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When To Leave The Driver In The Bag

By Jack Moorehouse

Supposedly, Tiger Woods used his driver only once in winning the 2006 British Open. In its place, he used low irons and fairway woods. I'm not sure exactly sure how many times he used his driver, but it wasn't much, highlighting something I advocate in my golf lessons and golf tips—knowing when to leave the driver in the bag cuts strokes from your score and your golf handicap.

Tiger succeeded at the British Open because he played smart golf. That requires strategically positioning the ball when you have to, which in turn means sometimes using the 3-wood, a hybrid club, or a low iron off the tee. Here are some tips on when to use each.

The 3-Wood

The 3-wood is easier to hit than the driver. It's especially useful when you must hit the fairway or when you want to draw or fade the ball on doglegs. It's also great on holes with tight fairways. Some experienced players use it almost exclusively from the tee. Novices find the 3-wood a great substitute for the driver most of the time.

Since the 3-wood is easier to control than the driver, it's easier to learn to hit a fade or draw with it. You don't have to significantly alter your set-up or your swing. The key to hitting a draw is approaching the ball from inside the target line on an arching motion. With a draw, the club tends to point to the right in a laid-off position at the top. The key to hitting a fade, on the other hand, is approaching the ball from outside the target line. With the fade, the club points to the left in a laid-off position at the top.

Learning to shape your shots with a 3-wood isn't exceptionally hard. All it takes is the right technique, a little visualization, and some practice. Using the 3-wood at the right time can cut your average score—and maybe your golf handicap—by at least a couple of strokes.

Low Irons

If you tend to hit a fade, your low irons will serve you well off the tee. These clubs are good in windy conditions, such as when you're hitting into a crosswind or a strong headwind. You can also use them

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on short par-4s when you want to hit the fairway. Since you're not turning your wrists over when you swing, the ball won't run as much as with the 3-wood or driver.

The punch-fade shot, for example, is ideal on windy days. It's a low-trajectory shot designed to cut through the wind. It requires a swing path traveling less around and more out-to-in, producing the fade

Start with a slightly open stance and the ball positioned toward the middle of your stance. Keep your back swing upright to encourage a steeper angle of attack while the right arm extends against a bent right wrist through impact. Try not to let your right hand release over your left.

Hybrid Irons

A hybrid club is ideal on holes with tight fairways. They're also good on holes that provide a lot of run.

You can use a low, hard draw to position your self where you want to be or combat a strong headwind. You can use it to replace a low iron, if you have a hard time hitting one.

As with a low iron, you hit down and through with a hybrid club, instead of sweeping the ball off the tee, as with a fairway wood. To execute a draw, set-up with the ball slightly back in you stance, which should be closed a bit. Hood the club slightly by pointing the toe at the target.

When you swing, approach the ball from the inside as you usually do when hitting a draw, but stop well short of parallel in your back swing. On the way through the ball, turn your hands over slightly with the right hand resting above the left (for right-handers) and your right wrist staying bent. A flat left wrist and a slightly bent right wrist keys this shot.

While none of us are Tiger Woods, we can still play like him. Knowing when to keep the driver in the bag helped Tiger win the British Open. The same strategy can cut strokes from your scores and slash your golf handicap. Keep this strategy in mind the next time you're on the course.

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?

By George Gabriel

Playing good golf requires the knowledge and use of every golf club in the bag. I don't know how

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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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