

Golf full of ups and downs

OFTEN, while giving a golf lesson at the Westville Driving Range, I am reminded that it is all very well hitting off such a level surface, but out on the course you are more likely to be faced with a more awkward, sloping lie.

This is true, but most of your practice should be done off level lies so that you build a correct, repeatable golf swing without compensation.

As you saw last week, it just requires some simple set-up changes and allowances for a curving ball flight to play these sloping lies with success.

Having shown you how to approach situations where the ball is above or below your feet, this week I will cover the uphill and downhill shots.

One hole where you are sure to be faced with an uphill slope to the green is the 3rd hole at Umkomaas, which is a lovely golf course on KwaZulu-Natal's south coast.

The key here, as you can see in the photograph, is to ensure that your shoulders and hips are set up at the same angle as the slope.

Another way to visualize this is to imagine your spine is perpendicular to the slope, as this allows you to swing the club head along the slope rather than have it digging into the ground.

I would also recommend that you position the ball further forward in your stance, toward the higher foot, as this will aid in achieving the required sweeping motion of the club head through the ball.



You will have to take one club more than usual as you effectively add loft to the club due to your body angle at address. For example, take a 6 iron if you would normally play a 7 iron from that distance.

If possible, you should try and have 60% percent of your body weight on the left or higher leg, as you now have to swing against gravity and inertia if you are to transfer the weight correctly as you follow through. Lastly, you will need to aim your clubface and your body to the right of target and then follow through on that path, as the ball should fly from right to left in the air. This is because weight transfer has become so difficult and you will invariably play



around your body more than usual.

The downhill shot is probably one of the most difficult of all to play. You will be very likely to face a situation like this for your second shot on the 5th hole at the Mt Edgecombe 1 golf course.

It is almost the reverse of the uphill situation, so therefore you must aim the clubface and body to the left of target and then swing along that path.

The ball position will be further back in your stance, toward the higher foot and you will feel that your spine is perpendicular to the slope again.

These changes help to avoid

the topped shot and the miss to the right of target that will surely follow if you play this shot normally.

Don't forget to take one club less now than normal (a 7 iron instead of a 6 iron), as you have effectively de-lofted the club.

Here is the big key to success for a downhill lie: You must try and keep the club head as low to the ground as possible on the follow through for as long as you can, without making any attempt to try and scoop the ball up into the air. It helps to visualise that you are trying to swing the club head along the slope, keeping your body angles as they were in the address position.

If this means that you end up with a curtailed or shortened follow through, that's fine, as long as there is momentum and club head speed.

You can also apply these changes when faced with similar lies in a bunker.

Once again we have a strong South African presence at the USPGA this week. For what it's worth, I have to say that Tiger is looking unbeatable.

I foresee some seriously late nights in the golfing community this weekend.

_ Lewthwaite is the Head Professional at the Westville Driving Range, in Spine Road. Contact him for all your golf instruction queries or to book lessons. People who know, go to their pro.



On the range

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