

Pure Pitches

Our real-golfer tests reveal the best drill for pitching



MIDDLE BALL DRILL
Hit the middle ball and miss the other two.



HIT THE TEE DRILL
Clip the tee in the ground after impact.



TEE IN GRIP DRILL
Point the tee along the target line as you swing back.

This month we report on a study of three drills designed to promote solid contact on pitch shots—the first step toward learning to pitch consistently.

First, we tested the Middle Ball Drill. In this exercise, golfers address a ball, then place another ball one inch outside the clubhead's toe, and a third ball one inch inside the heel. Then swing at the middle ball. The second drill was Hit the Tee: Participants stick a tee in the ground six inches in front of the ball and on the target line and try to clip it after impact. Finally, we tested the Tee in Grip Drill, in which golfers push a tee into the end of the grip and, as they swing the club up in the backswing, track the tee along the extended target line.

On the next page we reveal which of these drills is the best choice to help you start stiffening your pitches.

THE TEST*

Participating golfers were randomly assigned one of the three drills, with each group balanced for age, gender, handicap, and golf experience. After a brief warm-up, players underwent a pretest in which five shots to a target requiring a carry of 55 feet were measured. Then, each golfer used his assigned drill to make a practice swing and hit a single pitch shot to one of two targets, picked randomly, at 45 or 65 feet. This cycle was repeated 36 times.

A post-test was conducted using the same conditions as the pretest, excluding the warm-up shots.

*Conducted under the supervision of Dr. Bob Christina at the Pinehurst Company Golf Institute.

continued



IN MY OPINION

Most golfers don't pitch well because they move the club off its natural plane in the backswing—usually by pulling it too far inside—and then struggle to get it back in position for solid impact. The Tee in Grip Drill creates a visual reference that helps you keep the club on plane going back (right), which makes the downswing a simple retracing of the backswing.

The Hit the Tee Drill creates proper extension through impact, but doesn't correct a faulty swing plane. The Middle Ball Drill focuses on improving swing path, but, again, it doesn't pinpoint swing plane, which is the number-one determinant of how well you strike the ball on pitch shots.

THE RESULTS

If you're looking to improve your pitching contact, check out our winner—the Tee in Grip Drill. Participants who tested this drill averaged 149 inches (more than 12 feet) closer to the hole from pretest to post-test. This result was statistically significant. Furthermore, 84 percent of these participants reduced their average pitching error.

Finishing a close second was the Hit the Tee Drill, which produced an average improvement of

119 inches (almost 10 feet). This result also was statistically significant. Again, 84 percent of the participants improved.

Coming in third, the Middle Ball Drill yielded results that were not statistically significant (average of 41 inches closer). %

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