

The average PGA Tour player hits just less than twelve greens in regulation per round. This means that at least six times per round they will have to execute some type of a short game shot in an attempt to save their par. One of the shots they often face is the pitch shot.

Considering that amateur golfers hit far fewer greens per round, it is of even greater importance that they can successfully hit a quality pitch. To become a good pitcher of the golf ball, a player must do three things: create solid contact, control distance, and control direction. These are the keys to pitching like a pro.

A pitch is a lofted shot in which the golf ball will have more airtime and less groundtime. A player should decide to pitch when the shot requires carrying any obstacle, including rough, mounds, or bunkers. Typically, the technique required to hit the ball with increasing loft becomes more complicated. When you can keep the ball on the ground, do so.

Consistent solid contact is the most important aspect of good pitching. If you cannot routinely create solid contact, the golf ball will leave the face differently each time, thus making quality distance control and direction impossible. The first key to good contact is setting up correctly. The body doesn't do much in the backswing. While your body will turn as you swing your arms back, you should not transfer weight. It should stay at 60% left. In the downswing it is important that your body is active. Good motion entails moving forward and rotating your body towards the target. At finish your center should be facing the target and your right knee should be near your left.

In the backswing it is essential to hinge your wrists and set the club. It is extremely difficult to hit down if the club is not elevated. A good impact condition is essential for solid contact. To do this, the shaft needs to be leaning forward. This creates a descending angle of attack and enables crisp contact. A correct swing creates ball-first contact, followed by the striking of the ground. If the shaft is leaning back at impact, the player will often hit thin or fat shots. End your swing with an abbreviated finish and maintain a flat left wrist.

If your full sand wedge goes 80 yards, a pitch is really any distance 79 yards or shorter until you are next to the green and chipping. Thus, a good pitcher can control distance and hit pitches of any length. Teaching under Jim McLean at Doral, I've had the chance to watch him work with several tour players on their pitching, including Tom Kite, Bernhard Langer, and Christie Kerr.

SETUP BASICS

- Grip down (More on short pitches, less on long pitches)
- Get closer to the ball
- Put the ball in the middle of your stance
- Weight 60% left
- Lean shaft forward

Hitting the ball on your intended line is the third component of good chipping. If you can execute the first two components well, you'll have a good chance of controlling your direction.

If you have set up correctly, you will be closer to the ball. This gets your eyes closer to being over the golf ball. When your eyes get nearer your line of play it becomes easier to start your ball in that direction. Secondly, visualizing your landing spot will help your direction. Before you hit any shot, you must have a clear image of how the ball will fly and where it will land. When possible, try to walk up to your landing spot to get a better look. This should also help with your distance control.

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