

Escaping Fairway Bunkers

Here at San Vicente, fairway bunkers are not as big of an issue as they are at many other golf courses. Quite honestly, we really don't have that many. The ones we do have are not all that difficult but they are strategically placed pretty well. This article will focus on extricating oneself from a fairway bunker.



First of all, as we do when we enter a greenside bunker, examining the situation is very important (we are examining right????). Look to see what type of lie we have, whether it is buried or sitting up. Is there a high lip to the bunker that we have to negotiate? Is it an up hill or down hill lie? What obstacles may be in our line of flight? In any case, getting out of the bunker is the first priority. All of these factors can and will effect the club selection.

Let's start with the type of lie we have...a good lie will give you more options for club selection based on the other factors. Next we want to look at the lip of the bunker, both how close we are to it and how high it is. Depending on how far of a shot we need to hit, this is going to help determine what is the lowest lofted club we can use and get over the lip of the bunker. In many cases, if the lip is too high or too close to the ball, we may just be able to hit a high lofted club and get it back in **THE FAIRWAY!!!** In negotiating the lip, lean towards the generous side (more loft) in your club selection, you don't want to bury one under the lip of the bunker. If the lie is buried, all we can do is try to chop it out with a pitching wedge and get it back in **THE FAIRWAY!!!**

In hitting the shot, I will usually select a club more than I would from the same distance in the fairway. To be successful in hitting fairway bunker shots, it is critical that you hit the ball first. To help us accomplish this, we must play the ball a little bit further back in our stance and try not to shift your weight during the swing. I actually imagine hitting the ball thin intentionally. Don't dig your feet in too deep which will lower your body in the sand, possibly causing you to hit the sand first. Choking up on the club a little bit will help also, which is one of the reasons why you should take one more club than normal. Excessive body movement during the swing can cause your feet to slide resulting in poor contact. Play it safe and try not to hit shots that you wouldn't try from a good lie.

For help with this or any other part of your game, contact John Rathbun, PGA Head Golf Professional at the San Vicente Inn & Golf Club at (760) 789-3477.