



ESCAPE FROM TROUBLE

with Tom F. Stickney, the Club at Cordillera, Vail, Colo.



How to Beat Gnarly Greenside Rough

Treat this shot like a bunker blast for a memorable up-and-down

THIS STORY IS FOR YOU IF...

1. YOU'RE PRONE TO MISSING GREENS.
2. YOU'RE NOT SURE HOW THE BALL WILL REACT OUT OF LONG GRASS.

THE SITUATION

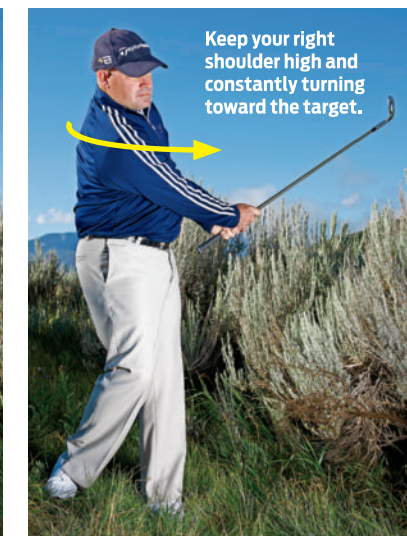
You erred on your approach in a big-time way. Not only did you miss your target, but you found some gnarly rough near the green—you were lucky just to find your ball. Hitting pitch shots has never been your strong suit, and now you're faced with making this play from heavy grass not knowing how to get the ball up and onto the green, and without a clue as to whether the grass is going to grab the club or if there's enough of it under the ball to get your club through the shot.

THE SMART PLAY

The trick to playing a pitch from long grass is to slide the club under the ball, just like you do when you're in a bunker. That's a good way to think about this shot—picture the blades of grass as grains of sand. Also, you want to limit the amount of time the club spends in contact with the rough, so you need a steeper approach than normal (a flatter approach increases clubface/grass contact time). A steeper approach will also add loft to the shot, which you'll need to stop the ball quickly on the green. You can't count on stopping the shot with spin, because you won't get any.



Hinge your wrists immediately in your backswing.



Keep your right shoulder high and constantly turning toward the target.

HOW TO PITCH FROM THE JUNK

STEP 1: Set up for a normal pitch shot with the ball positioned in the middle of your stance. Be careful while settling into your stance—the blades you're standing on might also be touching the ball and could move it before you start your swing (a two-stroke penalty).

STEP 2: To create the steepness you need to pop the ball up, and to limit the time the club stays in contact with the grass, hinge your wrists aggressively and early. You don't need as much arm swing as you do wrist hinge. Think "low hands, high clubhead."

STEP 3: Hitting down, picture the clubhead contacting the grass behind the ball and then sliding under it. Try to keep the clubface pointing at the sky through impact, and let it glide smoothly under the ball. (Don't worry about the club bouncing off the ground. If you can see your ball when it's in long grass, then there's probably enough grass underneath the ball for your club to slide safely under and through.)

STEP 4: Don't quit on this shot! Swing through to a half-finish while making sure to keep your right shoulder high and constantly turning toward the target. This is an easy way to maintain acceleration through impact so that you don't flip the clubhead past your hands. When this happens, you'll end up deeper in the junk or on the other side of the green.

Treat a pitch from rough like you do a blast from sand—your goal is to slide the clubface under the ball and pop it up and out.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ANGLUS MURRAY

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Watch a video of this lesson with Tom Stickney and learn to pitch it tight from greenside rough every time.



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Dear Ben,

You won the Farmers Insurance Open this year, your third career title, and have had five top-10 finishes and more than \$2.5 million in winnings. What's the secret to your success in 2010? —Kemper B., Washington, D.C. (Turn the page to see Ben's answer).

