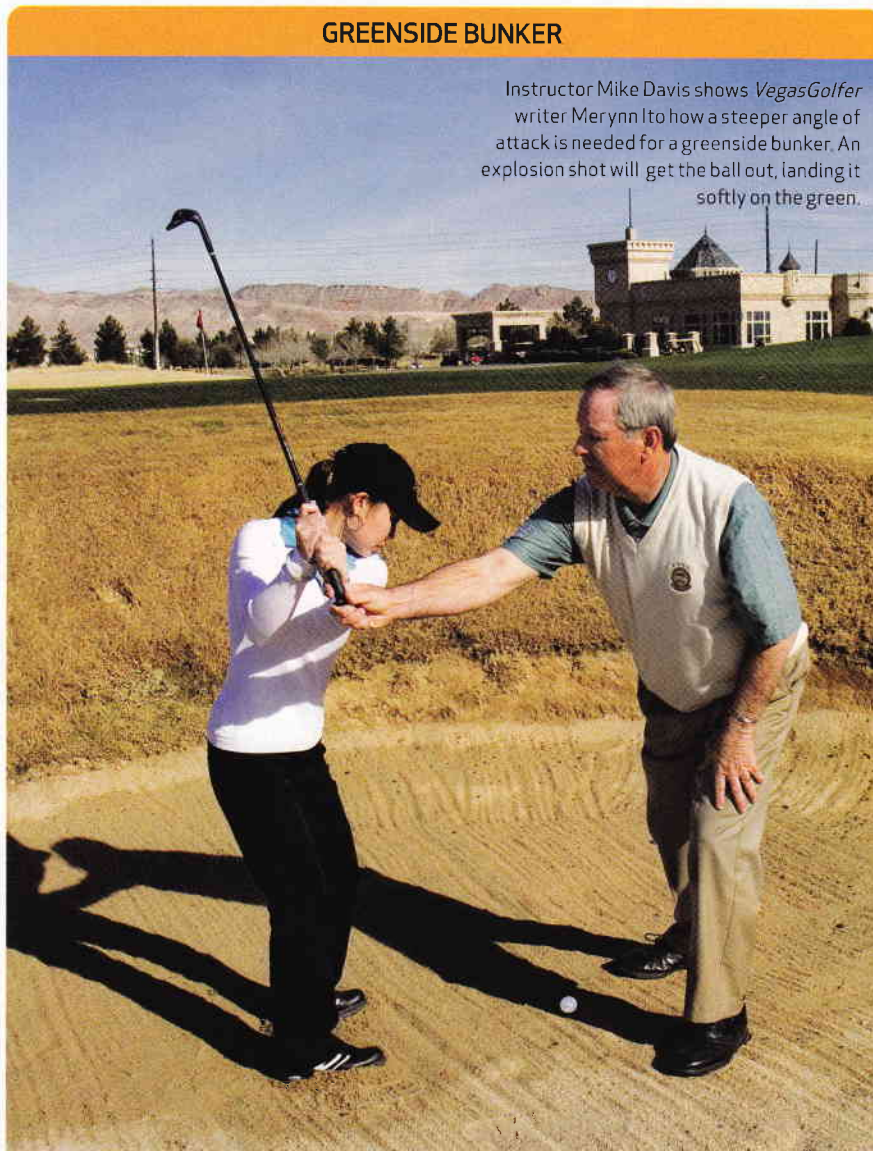


# SOLVING SAND

Picking the right club as important as picking the right shot

**M**ANY GOLFERS HAVE A serious fear of bunker shots. Improvement—and success—come from a good understanding of the concepts and techniques required for the shot. Here are a few easy steps to ensure you not only get out of that next bunker, but hit solid bunker shots every time.

The first step is to learn how to make a golf club slide through the sand—and under the ball—with the loft and force needed for the shot. The great Gene Sarazen invented the sand wedge in 1932 and used it to win the British Open that year. His design contained three key elements that made the explosion shot easier.



GREENSIDE BUNKER

Instructor Mike Davis shows *VegasGolfer* writer Merynn Ito how a steeper angle of attack is needed for a greenside bunker. An explosion shot will get the ball out, landing it softly on the green.

- Added loft created a shorter and higher shot so the ball stopped faster.
- Added material at the back of the sole of the club increased the force of the sand up on the club, reducing the tendency of the club to dig.
- The increased material added weight, which increased the momentum of the club, making it slide through the sand easier.

**A CLUB WITH 56** to 60 degrees of loft and 8 to 12 degrees of bounce (the angle of the sole from leading edge to trailing edge) is a necessity for success in short

explosion shots around the green.

Three variables will affect the results:

- The angle of the swing. A steeper angle will result in a shorter shot, while a shallower angle will result in a longer shot.
- The loft. More loft will result in a shorter shot, while less loft will result in a longer shot.
- The swing. An easier swing will result in a shorter shot, while a harder swing will result in a longer shot.

A good bunker player will adjust these three elements based on the texture of the sand and the situation.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

- A short shot from soft sand requires more loft, which adds bounce to resist digging and adds loft to shorten the shot.
- A short shot from hard sand requires less bounce to resist bouncing off the sand and a steeper angle of attack to shorten the shot.
- A longer shot from soft sand requires more force and a shallower angle of attack (you need to keep a lot of bounce to avoid digging).

- A longer shot from hard sand requires a shallower angle for attack and a little more force.

**THE AVERAGE STROKE FROM** good sand will be a 3/4-length swing at about 70 percent of a normal swing. The clubface will be slightly open and there will be a slightly out-to-in swing path.

Then we get to the long bunker shot, one of the most difficult shots in golf. The 50-to-60-yard shot from a bunker is tough because it's very hard to pick the ball

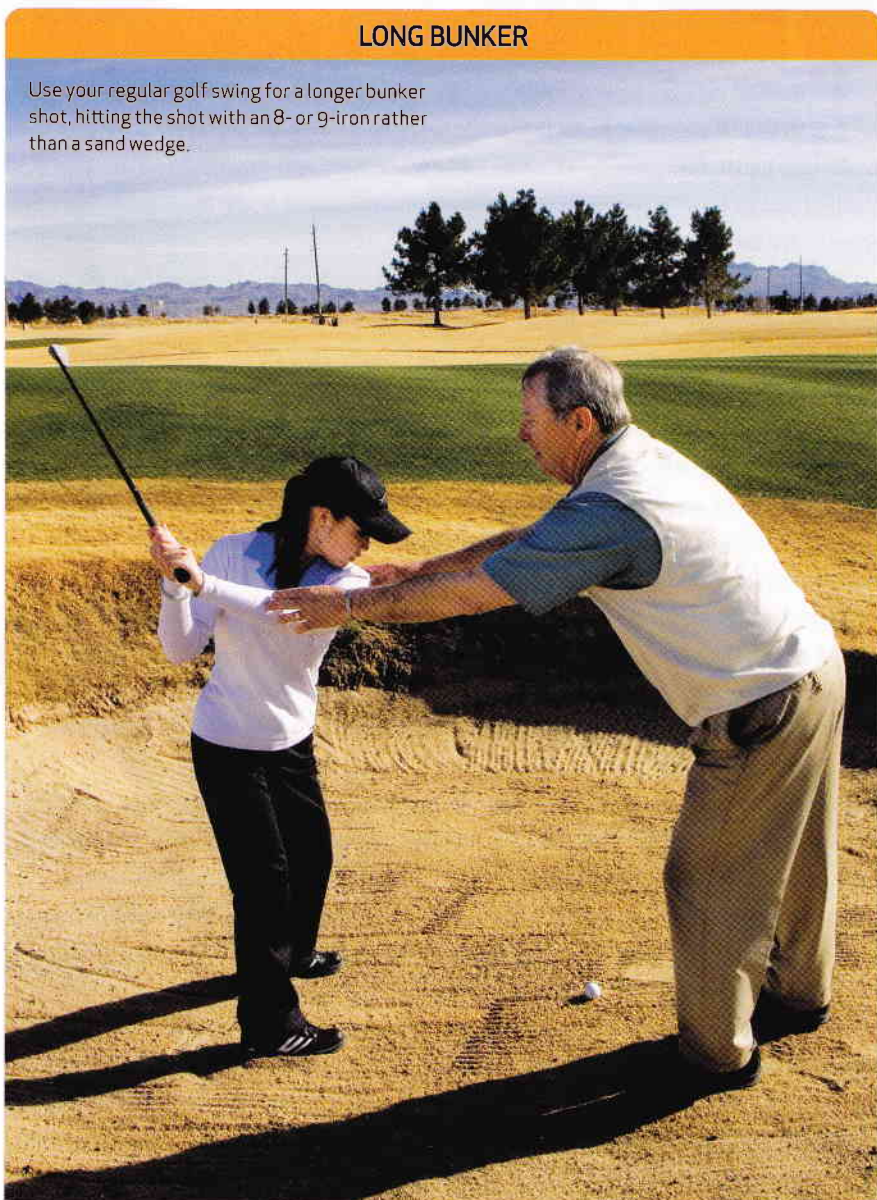
cleanly with a lofted club and also to get enough force with an explosion shot.

An 8- or 9-iron will help out here. Open the face only slightly and use your regular golf swing. The key is to swing 1/2-inch under the ball with a sweeping stroke, hitting the sand 2-3 inches behind the ball. In this case we have used all three elements to create a longer shot.

- A sweeping stroke.
- Less loft (an 8-iron has about 20 degrees less loft than a lob wedge).
- Swing harder; a normal golf swing is harder than the average bunker shot.

### LONG BUNKER

Use your regular golf swing for a longer bunker shot, hitting the shot with an 8- or 9-iron rather than a sand wedge.



**THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE** for practice when trying to improve your bunker shots, but understanding these keys will make your practice much more productive and your shots much more effective. **VE**



Don't automatically reach for that sand wedge when you're in a bunker.