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Pitching From Bad Lies

By Jack Moorehouse

Everyone eventually lands in a bad lie. It's just a fact of life. Even a good shot sometimes ends up in a divot. Shots off the mark, on the other hand, sometimes land on bare ground or in the rough. Pitching successfully from a bad lie cuts strokes from your score and positions you for your next shot.

A key to pitching from a bad lie is maintaining your focus. Pitching from a divot or bare ground isn't as tricky as it seems, if you do. In fact, it's fairly straightforward, as I've often say in my golf tips. It's just a question of selecting the right club and making a few adjustments.

Here are 5 things you absolutely must do in order to chip well out of a bad lie:

1. Select a club with a sharp leading edge
2. Position the ball in the middle (or back) of stance
3. Keep your hands ahead of the ball
4. Set wrists slightly earlier
5. Take a steeper attack angle on downswing

No single club is ideal for hitting from a bad lie. While a sand wedge is tempting, it's better to hit a pitching wedge or a 9 iron. Their sharper leading edges increase your chances of striking the ball solidly. Club selection, as I emphasize in my golf lessons, is almost as important as technique, so choose wisely.

Also key to hitting from bad lies is your attack angle. After selecting your club assume a normal posture, with the hands ahead of the ball and the club shaft and your left arm (for right-handers) forming a direct line down to the ball positioned in the middle of your stance or toward the back of it. Lean forward slightly. The ball position and weight shift encourage a steeper angle of attack than usual.

The downswing is similar to hitting a pitch shot from a clean fairway lie, except for the wrists. Set these slightly earlier in the takeaway than normally. Also critical is the centering of your weight over the ball. Coil your upper body over your flexed right knee. As you coil, you'll shift your weight slightly backward, positioning to hit the ball with a strong descending blow.

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You'll need force to punch the clubhead down into the back of the ball, driving it forward. Most of your weight should be on the front foot at impact, while your head should be centered over the ball as the clubhead cuts through the grass. Also, keep your left-hand firm.

In my golf lessons I show students a photograph of a club striking the ball when hitting from a bad lie. The photo shows that the angle of the shaft relative to the target is shifted forward quite dramatically. It also shows the hands leading the clubhead through impact.

A ball landing in deep rough is one of the few times on a golf course where brute force is required. Don't change your swing; just put some muscle into it. Your main goal here is simply to get of the grass and onto the fairway, in good shape for the next shot. The last thing you want to do, as I emphasize in my golf lessons, is ending up in the rough again.

Also, experiment with different clubs. Experimentation will tell you which clubs you hit best from which

lie. Of course, not every pitch shot has to be perfect. So try hitting the ball close to the pin by landing on spots other than the green, such as a few feet in front of the hole, and letting the ball roll. Or, try using the green's contour help funnel the shot to the hole.

Landing in a bad lie doesn't have to ruin a good hole. If you maintain focus, choose the right club, and make adjustments to your stance and swing, you'll be able to hit successfully from a bad lie. Players with low golf handicaps are adept at this. Players with high golf handicaps, on the other hand, need to practice this. Once you've developed confidence in your ability to do so, you'll take landing in a bad lie in stride.

Jack Moorehouse is the author of the best-selling book "How To Break 80 And Shoot Like The Pros

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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.

Do Pitching Machines Help Your Hitting?

By John Marcus

One of the most widely asked questions of baseball and softball coaches is: do pitching machines help your hitting. Although having a pitching machine one hand does certainly give your hitting game an extra boost, it is certainly not essential to have a machine in order to be successful on the baseball diamond. In most instances, coaches suggest that all baseball or softball players should spend some time working with a pitching machine, but not devote their entire hitting practice to a machine.

The biggest complain that both coaches and players have of pitching machines is their consistency.

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Although consistency in hitting and pitching is generally a good thing, pitching machines can provide you with the same pitch each and every time, often allowing the pitcher to relax since they essentially know what is coming. In this case, pitching machines can make a player become overconfident or cocky, which can be detrimental when game time rolls around and a pitching machine is replaced by a real, live pitcher. If you are interested in using a pitching machine, consider a model that will vary the speeds and pitches served to you so that you do not fall into the pitching machine routine.

However, the problem of consistency is often overpowered by the positive attribute of using a pitching machine. For example, a pitching machine can help a baseball or softball player by providing them with a way to practice their technique. Even though they may not hit the ball, the technique of the swing and follow through is crucial and easier to teach in using a pitching machine than an actual pitcher. Choose a pitching machine with several speeds so that a beginning player can better practice his or her swing technique in addition to keeping his or her eye on the ball without threat of being injured from high speed pitches.

In the end, the choice of whether or not to use a pitching machine in practice is left up to you. If you do elect to include a pitching machine into your practice routine, be sure to interchange it with time with an actual pitcher who performs a variety of pitches, including balls so that you know what to expect in game play. Typically, players who perform well in the batting cages with pitching machines find their game is less effective on the baseball diamond when they are pitted against an actual pitcher. The reason tends to be because the consistency of a batting machine tends to lure you into the false security that each and every pitch will be perfect. For this reason, you may not be skilled at deciphering with pitch is good and should be swung at verses those pitches that should be left to slide past without swinging.

John Marcus specializes in Pitching Machines

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