

**Chip, pitch, putt, and play bunkers like a pro —  
and shave strokes off your game!**

# **Golf's Short Game**

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**Michael Patrick Shiels**

*Golf writer*

**with Michael Kernicki**

*PGA golf professional*



***A Reference for the Rest of Us!®***

*Chip, pitch, putt, and play bunkers like a pro —  
and shave strokes off your game!*

# **Golf's Short Game**

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**Michael Patrick Shiels**  
*Golf writer*  
**with Michael Kernicki**  
*PGA golf professional*



***A Reference for the Rest of Us!®***

# ***Golf's Short Game For Dummies***

**by Michael Patrick  
Shiels with Michael  
Kernicki**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

## **Golf's Short Game For Dummies®**

Published by

**Wiley Publishing, Inc.**

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

Copyright © 2005 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.,  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 317-572-3447, fax 317-572-4355, e-mail: [brandreview@wiley.com](mailto:brandreview@wiley.com).



Trademarks: Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Dummies Daily, The Fun and Easy Way, Dummies.com and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

**LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY:** The publisher and the author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales or promotional materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every situation. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. The fact that an organization or Website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organization or

Website may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that Internet Websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Some of the exercises and dietary suggestions contained in this work may not be appropriate for all individuals, and readers should consult with a physician before commencing any exercise or dietary program.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit  
[www.wiley.com/techsupport](http://www.wiley.com/techsupport) .

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2005920298

ISBN: 0-7645-6920-1

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4

1B/RV/QV/QX/IN



# About the Authors

**Michael Patrick Shiels:** Michael Patrick Shiels displayed his woeful short game at courses around the world while maintaining his career as an international golf and travel writer. That is, until writing this book, during which his handicap improved five strokes.

*Golf's Short Game For Dummies* is his fifth book. The *Los Angeles Times* called his *Good Bounces & Bad Lies*, written with Emmy Award-winning golf announcer Ben Wright, "perhaps the best sports book ever," and a *Washington Times* review sardonically compared Shiels and Wright to Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Shiels' first book, a biography of famed Detroit radio host J.P. McCarthy, was a regional bestseller that received praise from Jack Nicklaus, Larry King, and Frank Sinatra, Jr. Shiels also penned *Works of Art: The Golf Course Designs of Arthur Hills*.

His travel articles have appeared in publications such as *Golf Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure Golf*, [www.pgatour.com](http://www.pgatour.com), *Sports Illustrated*, *Northwest World Traveler Magazine*, *Bermuda Royal Gazette*, and the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, and he's written scripts for The Golf Channel and ESPN. Shiels has traveled the world — from Thailand to the Middle East to his beloved ancestral Republic of Ireland in search of rich stories to tell. You can contact Michael at [Mshiels@aol.com](mailto:Mshiels@aol.com).

**Michael Kernicki:** A PGA member for over 25 years, Michael Kernicki has spent most of his career as a Head Golf Professional and General Manager at some of America's finest golf clubs. He was twice named Golf Professional of the Year by the Michigan PGA and has received other PGA awards. Kernicki has served as a member of the PGA of America National Board of Directors and on the Rules of Golf Committee, where he has administered the rules at 13 PGA Championships.

Noted for his knowledge of the golf swing, he has instructed at Teaching and Playing workshops around the country and has authored several articles about the golf swing and the short game.

Today Michael is the Head Golf Professional at one of the nation's most prominent country clubs, Indian Creek Country Club in Miami Beach, Florida. As a daily routine, Michael teaches the short game and the golf swing in the most simple and logical manner. His primary objective is for his students to enjoy the game while they improve and make golf a game for a lifetime.



# Dedication

**Michael Patrick Shiels:** To my eight-year-old son Harrison Ambrose Shiels, a giant-hearted little boy who, at the age of two, aced his first-ever hole of mini-golf at Pirate Golf on International Drive in Orlando.

**Michael Kernicki:** To my father, Walter Kernicki, for the tools you provided for golf and life.

# Authors'

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to Stacy Kennedy, the *For Dummies* acquisitions editor who envisioned the flight plan and got “Short Game” off the ground. Project editor Mike Baker was the architect with the shot clock, and copy editor Josh Dials put the finesse in our swings. Kennedy, Baker, and Dials are a “Wiley” bunch indeed! Photojournalist Ginny Dixon staged and shot the action at the famed Indian Creek County Club in Miami Beach, and you can see more of her work at [www.ginnydixonphotos.com](http://www.ginnydixonphotos.com). Finally, thanks to the legendary PGA professional Dick Stewart, who has long lorded over Kalamazoo Country Club, for serving as technical consultant.

# Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at [www.dummies.com/register/](http://www.dummies.com/register/) .

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

## **Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development**

**Project Editor:** Mike Baker

**Acquisitions Editor:** Stacy Kennedy

**Copy Editor:** Josh Dials

**Technical Reviewer:** Dick Stewart

**Senior Permissions Editor:** Carmen Krikorian

**Senior Editorial Manager:** Jennifer Ehrlich

**Editorial Assistants:** Hanna Scott, Nadine Bell

**Cover Photos:** ©David Madison/ Getty Images/Stone

**Cartoons:** Rich Tennant ( [www.the5thwave.com](http://www.the5thwave.com) )

**Composition Services**

**Project Coordinator:** Emily Wichlinski

**Layout and Graphics:** Barry Offringa, Jacque Roth,  
Heather Ryan, Amanda Spagnuolo

**Special Art:** Ginny Dixon

**Proofreaders:** Leeann Harney, Jessica Kramer, Carl  
Pierce, TECHBOOKS Production Services

**Indexer:** Aptara

## **Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies**

**Diane Graves Steele**, Vice President and Publisher,  
Consumer Dummies

**Joyce Pepple**, Acquisitions Director, Consumer  
Dummies

**Kristin A. Cocks**, Product Development Director,  
Consumer Dummies

**Michael Spring**, Vice President and Publisher, Travel

**Brice Gosnell**, Associate Publisher, Travel

**Kelly Regan**, Editorial Director, Travel

## **Publishing for Technology Dummies**

**Andy Cummings**, Vice President and Publisher,  
Dummies Technology/General User



## **Composition Services**

**Gerry Fahey**, Vice President of Production Services

**Debbie Stailey**, Director of Composition Services

# Contents

## [Title](#)

## [Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[What You're Not to Read](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

## [Part I : Walking the Short Game](#)

## [Chapter 1: Sharpening Your Approach](#)

[Approaching the Short Game Statistically](#)

[Approaching the Short Game Athletically](#)

[Giving Yourself the Best Shot](#)

[Making Practice a Priority](#)

[Avoiding Common Misfires](#)

## [Chapter 2: Discerning the Short Game Certainties](#)

[Recognizing the Peril and the Opportunity](#)

[Viewing the Variables: Terrain and Conditions](#)

[Understanding Your Options](#)

[Weighing Your Goals and Expectations](#)

[Playing in the Subconscious](#)

[Zeroing In On the Target Line](#)

[Grasping the Importance of Feel](#)

[Obeying the Captain: Allowing Your Front Hand to Lead](#)

[Centering on Ball Position](#)

## [Chapter 3: Gearing Up for the Short Game](#)

[Going Short-Game Clubbing](#)

[Sorting Through the Short Sticks](#)

[Calling All Putters Great and Small](#)

[Finding the Putter That Fits You](#)

[Caring for Your Putter](#)

## [Part II : The Long and Short of It: Short Game Technique](#)

## [Chapter 4: Chipping Off the Ol' Block](#)

[Discovering the Chip](#)

[Choosing the Chip over the Putt](#)

[Picking Your Chipping Tool](#)

[Chipping Goals and Expectations](#)

[Mapping Out a Chip-Shot Strategy](#)

[Hitting a Chip Shot](#)

[Too Close for Comfort: Paul Runyan's Greenside Chip Trick](#)

## [Chapter 5: Pitch, Pitch, Pitch](#)

[Distinguishing the Pitch Shot](#)

[Covering Distance and Avoiding Hazards](#)

[Pitching Club Preference](#)

[Pitching Goals and Expectations](#)

[Planning Your Pitch-Shot Strategy](#)

[Hitting a Pitch Shot](#)

[Pitching a Fit over Additional Complications](#)

## [Chapter 6: Climbing Bunker Hill](#)

[Setting Your Bunker Goals and Expectations](#)

[Avoiding an Explosion](#)

[Hitting a Bunker Shot](#)

[Executing Bunker Shots from Troubled Lies](#)

## [Chapter 7: Putting Your Best Foot Forward](#)

[Tossing Your Putting Prejudice Aside](#)

[Recognizing the Importance of Putting Skills](#)

[Putting Goals and Expectations](#)

[Rolling with the Fundamentals](#)

[Reading the Break of the Greens](#)

## [Part III : Short Game Strategies](#)

### [Chapter 8: Waging \(and Wedging\) a Ground Campaign](#)

[Gaining an Advantage by Keeping the Ball Low](#)

[Pitching and Running](#)

[Discovering the Famed Texas Wedge](#)

[Holding the Green](#)



[Pulling the Pin . . . or Leaving It In?](#)

## [Chapter 9: Selecting Putting Strategies and Remedies](#)

[Becoming a Great Putter](#)

[Settling on a Style](#)

[Watching Your Speed](#)

[Conquering Speedy Breaks](#)

[Defeating the Yips and Other Putting Maladies](#)

## [Chapter 10: Taking an Unconventional Approach](#)

[Chipping with a 3-Wood](#)

[Putting from Bunkers](#)

[Putting without a Putter](#)

[Playing from a Cart Path](#)

[Bellying the Wedge](#)

[Splishing After You Splash](#)

[Hitting Lefty \(or Righty\)](#)

[Rehearsing the Unconventional](#)

## [Chapter 11: Flipping to Flop](#)

[Focusing On the Flop Shot](#)

[Choosing to Hit a Flop Shot](#)

[Playing a Flop Shot](#)

[Deciding Against the Flop Shot](#)

## [Chapter 12: Keeping Your Head in the Game](#)

[Regrouping When the Wheels Come Off](#)

[Weathering the Heat of the Moment](#)

[Practicing Visualization](#)

[Staying Positive with Self Talk](#)

[Dispelling the Clouds of Doubt](#)

[Pacing Your Swing with a Phrase](#)

## [Part IV : Short Cuts to the Short Game](#)

### [Chapter 13: Warming Up to the Short Game](#)

[Limbering Up Before You Play or Practice](#)

[Practicing Like You Play](#)

[Preparing before a Round](#)

### [Chapter 14: The Games People Play](#)

[Pitching for Dollars](#)

[“Horse-ing” Around](#)

[Bingo, Bango, Bongo \(Jingles\)](#)

[Snake](#)

[Eight in a Row](#)

[First to Make Five](#)

### [Chapter 15: Tricks and Treats: Techniques and Tools to Improve Your Game](#)

[Riding the Range](#)

[Practicing in the Sand and on the Green](#)

[Improving at Home](#)

## Chapter 16: Learning from the Stars

Feeling like Seve Ballesteros

Escaping (Not Sleeping in) Bunkers like Gary Player

Living Hard and Playing Soft like John Daly

Scrambling like Lee Trevino

Putting like Ben Crenshaw

Finishing like Annika Sorenstam

Yipping like Johnny Miller

## Part V : The Part of Tens

### Chapter 17: Ten Simple Secrets of Short-Shot Success

Play in the Subconscious

Be Aware of the Clubface

Swing Along the Target Line

Maintain Consistent Speed

Salute the Lead Hand as the Captain

Let the Ball Get in the Way

Follow Through

Keep Realistic Expectations

Roll the Ball on the Ground

Recognize that Every Putt is Straight

### Chapter 18: Ten Ways You Can Practice Off the Course

Putt on Your Carpet

[Watch Golf on Television](#)

[Get Attached to Your Wedge](#)

[Chip into the Drapes](#)

[Bulk Up](#)

[Visualize Good Shots](#)

[Review Your Scorecard](#)

[Clean Up Your Act](#)

[Play Other Sports and Games](#)

[Read This Book When Necessary](#)

## [Chapter 19: Ten of the Greatest Short Shots Ever](#)

[Tway at the PGA](#)

[Mize at the Masters](#)

[Hail Hale!](#)

[Rocca Rocks the British Open](#)

[The Million-Dollar Ace](#)

[Watson Plunders Pebble](#)

[Leonard Lets Loose](#)

[Lanny Lands the Cup](#)

[One Small Shot for Mankind](#)

[Payne's Putts at Pinehurst](#)

## [Chapter 20: Ten Great Short Game Golf Courses](#)

[The Old Course at St. Andrews: Fife, Scotland](#)

[Pinehurst #2: Pinehurst, North Carolina](#)

[Stadium Course, TPC at Sawgrass: Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida](#)

[Ballybunion Old Course: County Kerry, Ireland](#)



[Threetops at Treetops Resort: Gaylord, Michigan](#)

[Strategic Fox, Fox Hills Golf Club: Plymouth, Michigan](#)

[Indian Creek Country Club: Miami Beach, Florida](#)

[The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf Resort: Charleston, South Carolina](#)

[Augusta National Golf Club: Augusta, Georgia](#)

[Club de Golf Valderrama: San Roque, Cadiz, Spain](#)

# Introduction

If we mention the term *professional golfer* to you, what image immediately comes to mind? Most likely you envision Tiger Woods taking a vicious swipe at the ball or Greg Norman bravely sweeping through the ball with his blonde locks flowing out from under his hat. You probably think of strong Tour players hitting big, booming drives that soar through the sky like guided missiles.

But even professional, tournament golf has an old and trusty adage: “You drive for show, but you putt for dough.” Often you hear a player who wins a tournament say, “I won because the putts just started falling for me this week.” No player ever won a tournament by hitting the ball the farthest from the tee. Players win tournaments at the opposite end of the hole — by hitting the ball close to the flagstick and making putts.

Take it from the pros: You can win more of your amateur tournaments and friendly matches by hitting the ball closer to the hole and giving yourself better chances to make putts. And you can improve your enjoyment of the game by improving your performance. An improved performance results in lower scores. And you can most immediately improve your performance and your scores by improving your short game.

Although most average players place a great deal of emphasis on how long a player can hit a golf ball, you use the driver from the tee only 14 times per round on a golf course. By contrast, you use your putter and short irons for as many as 50 percent of the total strokes. Players who strive to break 90 have a much better chance of realizing their goal if they come to the realization that they can save many, many more strokes by improving their short games instead of placing so much emphasis on the long ball. Chicks may dig the long ball, but as any dummy can tell . . .

*The secret of golf satisfaction is in the short game.*

## About This Book

Every player likes to bang the ball with a driver, just like the kid at the carnival who tries to hit the bell with the sledgehammer. But standing at the driving range and belting pills gets you one thing — blisters.

Tiger Woods and John Daly may slug majestic, rising drives over 300 yards, but the average player has trouble equaling that kind of prowess. For most of us, the short game is the great equalizer. Something that we can do as well as the pros. For all their power, long hitting players like Woods wouldn't be as successful without equally impressive short-game skills — skills that average players can, indeed, acquire. You've likely heard Woods being tagged with the best-short-game-on-the-planet

label, and if you've watched Daly, you've listened to announcers marvel at his touch around the greens. That part of their games you can emulate and even equal!

Convincing people to spend time at the practice green rather than the driving range is a tall order, but a spoonful of sugar can help the medicine go down, and we've written *Golf's Short Game For Dummies* to serve as an invigorating elixir for players seeking to improve their golf games.

Because many instructional books are as boring as the thought of practice itself, we wrote this book to entertain and excite you about developing and showing off your short game. Soon after you open the book and hit the practice facility, you can start winning bets and impressing your opponents.

This book details not only the specific types of shots and how to execute them but also relives stories of some of the greatest short game shots ever hit and shows you what you can learn from golf's biggest stars.

You find drills, tips, secrets, visualizations, and bits of advice that you can use immediately and that inspire you to go back to *Golf's Short Game For Dummies* time and time again for refreshers.

# Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate through this book, we use the following conventions:

- ✓ We use *Italic* for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that we define in the text.
- ✓ We use **Boldfaced** text to indicate keywords in bulleted lists or the action part of numbered steps.
- ✓ We use Monofont for Web addresses.

## What You're Not to Read

We dedicate most of *Golf's Short Game For Dummies* to improving your play by improving your short game. We put some of the other historical asides and stories in sidebars throughout the book. You don't have to read these asides to understand the text, but you certainly can: Reading them may inspire you or provide you with some vivid examples to help your visualization.

## Foolish Assumptions

If you're reading this book, we assume you have more than a passing interest in golf and more than a little desire to refine your game and improve your scores. You

probably have your own golf clubs and know the difference between a 9-iron and a 4-wood. You know what your favorite golf courses are and can recognize a tough hole or an easy green. You like to go out and play with some friends, and you want to get a competitive edge over them. You likely understand enough golf lingo to be able to handle any of the terms we use in this book.

If you're a true beginner, we can surely help you develop your short game. But you should also consider picking up *Golf For Dummies* (Wiley), written by Champions Tour player and CBS Television golf announcer Gary McCord. His text can familiarize you with the game and help if you're having trouble with golf shots outside of the short game.

# How This Book Is Organized

We organize *Golf's Short Game For Dummies* so that you can look through the table of contents and immediately find the help or instruction you need to hit a specific type of shot. If you have trouble with bunker shots, you can flip directly to the bunker shot chapter and read all about the technique and execution needed to play effectively from the sand. We lay out the basic nuts and bolts for you in plain “golf speak” (admittedly, a variation of English!).

You can also delve into discussions on equipment, strategy, unconventional shots, drills, practice techniques, and philosophies about the short game by turning to other chapters of the book. We have chapters that tell you which golf stars to emulate and what golf courses are best to test your short game on! You can even read about how to stretch and limber up properly before any round of golf or practice session.

# Part I: Walking the Short Game

Part I of *Golf's Short Game For Dummies* is all about reintroducing you to the short game. We show you that it doesn't have to be all that complicated. With some practice, you can begin knocking strokes off your score in no time by avoiding some common mistakes we all make. We also present a new way of thinking about the short game — broken down into two parts: fundamentals and preferences. We conclude Part I by dumping out that bag and taking a closer look at the golf clubs you use for short shots. The short game relies on fundamentals and preferences, and you have plenty of options in terms of clubs and equipment.



## **Part II: The Long and Short of It: Short Game Technique**

In this part, we present the technique and execution of the fundamentals of approach shots via the short game: chipping, pitching, bunker shots, and putting. This part spells out the basics and gives you the fundamental techniques you need to improve your short game. The good news is an effective short game isn't as tough to achieve as you may think. This part shows you why.

## **Part III: Short Game Strategies**

Part III reveals the strategies behind the fundamentals of chipping, pitching, bunker play, and putting and also gives you fixes if your game has gone astray. What should you be thinking when faced with a certain shot? Can you use a more effective variation of the shot? How can you putt more efficiently and take your green game to the next level? Should you hit the ball high or keep it low? What can choking down on a golf club do for you? How can you shape the shot and affect its outcome? What are some unconventional short-game shots you may encounter or unconventional techniques you may want to work into your repertoire? We have the answers. Also, you can meet the infamous flop shot and receive a host of tips and tricks for getting your mind right and your head in the game.