

Build That Defense

Wedges that perfectly suit you will make a big difference in your game

BY BILL CHOUNG

The year 2013 is special for CompuGolf because it marks our 10th anniversary. I remember when we first opened our doors, we were the first one in Dallas to have a launch monitor and we had to educate all our customers about driver launch angles and back spin to maximize the distance off the tee.

We were very successful in giving our customers an extra 15 to 20 yards off the tee. Because launch monitors can be found at every golf store, avid golfers should have gone through some kind of driver fitting and purchased a custom driver by now.

Therefore, let's start off the New Year by focusing on your scoring clubs. I like to call wedges and putters your defensive weapons in golf. Hitting a tee shot in the rough behind a tree is like turning over the ball at your own 20-yard line. Your defense needs to bail you out by keeping the other team from scoring a touchdown.

Your short game is your defense against a bogey, double bogey or even worse. You can't ignore the offense (tee shots and iron shots), but realize that a strong short game, just like a strong defense in football, will help you win in the long run. Make it your New Year's resolution to get fitted for your wedges and putters.

In this article, let's focus on the wedges.

How many wedges should I have?

I strongly recommend that you carry four wedges, including your pitching wedge. Sacrifice the 5-wood or a 2-hybrid and build up your defense. Why? Some of the lofts on pitching wedges are so strong that your pitching wedge is really closer to a 9-iron; therefore, you need three additional wedges to score.

What lofts should I carry?

The loft on your pitching wedge should determine the lofts of your wedges. The loft

differential between the pitching wedge and the gap wedge should be 4 to 5 degrees. If your pitching wedge is 45 degrees, the gap wedge lofts should be 49 or 50 degrees, sand wedge 53 or 54 degrees and the lob wedge 57 or 58 degrees.

What bounce is right for me?

1. First, let's define bounce: the angle that is formed between the ground and the sole of the wedge. The higher the bounce angle, the less the leading edge of the club will dig into the ground.

2. Choosing the right bounce depends on three variables: a) turf condition; b) bunker sand type; and c) skill level.

a. Tight fairways equal low bounce; plush fairways equal higher bounce. In Dallas it is a good idea to use low bounce wedges in the winter and use mid bounce wedges in other times of the year.

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- ▶ Your short game is your defense against a bogey, double bogey or even worse.
- ▶ Bounce is the angle that is formed between the ground and the sole of the wedge.
- ▶ Spend 50 percent of your range time hitting shots from 100 yards and in.

b. Firm sand equals low bounce; fluffy loose sand equals high bounce.

c. Bounce is your friend. Lower handicap equals lower bounce. Because higher bounce wedges dig less, higher handicappers should use higher bounce wedges. Most Tour players use very low bounce wedges because it gives them more crisp contact, which results in greater spin. Phil Mickelson uses a 0-degree bounce wedge. The Miura wedges

we built for K.J. Choi have only 4 degrees of bounce. Custom grinding is recommended for better players.

d. Make sure the lie angle is set correct for you. If not, the bounce effect becomes useless.

How often should I change my wedges?

To keep the grooves fresh and to maximize the spin, Vijay Singh changes his wedges every week. We build Choi his wedges every two months. If you play once a week, you should change your wedges every 2 to 3 years.

What shafts will work best for me?

Everyone gets fitted for custom driver shafts, but wedge shafts are ignored. Most wedges are sold with one flex. I see most people playing with shafts that are too stiff for them, which results in pulls. The wedge shafts should match up to your iron shafts to give you consistent tempo and rhythm in your swing. If you are going to error on the wedge shafts, go softer instead of stiffer.

What are the best wedge heads?

According to our research, Miura, Mizuno and Vokey wedges offer the best clubheads. These three heads provided the most spin and best feel.

Finally, spend 50 percent of your range time hitting shots from 100 yards and in. And find your most favorite wedge with the favorite distance. Start this year with a strong defensive game and you will win more often.



Bill Choung is the founder of CompuGolf Center in Carrollton. He is a PGA Tour instructor and Golf Digest Top 100 Fitter. He has done extensive swing and equipment research on the PGA Tour and currently works with K.J. Choi and Danny Lee. He has worked with more than 40 Tour players. www.computogolfcenter.com.