



V 8 Supercars champion Marcos Ambrose continues his quest to slash his handicap from 18 to single figures...

Giving SHORT SHRIFT

Last month our coaching session ended with a nine-hole assessment of how Marcos was coping with early changes made to his swing. It was evident early in that round that Marcos' short game would continue to hold him back from improving, no matter how well he was adapting to the swing changes.

After a quick swing check we moved into some stroke saving, specifically improving



instruction



EXCLUSIVE
by Mark Gibson
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Marcos' short game.

Like most club golfers, when Marcos is inside 20 metres of a green or flag he reaches for his lob wedge or sand-iron every time. To highlight the ineffectiveness of this, I set up a hula-hoop as a target landing area. The further away the hoop was from Marcos, the longer it took him

to get the ball to land in the desired landing area. We moved the hoop closer and it took Marcos just a few goes to land the ball where he wanted it (pic 1). Then I had Marcos select the appropriate club so the ball would run the required distance.

Next I looked at Marcos' technique. The shape of the swing arc is

important; the lower and flatter the arc, the easier it is to get the club on the ball sweetly. This works well when the lie is good.

For the poorer lies we made the swing arc a little more descending so as to ensure solid contact. The way to do this is to take a normal set-up (weight distributed 50:50), then lean your shoulders and chest slightly towards the target with 60 per cent of your weight on the front foot.

This results in the backswing and downswing being a little steeper, with the ball contact cleaner from a poorer lie. The follow-through gets a little lower – but by then the ball is safely on its way.

I also gave Marcos two grip choices – one for long and one for short chips. His normal grip still gives his wrists some freedom, which creates more power. This is great for the slightly longer chip shots (pics 2, 3 & 4).

For the more delicate shorter shots, Marcos now uses his putting grip, which restricts wrist motion. A safer player closer to the green, he's now learning to save plenty of strokes – which gets us on the path to his single-figure handicap goal.



PHOTOS: MICHAELA ELPHICK/TRES BIEN PHOTOGRAPHICS X 4

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