little more confidence in your golf swing to the tee box, and it will not matter what golf club you select. Each golf club is as easy as the other. You just need a little more faith in your golf swing.

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