



Chipping CHALLENGE

Chipping is largely about feel but it is difficult to develop decent touch if your basic technique is at fault. Annie has natural ability but her shots around the green are proving a frustration. Here's how we sorted her out!

With: KATIE DAWKINS Photos: STEVE BARDENS

THE READER



Annie Blackburn only started playing golf six months ago but has shown she has the potential to become a very good player. She is still coming to terms with chipping, though, and struggles to get the ball airborne consistently.

THE TEACHER



Former county player and England international Katie Dawkins is a PGA professional at Hamptworth GCC. She runs the New Forest Girls Golf Academy at the club, which caters for all standards of player.

THE DIAGNOSIS

Annie has a problem that is common among beginners. She does not trust her club to lift the ball into the air and tries to do it herself. At address, she sets the ball well forward in her stance and places her hands back so she can try to scoop the ball off the surface.



Annie does not trust the loft of the club so "flicks" her wrists at impact to try and scoop the ball into the air. She has little control with this technique and will tend to hit fat and thin shots.



THE LESSON

At address, I'd like to see Annie have her hands further forward, with the ball back towards her right foot. Her weight should slightly favour her left side as well.



This new set up will, with practice, lead to a solid strike. At impact Annie should try to reproduce the address position of the hands and club and not break her wrists.



I worked on these three drills with Annie and they really made a difference. They are ideal for working towards a more consistent motion or sharpening an already decent chipping technique.

THE CURES

THE SPLINT DRILL

Wear a watch on your left wrist and place a tee-peg behind the strap (see inset). Hit some practice chips – if you try and scoop the ball the tee will dig into your wrist causing a small amount of discomfort! This drill encourages a firm wrist action – just what you need when chipping.



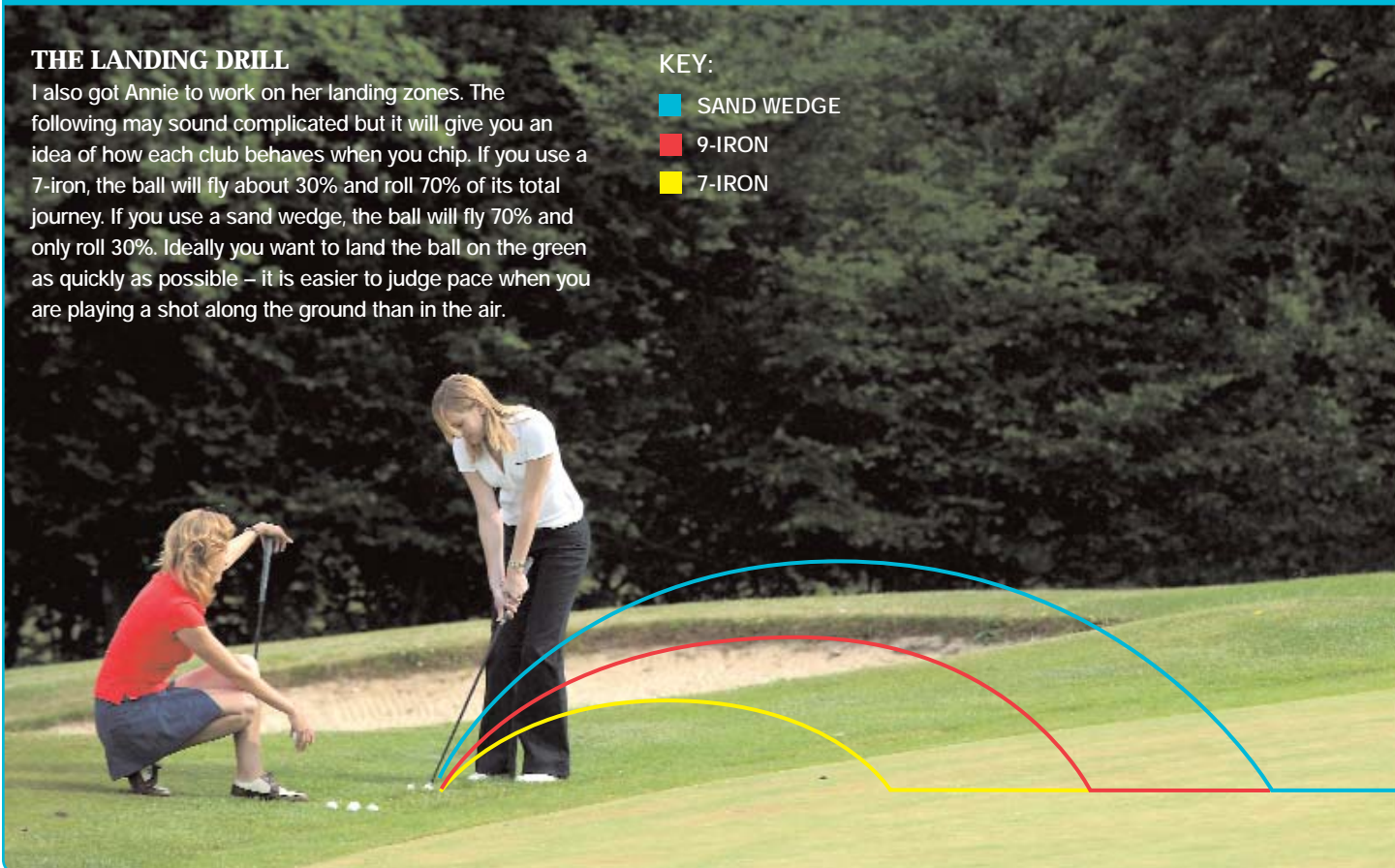
THE CURES

THE LANDING DRILL

I also got Annie to work on her landing zones. The following may sound complicated but it will give you an idea of how each club behaves when you chip. If you use a 7-iron, the ball will fly about 30% and roll 70% of its total journey. If you use a sand wedge, the ball will fly 70% and only roll 30%. Ideally you want to land the ball on the green as quickly as possible – it is easier to judge pace when you are playing a shot along the ground than in the air.

KEY:

- SAND WEDGE
- 9-IRON
- 7-IRON





THE UMBRELLA DRILL

You can do this drill practically anywhere. Stick an upturned umbrella in the ground and take 10 steps away from it. Try to chip balls into the umbrella. Keep going until you have managed five in a row – this is a great way to improve your consistency.



CURED!

Well, almost! When Annie makes practice strokes, she swings the club perfectly for the chip shot, as the picture shows. But as soon as she is over the ball, her hands start to scoop slightly. The good news is she can do it – all she needs to do now is convince herself!

