

# THE NEW WAY TO HIT YOUR WEDGES

TOUR-TESTED  
AND PROVEN  
BY 40+ PROS!



First, the bad news: The technique you're using on chips and pitches is wrong. You were probably taught the "body-moves-the-club" method that seems sensible but often results in skulls, chunks and poor touch. The good news? A new, scientifically proven short-game system is sweeping the PGA Tour, and it's easy for you to learn. The Top 100 Teacher who discovered it (above left) shows you the new way to control shots from 40 yards and in, with help from his star pupil Nick Watney. Turn the page to join this short-game revolution and get up and down all day long! →

By David DeNunzio  
Photography by Angus Murray





Bo Van Pelt is the latest in a long line of Tour stars to seek out Sieckmann and unlock the new secrets to wedge play.

clubhead moves faster than the arms and hands in the transition” says Sieckmann. “And that revelation can be an eye-opener.”

Crane’s eyes were opened wide. One month after his session with Sieckmann, Crane won the 2010 Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines en route to setting a career high in season winnings with \$2.8 million. A week later, Sieckmann met with Brad Faxon, a famously deft chipper and putter. Even the eight-time Tour winner was wowed by Sieckmann’s insights. “He knows more about the short game than anyone I’ve ever met,” said Faxon.

Soon, Sieckmann’s stable of students grew to include Charley Hoffman, Nick Watney, Camilo Villegas, Kyle Stanley, I.K. Kim, Cameron Tringale, Jeff Overton, Bo Van Pelt and some 30 other touring professionals. “The floodgates opened for him after Ben,” says Titleist’s Rose.

Rose adds that three-dimensional computer mapping by the Titleist Performance Institute suggests that Sieckmann’s short-swing philosophy—“it’s a finesse sequence, not a power sequence”—is dead on (see graph, previous page). “We had data on hundreds

Says Sieckmann’s student Nick Watney, who went from 146th to 12th in Scrambling in just one season, “The most important thing I’ve learned is that the short-game swing is the direct opposite of the long game.”

of elite short swings, but didn’t fully understand it until I met James,” admits Rose.

Says Sieckmann’s star pupil, five-time Tour winner Nick Watney, “The most important thing I’ve learned from him is that the short-game swing is the direct opposite of the long game.” Indeed, Watney went from 146th in Scrambling in 2010 to 12th in 2011. “In full swings you want width and power, but with a wedge you want less width and more finesse, so the sequence has to change.”

For his part, Sieckmann now sees his years toiling away in Asia—hitting countless bags of numberless balls, all seemingly ending in failure—as a stroke of luck. “Because I did everything wrong,” he says, “I know what’s right.” ■

## 6 New Ways to Hit Wedge Shots

From chips to bunker shots to 40-yard pitches, here are James Sieckmann’s new rules for knocking down the flag with your short shots

**1** **OLD WAY** Your Body Moves the Club  
**NEW WAY** The Club Moves Your Body

Your short-game downswing isn’t an assertive strike propelled by your body. It’s little more than letting the clubhead fall back to the ball in a circle—letting gravity do the work—and then turning your chest to support the motion of the club. Your hips are mostly an afterthought. In fact, you shouldn’t turn them until the club gets back in front of your body. If your hips turn first, as they do on full swings, the club will drop under plane and the face will stay open [which causes those weak shots to the right]. In other words, swing with finesse, not power.

**2** **OLD WAY** Square Stance at Address  
**NEW WAY** Open Stance at Address

Set your back foot square to your target line and flare your front foot with your heels almost touching. Opening up like this with your chest pointing more toward the target moves the low point of your swing in front of the ball, freeing up the clubhead to produce crisper contact.

**3** **OLD WAY** Lean Left and Keep Your Head Still  
**NEW WAY** Let Energy Flow Toward the Target

Good wedge players don’t keep their head rock-steady. Video evidence proves that they move their head toward the target a few inches during the backswing in what’s essentially a reverse weight shift; then they either keep their head still or move it even farther forward in the downswing. This gets energy flowing toward the target—a must for solid contact.

**4** **OLD WAY** “Cut Across the Ball”  
**NEW WAY** Trace an On-Plane Swing Path

The most efficient way to deliver the club to the ball on a short shot is to swing the clubshaft and clubhead on the plane line established by the lie angle at address. [Check if you’re doing this by swinging next to a mirror and charting the clubhead’s path in your reflection.] A neutral swing doesn’t require manipulation if the club is delivered on plane.

**5** **OLD WAY** Swing Square-to-Square  
**NEW WAY** Rotate the Clubface

As you swing the club back on plane, let the clubface rotate open. An open clubface lets you release the club properly without fear of hitting the ball left. A released club produces a higher shot and allows you to use both the loft and bounce of the club to ensure better contact with the ball and ground.

**6** **OLD WAY** “Hold” Your Follow-Through  
**NEW WAY** Release the Clubhead

Despite what’s often taught, you shouldn’t “hold” on to your release by keeping your hands ahead of the clubhead past impact. Doing this requires tension, and tension destroys your rhythm and feel. In addition, it reduces the effective loft and bounce of the club, sharpening the leading edge so that it’s more likely to stick into the turf [hello, fat shots].



# How to Groove a Finesse Swing

Hit chips with one arm to feel the correct sequence of moves in your short-shot downswing



If you can hit solid chips using only your right arm, then you have the feel for the finesse sequence found in all great short swings.

CLUBHEAD GOES FIRST

FOLLOWED BY THE RIGHT ARM

SUPPORTED BY THE CHEST AND HIPS

The new way to hit wedge shots comes down to changing the sequence in your downswing so that the club moves faster than your arms in the transition, then learning how to support the movement of the club with your arms and chest. To do this, try hitting shots with only your right arm (or your left, if you're a southpaw). "I know it sounds simplistic," says Sieckmann, "but it's a powerful drill." Why? "Hitting solid shots this way automatically creates the correct sequence in your swing, without any thinking on your

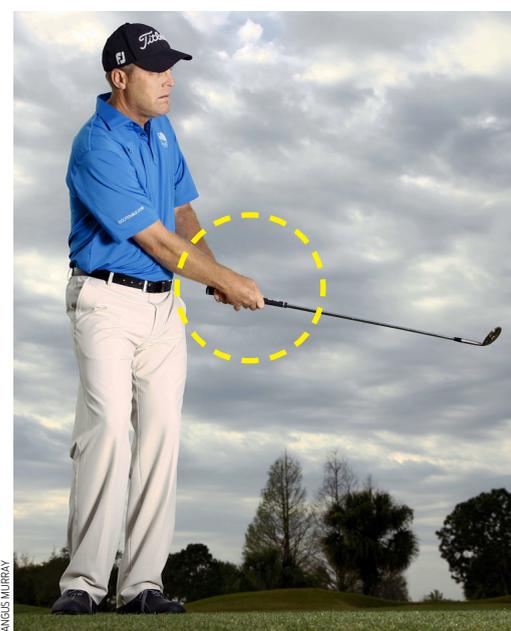
part." In other words, you must swing in the proper clubhead-leading-the-body motion or you'll hit fat or thin shots. As you perform this drill, focus on the following:

**1 Get the clubhead moving first.** The club accelerates first and fastest, followed by your arms, chest and, finally, your hips. [Yes, this sequence is the exact opposite of what you use in full swings.]

**2 Turn your chest through impact.** This supports the release of the club and ensures that you don't stop your arm swing at

impact. Continue to swing your right arm past your body and smoothly accelerate the clubhead past your hands. You'll know you did it correctly if, at the finish, the grip points at your belly and the face is slightly open.

**3 Place your left hand on the grip while holding your finish.** In order to fit your left hand on the handle, you'll have to fold your left elbow and cup your left wrist [look for wrinkles on the back of your left wrist]. These are key moves to correctly release the clubhead and optimize loft and bounce.



Add your left hand to the handle at the end of the drill for a more realistic feel of the proper swing and finish.

# Short and Sweet

Steal Nick Watney's greenside secrets in this frame-by-frame lesson

In a power swing, you want to generate as much speed as possible—loft and bounce are unimportant. "In a finesse swing," says Sieckmann, "you want to control speed and use loft and bounce as assets." There's a change in mechanics as well as a switch in

the way you mentally approach both swings. According to Sieckmann, the role of your lower body on short shots is to provide stability and balance. You don't use it to create power. Notice how Nick Watney, a Sieckmann student since 2010, initiates his downward movement

by moving the club first, before his body. Think of it as a gentle casting motion or, in our Top 100 Teacher's words, "letting gravity be your friend." You can see how Watney's hips don't really turn until after the club gets back in front of his body. "The feeling you're after," Sieckmann

says, "is to have soft and relaxed arms that swing the club past your lower body while your chest smoothly rotates toward the target at the same pace." If you hit your 5-iron this way, the ball would go nowhere. "Essentially," he says, "great wedge players are weak on purpose."



"My biggest mistake is getting too much of my long-game swing in my short-game swing. Only when I learned to swing narrow and steep with the right sequence did I learn that my short game could become a reliable scoring weapon." —Nick Watney

## FINESSE ON TOUR

James Sieckmann's Full-Time Tour Students

**Nick Watney**  
12th in Scrambling (2011)

**Bo Van Pelt**  
+57 spots in Proximity to Pin from 50-75 Yards since 2012

**Ben Crane**  
6th in Scrambling (2013)

**Charley Hoffman**  
+117 spots in Sand Saves since 2012

**Tom Pernice**  
1st in Putting, 11th in Sand Saves (2013 Champions Tour)

**Charlie Wi**  
3rd in Scrambling (2013)

**Jeff Overton**  
+81 spots in Scrambling since 2011

**Kevin Chappell**  
6th in Sand Saves (2013)

**I.K. Kim**  
17th in Sand Saves, 4th in Putting (2012 LPGA)

**Cameron Tringale**  
16th in Sand Saves (2013)

### Other Pro Students (past and present)

- Justin Rose
- Brad Faxon
- Tom Purtzer
- Alex Rocha
- David Toms
- Peter Jacobsen
- James Driscoll
- Juli Inkster
- Tim Herron
- Camilo Villegas
- Kyle Stanley
- Nicholas Thompson
- Lexi Thompson
- Skip Kendall
- Duffy Waldorf
- Chris Tidland
- Charlie Beljan
- Matt Harmon
- Jason Knutson
- Richard Lee
- Steve Lowery
- John Rollins
- Danielle Kang
- Candie Kung
- Frank Lickliter
- Grant Waite
- Joe Durant
- Bob Tway
- Kevin Stadler
- Scott McCarron
- Olin Browne
- D.J. Trahan
- Sang-Moon Bae
- Doug Barron
- Lee Porter

### DIGITAL BONUS

Learn more about James Sieckmann's six wedge secrets at [golf.com/instruction](http://golf.com/instruction) and in the tablet editions of *Golf Magazine*.