

# WEDGE IT CLOSE!



**ONE OF THE  
EUROPEAN  
TOUR'S  
SHARPEST  
PITCHERS  
SHOWS  
YOU HOW  
TO BECOME  
DEADLY IN THE  
SCORING ZONE.**

**BY SØREN KJELDSSEN**  
WITH **ROBBIE GREENFIELD**

“Ask yourself this question and be honest: when was the last time you focused solely on your wedge play during a practice session? For the majority of amateurs, this is the most neglected part of the game, more so than chipping, putting and even bunker play. For tour pros, and me especially, it’s an area that we spend a lot of time focusing on. I’m not a long hitter, so it’s even more important that my wedge game from 100 yards and in is razor sharp, because I’m not getting up in two on a lot of the par 5s. I’ve made wedge play the No.1 strength of my game and the best advice I can give you is that you should try to do the same. Think of how many shots you have in a round from between 30-100 yards. If you sharpened that department of your game up your handicap would tumble dramatically, and over the following pages I’ll show you how.”

# SØREN'S WEDGE PLAY PHILOSOPHY

**I** think wedge play tends to confuse a lot of people because it's not really short game or long game, it's somewhere in between. Most of the amateurs I play with would rather have a full shot from 120 yards than an awkward 50-yard pitch, but by sticking to a few basic principles you can turn your pitching into a strength, rather than a weakness.

A lot of teachers will tell you to use a clockface method when it comes to distance control but that just doesn't work for me. I pitch by feel and speed. I've never liked the idea of varying the length of my swing because no shot in golf is the same. You have to feel and see the shot. There are so many different ways of playing a 60-yard pitch. You could hit it in low, get it to skip forward and stop. Or you could throw it up in the air and spin it back.



## Fundamental Keys for Wedge Play

Forget everything you've ever learned about pitching and remember this one point because it really is the key to accurate wedge play – You MUST work the bounce of the club properly and release the clubhead through the shot. If you watch the guys on tour, you'll notice that they barely take a divot when they pitch. Steve Stricker is a fantastic example of this. Check out the sequence above and you'll see what I mean – this is a 40 yard pitch shot. As you can see I have not taken a divot here.

Your No.1 aim when practicing should be to 'bounce' the sole of the club off the ground. The worst thing you can do is dig or drive the leading edge into the turf, producing a big divot. If you trap the ball with your hands and deloft the club, you have zero margin for error. My method increases that margin exponentially.



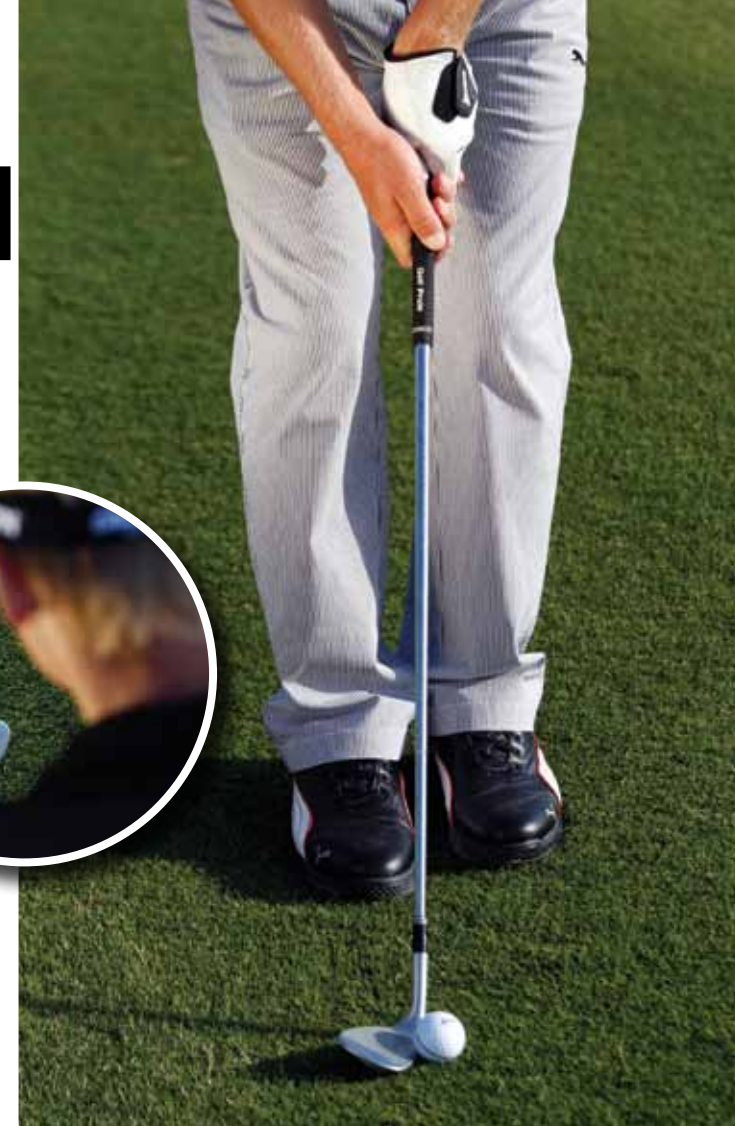
## Set-up: Narrow stance, soft hands

You need a very soft feeling in the hands to pitch the ball well, so your grip pressure should be light. With pitching, the weight of the clubhead should dictate rhythm, rather than creating speed through hand and arm movement. I always set up with a very narrow stance when I'm pitching. I don't vary it depending on the yardage. If I'm closer than 100 yards, I'll be standing with my feet close together.

## Technique

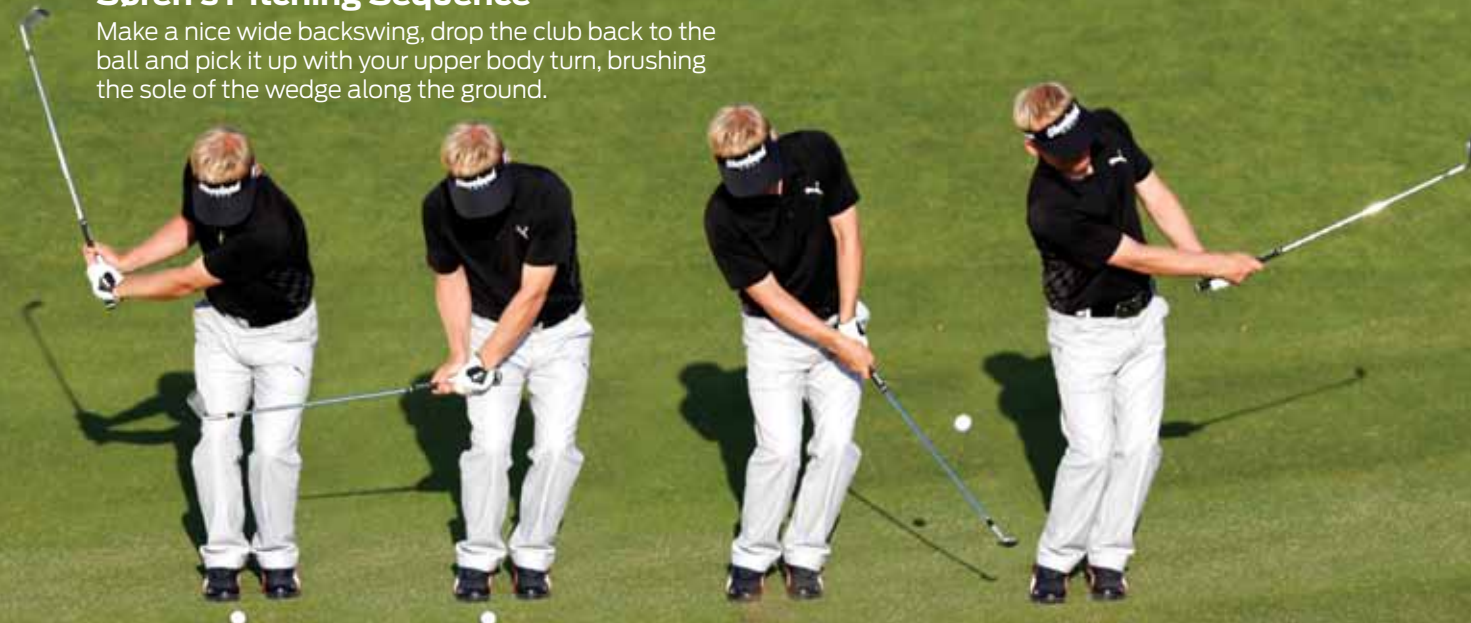
The basic principle on how the club moves is the same for both pitching and the full swing. The clubhead must release through the ball. There are a few things you need to do to help groove this technique.

Once you've grasped the idea of the sole of the wedge 'bouncing' through the turf, the next stage is to get a feel for the swing. Remembering to keep a soft feel of the club, try to think of the clubhead falling back to the ground from the top of your backswing. It drops back in behind the ball and you pick it up again with your body turn. The crucial point again is to avoid trapping the ball with your hands. This leads to duffs and thins – the two dreaded mis-strikes that amateurs fear the most.



## Søren's Pitching Sequence

Make a nice wide backswing, drop the club back to the ball and pick it up with your upper body turn, brushing the sole of the wedge along the ground.



## Brush the Ground for Feel

**Practice:** You know when you watch TV and the pros make that brushing sound on their practice swings. The sole of the club is swishing the ground without the leading edge digging in. Try this for yourself next time you practice. Make some fairly hard, aggressive practice swings, ensuring that the club contacts the ground without making a divot. It is this action that will allow you a huge margin for error when it comes to pitching.



## Work your way up to full shots

Start by hitting five-yard chips, feeling the way the sole of your wedge brushes the ground. You'll soon notice that with the right motion you can afford to almost chunk the chip from a good lie and the flight will still be nice and soft. You don't get this kind of generous margin for error if you dig with the leading edge.

