

# Golf Insider

## Exemptions ease money list worries

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GAME

### Bermuda grass is no vacation

By T.J. TOMASI  
Universal Press Syndicate

Bermuda grass is famous for "eating up" clubhead speed, which is why the vast majority of pitches and chips from Bermuda roughs fall woefully short of target. It gives new meaning to the phrase "short game."

Bermuda is a very difficult grass to pitch out of because it grows straight up, and the ball can either sink to the bottom, stay on top of the grass or settle somewhere in between. The player is forced to adjust the stroke, depending on which situation is in play.

To combat this, always take a practice swing or two in grass of a similar texture near the ball to figure out how hard to swing.

In the first photo below, Futures Tour player Jee Hee "Pony" Lee uses her left arm to judge the length of her backswing. For this shot it points to about 8:30 on the clock. When the ball lies at the bottom of the grass, it will require a much harder swing to cut a path to the ball. In that case, Pony would probably swing her guide arm (her left) back to 10:30 to provide enough force to pop the ball out.

Whatever distance her guide arm swings back to, she must take care to match that distance on the follow-through in order to preserve her acceleration through impact.

Otherwise, Pony will fall prey to the dreaded "decoll shot," where the ball falls well short of target.

The opposite lie, where the ball sits on top of the grass, looks easy, but it isn't — in fact, it's one of the hardest shots in golf. You should use your sand wedge for maximum loft, but since it has a large flange on the bottom, it flattens out the grass behind the ball as you approach impact. This can cause the ball to ride up the face of the club too much and — you guessed it — the ball falls well short of target.

To prevent this, hover the club over the ball instead of soiling it behind the ball as you normally would, then make sure your swing is a bit flatter (more around) than usual.



Jee Hee "Pony" Lee judges the length of her backswing with her left arm — about 8:30 on the clock here. She figures out how hard to hit the ball by eyeballing the distance of the pitch and evaluating her lie.



Note here how low Pony's clubhead stays through impact — no trying to lift the ball in the air with this swing. And the back of her left hand is firm with the left arm and shaft in a perfect straight line, indicating that her core is moving the clubhead rather than her hands.

### THE GOLF DOCTOR

#### Low hands in high grass

When your ball is buried in the grass, your clubhead should rest on its heel, with the toe of the club off the ground. By setting the club on the heel, the bounce of the club is increased along with the potential hitting surface. This increased surface area helps your clubhead plow through the grass, giving you the best chance to make solid contact.

When you stand farther from the ball to do this, your hands hang lower, presenting your wrists and creating a steeper angle of attack so that the grass behind the ball has less effect on the shot. Also, by lowering your hands, your shoulders tilt more as they swing, producing a more upright backswing that adds to the cutting action

By CRAIG DOLCH  
Cox News Service

#### West Palm Beach, Fla.

Question: What do Nick Price, David Duval, John Daly, Mark Calcavecchia, Paul Azinger, Mark Brooks, Steve Elkington, Larry Mize, Lee Janzen, Steve Jones and Bernhard Langer all have in common?

Obvious answer: They're former major champions on the PGA Tour.

More appropriate answer: They're all outside the top 125 on this year's money list. And with just two full-field events remaining, that's not a great place to be. But it's not the worst place, either.

Even though it's becoming harder to finish in the top 125 because more international players are competing on the PGA Tour, being outside the top 125 isn't as scary as it used to be for these veterans because there are other ways to get into future events.

Daly (152nd on the money list) is so unconcerned about his status, he didn't even enter the Funai Classic at Disney World or this week's Chrysler Championship.

You can blame his absence either on a hand injury, a season in which he's posted only one top-25 finish or general indifference (he's already said he won't go back to the PGA Tour's Qualifying Tournament).

"It's just been one of those years where nothing has gone right," Daly said.

But Daly has a safety net. Since he has won a PGA Tour event (he's won five, including two majors), he's considered a Tour mem-

ber and can receive as many sponsor's exemptions as he wants. With his popularity Daly figures to get more than enough exemptions to fill out his schedule, and he's also free to take appearance fees by playing overseas.

Calcavecchia (128th) doesn't have to worry about next year's status because his victory in last summer's Canadian Open carries a two-year exemption. The only drawback is he's not currently exempt for The Players Championship.

Duval's five-year exemption for winning the 2001 British Open expires this season, but he can take a one-time exemption for being in the top 25 on the tour's career money list (he's 24th with \$16.6 million).

Because he's guaranteed of finishing in the top 25, he'll be eligible to take a future exemption for being in the top 50 in career earnings.

Price also can take a one-time exemption for being in the top 25, but he turns 50 on Jan. 28 and will play some on the Champions Tour as he continues to cut back on his playing schedule. Bob Tway (175th) also can use his top-50 exemption to keep playing a full schedule next year.

Azinger (122nd), Janzen (147th) and Mark O'Meara (197th) used their top-50 career money status to keep playing this year, so they don't have that option again. O'Meara won't need to — he turns 50 on Jan. 13.

Langer (145th) also turns 50 next year, but not until Aug. 27. That explains why he's played the last five weeks.



BEN GRAY / Cox News Service

Although he's outside the top 125 on this year's money list, John Daly, shown above during the 2006 Masters, can fill out his golf schedule through exemptions.

## Lehman puts focus back on his game

STAN AWTREY  
Cox News Service

#### Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

It's been weeks since Tom Lehman walked away from The K Club, a plot of soggy Irish soil soaked by rainfall and the celebratory champagne sprayed by the victorious European Ryder Cup team.

With his U.S. Ryder Cup captaincy behind him, Lehman is ready to resume his most successful season as a player on the PGA Tour since 2001.

"It's been a very hectic last couple of months," Lehman said last weekend during the Funai Classic. "It's nice to be out here playing again."

Lehman has won \$1.681 million



LEHMAN

on tour this year, ranking 40th. He'd like to qualify for the Tour Championship next month. He has not participated in the season-ending event since

2001, when he won \$1.9 million and ranked 20th on the money list. Looking rested and relaxed, he acknowledged that the adjustment from Capt. Lehman to citizen Lehman wasn't easy to make, not that he believed it would be easy to walk away from an event that consumed him for two years. He took two weeks off after the Ryder Cup before deeming himself ready to

return to competition. And he has purposely kept a low profile since the Ryder Cup.

"It took a couple of weeks to get everything all sorted out," Lehman said. "Get back home, get reorganized, that sort of thing."

"It definitely took a little while. You put so much into it for so long, it's not like you can just turn it on and off and move on. It took a little bit of an adjustment."

Lehman's game has been good this year. He lost to Dean Wilson in a playoff at the International and nearly played his way onto the Ryder Cup team. He still drives well and is among the top one-third in greens in regulation.

"Now I've got to get ready to play and work on my own game," he said.

## PGA Tour aligns with NASCAR

RICK MINTER  
Cox News Service

Atlanta  
Golfer Davis Love III took a few fast laps around Atlanta Motor Speedway with Denny Hamlin earlier this month, and the

PGA Tour jumped on the NASCAR bandwagon by announcing that Hamlin's No. 11 Chevy will carry a FedEx Cup logo during Sunday's Bass Pro Shops 500.

Love, who first rode with Hamlin in 2005, likened the PGA's new four-tournament playoff format, which begins next year, to NASCAR's Chase for the Nextel Cup.

In both, points are earned by competitors during the regular season, then the points are reset for the play-

offs. In NASCAR, the Chase begins after the first 26 races of the season and is run during the final 10 events. On the PGA Tour, the FedEx Cup begins after the first 36 tournaments and is

played over four events, ending with the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

Love, a longtime NASCAR fan and friend of driver Kyle Petty, said he believes golf fans will learn to like the new format.

"We'll have our playoffs, we'll have our Chase for the Cup, and it'll be an exciting finish," Love said.

Love also gave Hamlin a few golf tips. Hamlin said he's not about to try to switch sports. "I'm going to stick with what I know how to do," he said.



Cox News Service

Davis Love III hits some balls at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

### SCHEDULE

All Times Eastern

**PGA TOUR**  
Chrysler Championship  
• Site: Palm Harbor, Fla.  
• Schedule: Thursday-Sunday  
• Course: Westin Innisbrook Resort, Copperhead Course (7,340 yards, par 71).  
• Purse: \$5.3 million. Winner's share: \$854,000.  
• TV: USA (Thursday-Friday, 4-6 p.m., Saturday, 3-6) and ABC (Sunday, 2-5 p.m.).

**CHAMPIONS TOUR**  
Charles Schwab Cup Championship  
• Site: Sonoma, Calif.  
• Schedule: Thursday-Sunday  
• Course: Sonoma Golf Club (7,111 yards, par 72).  
• Purse: \$2.5 million. Winner's share: \$440,000.  
• TV: The Golf Channel (Thursday-Sunday, 5-7:30 p.m., 9-11 p.m.).

**LPGA TOUR**  
Kolon-Hana Bank Championship  
• Site: Kyungju, South Korea.  
• Schedule: Friday-Sunday  
• Course: Mauna Ocean Golf & Resort (6,381 yards, par 72).  
• Purse: \$1.35 million.  
Winner's share: \$202,500.  
• TV: None.

**NATIONWIDE TOUR**  
Micosukee Championship  
• Site: Miami  
• Schedule: Thursday-Sunday  
• Course: Micosukee Golf and Country Club (7,200 yards, par 71).  
• Purse: \$500,000. Winner's share: \$90,000.  
• TV: The Golf Channel (Thursday, 1:30-4 p.m.; Friday, 1:30-3 a.m., 1:30-4 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 1:230 a.m., 1:30-4 p.m.; Monday, 1:230 a.m.).

**PGA EUROPEAN TOUR**  
Volvo Masters  
• Site: Sotogrande, Spain.  
• Schedule: Thursday-Sunday  
• Course: Valderrama Golf Club (6,952 yards, par 71).  
• Purse: \$5.01 million.  
Winner's share: \$835,200.  
• TV: The Golf Channel (Thursday-Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon; Sunday, 8-11 a.m.).

### LEADERS

WORLD RANKINGS	
1. Tiger Woods	22.30
2. Jim Furyk	8.66
3. Phil Mickelson	8.26
4. Adam Scott	7.20
5. Vijay Singh	6.65
6. Retief Goosen	6.38
7. Ernie Els	6.04
8. Luke Donald	5.63
9. Sergio Garcia	5.56
10. Geoff Ogilvy	5.45

MONEY LEADERS PGA TOUR	
1. Tiger Woods	\$9,941,563
2. Jim Furyk	\$6,483,316
3. Vijay Singh	\$4,325,406
4. Phil Mickelson	\$4,256,505
5. Geoff Ogilvy	\$4,228,869
6. Adam Scott	\$3,808,958
7. T. Immelman	\$3,562,548
8. Stuart Appleby	\$3,258,242
9. Luke Donald	\$2,911,408
10. David Toms	\$2,764,287

LPGA TOUR	
1. Lorena Ochoa	\$2,342,872
2. A. Sorenstam	\$1,906,126
3. Karrie Webb	\$1,889,613
4. Cristie Kerr	\$1,539,366
5. Mi Hyun Kim	\$1,290,910

CHAMPIONS TOUR	
1. Jay Haas	\$2,315,227
2. Loren Roberts	\$2,207,395
3. Brad Bryant	\$1,655,292
4. Gil Morgan	\$1,482,050
5. Tom Kite	\$1,389,348

of the swing, just what you need to carve your ball out of the grass.

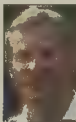
When your club is on its heel, be sure to position the ball in the middle of the club face to avoid any possibility of catching it on the neck of the club (aka shank).

There are two additional adjustments in deep grass:

(1) Since deep grass tends to grab the neck of your club, it can twist your clubface into a closed position at impact. This causes a pulled shot left of target, so aim to the right (left for lefties) to compensate for the pull.

(2) And of course, because of the resistance of the grass, you have to swing harder than you normally would with a firmer grip pressure that helps you retain control of your club.

— T.J. Tomasi



Dr. T.J. Tomasi

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### ASK THE PRO

Q: I took up the game two months ago and don't know much about the water and sand that I always seem to be in. What do I need to know? — Dora B., from the Web

A: Dora your question is about "hazards," which include permanent water areas such as ponds, brooks and ditches, whether filled or dry, and the exposed sand or soil in a bunker.

Water: The boundaries of regular water hazards are defined by yellow stakes. When your ball is in a water hazard, you have three options: (1) play it as it lies, (2) take a one-stroke penalty and drop a ball behind the hazard in line with the hole and the point at which the ball last crossed the margin of the hazard, (3) take a one-stroke penalty and replay the shot from where your original ball was hit. If it was from the tee, you may re-tee.

Lateral water hazards are defined by red stakes.

Generally, a lateral hazard runs parallel to the line of the hole. In a lateral hazard, you may choose any of the options for a regular water hazard plus two additional: You may drop a ball within two club lengths of the point where the ball last crossed the line of the hazard, or drop a ball within two club lengths on the opposite margin of the hazard at a point that is equidistant from the hole.

Bunkers: Sand bunkers are also considered hazards, and you must play the ball as it lies in the bunker without touching your club to the sand when you address the ball.

In fact, when your ball lies in any hazard, you can't touch the ground (sand or water) with the club until you are making a forward swing.