



Understanding Wedges for the New Golfer

BY NICOLE WELLER

For a new golfer, having 14 different clubs can be confusing with all the options. Most sports have 1 piece of equipment at a time like tennis, soccer, cricket and lacrosse, to name a few. Imagining a tennis player needing to get a different racquet for each different type of shot like a serve, lob shot, soft cut shot over the net, hard forehand from the baseline and so on. Keeping it simple for new golfers is good!

Way back there wasn't a limit on the number of clubs a golfer could have... in fact some caddies were lugging 26 clubs (or more!) in their players' bags like Lawson Little, who won back-to-back U.S. and British Amateur Championships in 1934-1935. In modern days, sets usually have a putter, several wedges, 9 iron, 8 iron, 7 iron (clubs were actually made of forged iron!), several hybrids, several fairway woods or fairway metals and a driver.

Wedges tend to be the higher lofted clubs in the set. Here are some ideas to help new golfers understand the Wedge World, as it can be confusing with how they're labeled... we chip with a pitching wedge and pitch with a sand wedge, how does THAT make sense?!?

The lofts on a club dictate how high the club can launch the ball into the air. Traditionally the 'Lob' Wedge has 60-64 degrees of loft, a 'Sand' Wedge 55-59 degrees of loft, a 'Gap' Wedge 50-54 degrees of loft and a 'Pitching' Wedge 45-49 degrees of loft, roughly. Companies have labeled the wedges but it's nice to see that manufacturers are putting the degrees on the clubs now instead of the labels like P, W, S, L, A, D, U... degrees are changing to lower lofts so instead of a pitching wedge being 46 degrees, some are now 39 degrees. Maybe they want us to think we're hitting them farther,

but essentially we're really hitting a former 8 iron... tricky marketing! Whatever the label is, find the right lofts that help your yardage. Most new golfers do better with just 5 clubs and then add from there as they learn how to use the clubs better and see more need for extra clubs and distances.

I actually call my S wedge not my Sand Wedge but my Stop Wedge, since I use it mostly out of the grass and other lies and not strictly out of the sand. I want that high lofted club to launch high and then stop on the green from all kinds of surfaces. The 'sand' wedge is not just for the sand.

FUN TIPS TO LEARN YOUR WEDGES:

- Pitching Wedge would be roughly your 10 Iron
- Gap Wedge (or Approach, Dual, Utility with other companies) would be roughly your 11 Iron

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