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TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEDGES

Welcome to this wedge play instruction special, created with a single goal in mind: to improve your confidence and control around the greens

ontrol is something we'd all like to have in our wedge games; but we have to be wary //// of what the word means to us. For many, 'control' conjures images of something that is streamlined, repetitive, perhaps even contained.

But in a game where we may be facing a ticklish lob over a bunker one minute and a 40-yard gallop up a long, soggy green the next, that definition just won't cut it.

No, when it comes to the short game we will do far better to think of 'control' as the ability to take charge of the ball's journey, adapting our approach to match the unique challenge in front of us. Only in this way can we develop the resourcefulness, versatility and creativity the short game demands of us every single round.

In this supplement – brought to you by PING's new s159 wedges - you will learn how to harness six variables that directly

influence flight, spin and carry/run ratios.

While we will examine each in isolation, please keep in mind that the elite golfer develops a genuinely versatile short game by working out the most effective ways to blend them. Our hope is that we can give you the tools to follow a similar path.

And on the subject of tools, we are delighted to feature PING's brand new, tour-inspired s159 wedge series throughout these pages. With 25 loft/grind combinations and a brilliant online fitting tool, this super range allows every golfer to both personalise and broaden their wedge set-up... ensuring they are ideally equipped to deal with the ever-changing lies, conditions and hazards that make the short game so challenging.

You'll learn more about these wedges later. But for now, let's make a start on helping you take control of your short game. Good luck!

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YOUR COACH



solidgolf.co.uk Fellow of the PGA based at Liverpool Golf Centre liverpoolgolfcentre.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY BOB ATKINS

With huge thanks to Wallasey Golf Club, Wirral. The home of Stableford, this immaculate layout unfurls through muscular duneland to offer exhilarating shotmaking, stunning sea views and the definitive links experience. For more information, visit www.wallaseygolfclub.com



PLUS

THE CLUBS

The tech that makes

PING's s159 one of our

favourite wedges

of 2024.

Try PING's new WebFit Wedge app use this QR code







INSIDE THE TECH BEHIND PING'S NEW S159 WEDGES

New shape, new grinds, new finishes... and a new wedge fitting app to find the perfect set-up for your game



ING have been making brilliant wedges for years, and the Glide 4.0 has always

featured among our top performers when we've tested them. But its fairly long blade length wasn't to everyone's tastes - and that's where the new s159 comes in.

Through extensive testing with their tour players, PING have created a wedge that will appeal to golfers of all abilities, especially those who are pretty handy around the green.

TG Equipment Editor Simon Daddow says: "If your game can justify buying into tour-level wedges, the s159 is one of the

best-shaped and most desirable wedges I've seen this year.

"Our test numbers are pretty impressive, too. With a backspin rating 300rpm above our average, the s159 can get shots stopping.

"It also posted the lowest backspin drop-off of all 20 wedges we tested, which means you can expect excellent shot-to-shot spin consistency and predictability.

"Make sure you take PING up on the opportunity to get properly fitted as there's a good selection of sole grinds, lofts and shaft options to dial into your perfect set-up using their brilliant new WebFit Wedge app."

The s159 is cast from 8620 carbon steel, with an elastomer insert behind the face which softens feel and sound. The compact head shape, fairly straight leading edge and minimal offset all support the notion that this wedge is aimed at better players.

Wheel-cut grooves are precision milled to varying dimensions, depending on the loft. The 54° to 62° lofts feature more tightly spaced MicroMax grooves, while 46° to 52° wedges have a 20° sidewall, milled to maximise groove volume for greater control on full shots.

It comes in with the popular Hydropearl 2.0 chrome finish, or Midnight, a new darker option that reduces glare on bright days, plus six grind options (see right).



New 'H' or Half-Moon Grind

A shot-saving option for players with steeper angles of attack who like to manipulate the handle and play with versatility. It performs best in softer conditions.



New 'B' Grind

For a shallow angle of attack and neutral face delivery. Low-bounce design sits low on the turf on square face shots, providing forgiveness via the sole width to deliver performance in firmer conditions.



'T' Grind

The most versatile option allows players to manipulate the face for shot-making precision around the greens. Ideal for medium to firm turf conditions.



'W' Grind

Maximum forgiveness through the turf. Best fits a steep angle of attack from a lot of handle lean and a player who prefers the look of a speciality wedge but relies on a little more forgiveness.



'E' or Eye2 Grind

Continues to be the ultimate bunker club, carrying on a 40-year tradition of helping golfers get up and down from the sand. It plays with relatively low bounce on square or slightly open-face shots.

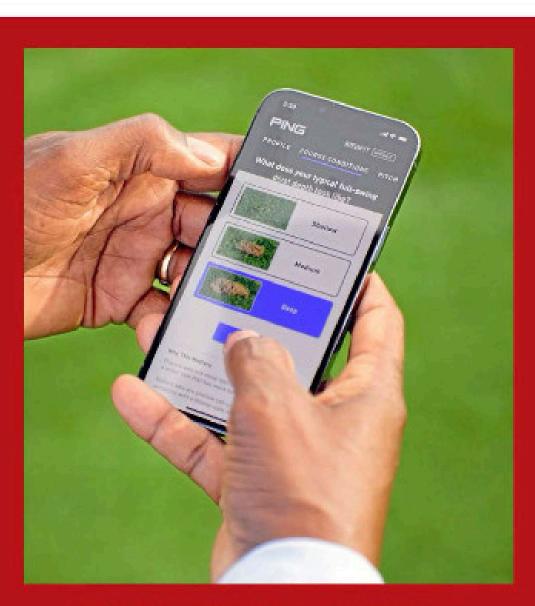


'S' Grind

Fits a wide variety of conditions and techniques. Designed with ample bounce in the midsection to play full shots and provides greenside versatility due to heel/trail edge relief.

What PING say about the s159 wedge

"The new wedges represent our most extensive and versatile wedge line to date, significantly advancing wedge performance and expanding fitting options," says John K. Solheim, PING CEO & President. "They are already winning on tour and we're seeing a lot of players converting to them around the world. They love the clean look, the soft feel and, most importantly, the ability to launch and spin their shots with precise control. With six grinds designed to perform in a variety of playing conditions and techniques, we have a wedge to fit every golfer."

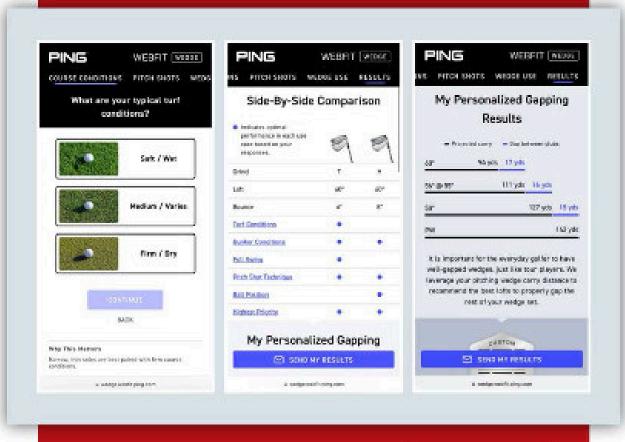


TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PING'S **NEW WEDGE FITTING APP**

PING's new WebFit Wedge app gives golfers a quick and easy way to determine the wedge grind that best fits their game. The app doesn't require downloading, logging in to or signing up for anything; you simply answer a series of questions about your short game and are given two grind suggestions. You can then take those recommendations to a fitter, who can help validate them and further fine-tune the specs of the wedge. The app, which takes just a few minutes to complete, also provides gapping information to help you build out the bottom of your bag.

The app was developed in-house by PING's data scientists and relies on their massive collection of wedge data, much of it mined from their relationship with game tracking software Arccos.

"It's no secret that shopping for wedges can be confusing as golfers try to understand all the nuances of a wedge's design and what's best for them," says PING CEO & President John K. Solheim. "Our goal is to simplify the process of finding a wedge that fits the golfer while also educating them as to why a particular grind is best for them."



The app is accessible via this QR code and at https:// wedge.webfit.ping.com/en/



4 SHORT GAME SPECIAL



WEDGE PLAY: THE BASIC MOVEMENT PATTERN

main his instruction special is designed to help you develop a short game versatile enough to cope with its ever-changing demands. As such,

adaptation and variability are its central themes. That said, I do want to start by giving you a staple foundation in the playing of all shorter-

swing and part shots. While this may sound contradictory, you will quickly grasp that each of the six ball-controlling variations you are about to learn can and will operate within this fundamental framework. When you have these basics in decent shape, those adaptations become much easier to master.



HOW TO BLEND YOUR ARMS AND BODY

In my experience, the biggest problem club golfers have with the short game is an inability to blend the swinging of the arms with the turning of the body. With full swings, we generally find a rhythm that pulls them into some sort of agreement; but in part swings, this sense of coordination is less easy to come by. The most common pattern sees the hands and arms dominate the motion while the body remains passive. This immediately compromises attack path, attack angle and strike point. The erratic results defy shot control, and we end up losing confidence.

Why a foam ball is your best friend

For a genuinely effective - and simple - way to work on this, invest a few quid on a toy foam ball, ideally about half the size of a football. Take up your address position, using your upper arms to hold the ball in position against your chest.



Throughswing: **Holding it together**

Spend some time making half-swings, back and through. Get used to an action that allows you to hold the ball fast. You will begin to develop a greater awareness of how a connected motion feels, and how the body's rotation can in fact set the pace and shape of your swing. You'll also feel the hands and club settling down somewhat as your core takes on a more active role in your motion.



Ultimately, I'd like you to get to the point where you feel that it's the motion of your body that is causing your arms to move and the club to swing:

1. You core's rotational movement sets a more functional 'in-to-in' path for the club.

2. When your core drives your motion, your arm swing becomes naturally quieter and more responsive. Alongside the improved path, this calms hand action and helps you keep the clubface under control. 3. The swing's radius and attack angle fall into line, boosting consistency of contact.

Whenever you practise these shorter, part-swing shots, use the foam ball or similar to help you recall this feeling of your chest 'carrying' your arms back and through. We will now turn to the six variables that will allow you to take command of trajectory, spin and run-out, but remember: they all work from this basic movement pattern.

CLUB CONTROL

VARIABLE #1: SHAFT LEAN

If you were to sit your wedge on a hardwood floor in the position the maker built it — the centre of the sole on the ground — you'd find the club is designed with the handle set slightly forward of the leading edge of the face. In other words, some shaft lean is pre-set into the club. This is a subtle aid to finding an effective hand position at address and promoting ball-first contact. But why would you want to? And what are the effects of doing so?





Why do it?

Leaning the handle forward makes sense when you want the ball to come out fast and low – for example, when playing to a rear pin with green to work with. You could of course simply use a stronger-lofted club, but when you take more loft and lean the handle forward, it can make ball-first contact a little easier while the stronger, more compressing strike it promotes can help you get the ball back to the flag.



What to look out for

Bounce: Whenever you bring the sharp leading edge closer to the ground at the strike, you run the risk of the clubhead digging in and snagging. If you enjoy playing shots this way, consider a sole grind with generous bounce to give you a little more protection through impact. Lie: If the ball is sitting up at all, this handle-forward shot can lead to contact high in the face and erratic distance control. Reserve it for shots where the ball is sitting down slightly.





Why do it?

A neutral clubshaft lean helps take power out of the shot by adding loft and reducing compression. Factor in the potential for extra spin and it can work when the green is firm or the pin is cut close to you. In this instance, taking more loft will often make more sense; but it remains an option for you to be aware of and to experiment with.



What to look out for

Bounce: A neutral or slightly backward shaft lean promotes an effective bounce angle larger than that built into the club. If you like to see plenty of loft on the clubface around the green, consider a sole grind with lower bounce to stop that leading edge rising too high. Lie: With the trailing edge of the sole impacting the turf and the leading edge raised up, neutral shaft lean works best when there is some grass under the ball. Tight, firm lies risk the dreaded bounce thin, the club skipping up behind the ball.



FACE CONTROL

VARIABLE #2: AIM IT

It's perhaps the most commonly used variable of them all — altering flight, spin, carry and run by opening and closing the clubface. Let's make sure we understand how it works... and why we would do it

HOW THE FACE AFFECTS SHOT HEIGHT

Take a look at these two images below. Ball position, shaft lean and weight distribution are all identical. The only thing I've changed is the aim of the face.

- In the left-hand picture, the face is square. The magnetic face guide is showing the club's designed loft of 58°.
- In the right-hand picture, I've opened the face wide.

 Just look at how big a difference this has made to the loft

on the face... which is now showing somewhere north of 70°.

Everything else being equal, a simple change of face aim is your quickest route to adding or removing height from the shot, but as a rule of thumb, square the face when you want to apply the club's true loft (left) and open it to raise launch (right).



1. Always set the open face before taking your grip. Do not take your regular hold and then simply twist the face open.

2. You can play short-game shots with a closed face, but it sharpens the leading edge to a dangerous degree and there is very rarely a need for it. If you want to hit the ball lower, use a stronger club.

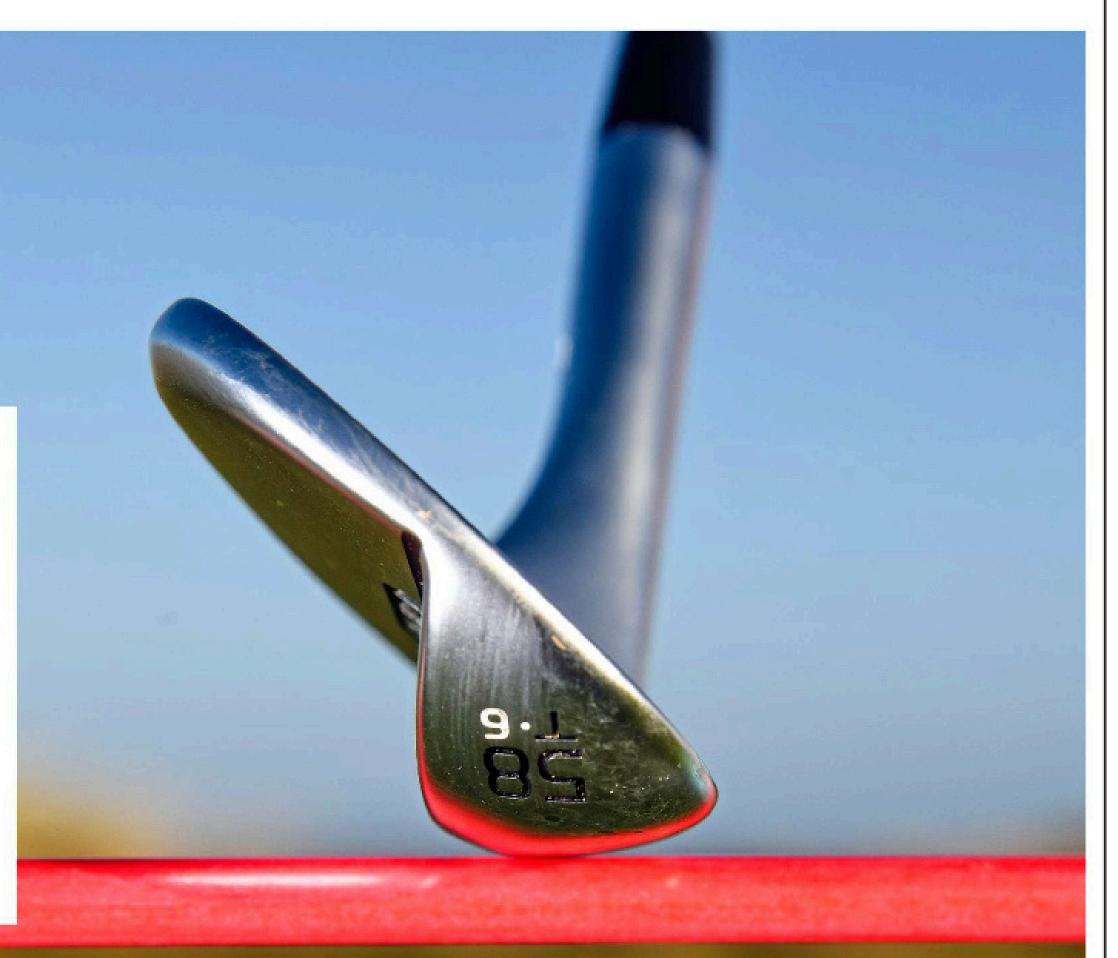
Again, all other things being equal, adding loft increases spin.
 You can expect the ball to stop quicker from that open face.
 We are conditioned to think blade aim controls shot direction.
 But the weaker the face gets, the less this is true. With the most lofted clubs in the bag, we can afford to open the blade without fearing offline shots.

HOW THE FACE AFFECTS THE BOUNCE ANGLE

It's time to take a closer look at bounce. The bounce angle is the angle between the club's leading edge and the bottom of its sole. It is typically marked on the club in degrees, alongside the loft.

Square face – designed bounce

The bounce angle, in this case 6°, ensures the club's leading edge is raised off the ground when the club sits in its designed playing position. This provides some insurance against the leading edge digging into the ground by encouraging the sole to skim or skid on impact with the ground. When bounce is allowed to do its job, we can actually hit the ground before the ball and still deliver an effective strike.



Open face – increased bounce

In Variable #1 we saw how shaft lean can increase or decrease bounce angle.
But face aim does this, too.
We can see here how, simply by opening the blade, the leading edge raises up and the angle between it and the base of the sole increases.
That 6° has now become probably 10 or 12°.



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Beware tight lies: When we open the face, we raise its leading edge higher and increase the bounce angle. While this increases the skid and forgiveness of the blade, it makes it harder to get that leading edge under the ball when it is sitting on short, tight grass. Reserve opening the face for when there is a reasonable cushion of grass under the ball.

■ Sole grinds: Besides controlling the height and spin of the shot, opening the face is a preference; some golfers like to play shots with a squarer face, others like to open it. PING cater to this preference by producing eight different sole grinds, each one designed to deliver the ideal ground contact and interaction. Do not choose your wedges before trying their online wedge WebFit custom-fit tool (see page 18) or discussing your game with a pro.

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LAUNCH CONTROL

VARIABLE #3: ATTACK ANGLE

Our third option is based on how shallow or steep we choose to be as we attack the ball. Let's examine why we might look to change attack angle... before addressing simple ways to influence it





How to steepen your attack angle

- Play the ball centrally. ■ Settle your weight into your lead side, shirt buttons just ahead of the ball. By creating this forward pressure and shaft lean, you promote a steeper attack.
- Steepen the arc of the swing by cocking the wrists early and aggressively. This will help you squeeze down on the ball.



How to shallow your attack angle

- Again, play the ball centrally in a narrow stance. ■ Stand more neutrally, shirt buttons over the ball, and favour the front foot marginally for weight (55-45%).
- Keep backswing wrist action quiet, employing just a small hinge to get club swinging. This keeps the arc of your motion wider, the attack more shallow.

SPEED CONTROL

VARIABLE #4: RHYTHM & TEMPO

You can of course mix up the rhythm and tempo you use on short-game shots, using a brisk, purposeful motion on one shot and a slow, 'lazy' one on the next. But if you're going to do it, let's make sure you know why!



When we look to move the club faster, several things happen automatically:

■ The extra force needed to move the club more quickly places higher demands on our muscles, which tighten in response. This tends to shorten the swing and limit

pull the handle forwards as we swing down and through, creating more shaft lean, more compression and a more zippy strike.

These changes mean we will tend to create a more compact, punchy swing that delivers a delofted clubface to the ball; this is why a





GRIP CONTROL

VARIABLE #5: HANDLE HEIGHT

We can affect the shot ahead of us by raising or lowering the handle from its designed playing position. But what does this change? And when would we want to do it? Let me explain...

BY LOWERING THE HANDLE...

Take any wedge and place it on the ground in its regular playing position, the sole flush to the turf. Now lower the handle smoothly, without changing shaft lean or face aim. We see two big changes down at the clubhead:

- The toe rises from the ground as the club begins to rest on the heel.
- The face starts to close. This is the result of something called 'face plane tilt'. This is hard to see with the naked eye, but a magnetic face aim gadget will show you exactly how it works.





In tight

To understand how doing this could help us execute the shot we need to play, we need to take a closer look at the clubface in this new position. You will see the heel's leading edge sitting in tight to the ground. This happens because in general there is less bounce in both the heel and - as we will see - toe portions of the club.



Why do it?

Think of greenside shots where we need height: most of the time we will play these shots from a traditional position, releasing the club and using the sole bounce. But there are times when this is not possible; think of a ball nestled in sand or on short, tight grass. Here, we need more of a nipping, pinching strike while preserving face loft. By lowering the handle - then opening the face to bring it back to square - we can find this elusive combination.

BY RAISING THE HANDLE...

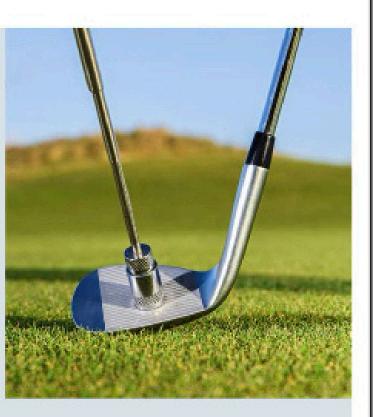
Let's now go the other way. Return to your regular starting position, the club at its designed lie angle. From here, push the handle away from you to raise it. Again, this will cause two important

- It begins to rest on its toe as the heel is raised from the ground.
- The face becomes increasingly open as the handle rises - again, this is not easy to see without a face aid.



■ Both these techniques need to work in tandem with your wedge's sole profile. The club's leading edge camber (curvature) and bounce angle both play a role in how comfortable it feels to hit shots from a raised or lowered handle. Note that some sole shapes — for example PING's versatile new half-moon H grind – allow this more than others. Experiment with different grinds to see which works best.

■ Remember! Raising and lowering the handle affects face aim. Again, experiment to see the results... but as a rule, consider closing (raised handle) and opening (lowered handle) the face to bring it back to square.



High heels

As before, a closer look at the clubface reveals the potential value in making this change: 1. The bulk of the sole is now

off the ground. 2. The portion of the club that

rests on the ground - the toe - feels sharper and tighter against the turf. As before, this is the result of reduced sole bounce under the toe of the clubface.



Why do it?

Shuffle in to take your address position around this higher handle position. Consider two potential benefits of hitting shots from here:

■ That sharper, tighter toe helps us 'dig out' a ball that has nestled awkwardly.

■ Your chances of heavy contact are reduced because much of the sole is raised from the ground.

Raising the handle, then, becomes a useful option when you face a lie that demands a neater, sharper contact perhaps sitting down in fluffy grass, or with the grass growing against you. Hit shots from these situations... and compare your results against your regular playing position.



STRIKE CONTROL

VARIABLE #6: CLUBHEAD 'THROW'

Our final option for greenside shots revolves around how much — or little — we choose to release or 'throw' the clubhead through the strike. Like all the variables we have examined here, our decision will be based around the demands of the shot we face. Let's take a look at how it works...

WHAT IS CLUBHEAD 'THROW'?

We return here to our two foam balls... one at the upper end of

short-game backswing, as pictured. At this point the clubhead is of course further from the target than the hands, the lower pink ball a long way behind the upper one.





Focus on the finish

This throwing, releasing move comes mostly from the lower hand; so to gain a feel for the release, swing with the trail hand only. Practise swinging through to this position, the shaft horizontal at around hip height. You should feel this assisted release adding loft to the clubface and the curved, back edge of the sole skimming off the grass.



Clubhead passes hands

From here, hit some short shots, allowing that trail hand to throw or release the clubhead. Keep your focus either on that finish position or on the feel of the clubhead passing the hands through the strike. As you will see, more throw delivers higher, spinnier shots with more sole bounce exposed to the ground. That's why this release is so effective out of sand, or any time you need quick height.



Take the upper hand

This time use the higher hand for your practice swings. This hand is more of a handle dragger, wanting to pull the grip forwards. Make practice swings without a ball, working on the feeling of the handle (upper ball) staying ahead of the clubhead (lower ball) through the strike. You should begin to sense a firmer lead wrist, a delofted face and the club's leading edge impacting the ground.



Handle leads clubhead

Now introduce your trailing hand and a ball, and repeat the feeling with some shots. Let that firm lead wrist accelerate the club forward, and feel how the clubhead never quite catches up with the handle. This reduced-throw release delivers a more squeezed strike, the ball coming out lower and ready to run more. It's ideal for chip-and-run shots, or whenever you have plenty of green to cover.



FIND YOUR GRIND WITH THE PING WEBFIT WEDGE APP

PING's new fitting app makes finding the perfect wedge set-up for your game a doddle... and it's free

raditionally, our attempts to understand and select wedge sole grinds have begun with a deep breath and ended with the sound of aspirin fizzing in a glass.

A complex blend of camber, bounce and relief, sole grind itself takes no little understanding; but by the time we've factored in the multitude of combinations that go to make up a brand's range, the chances of reaching a clear, rational decision have almost certainly evaporated.

All we know is that our wedge's sole profile can guide us towards the contact we are looking for, or pull us away from it... and we still have no idea how to make sure it's the former. Until now...

PING's new, online wedge fitting tool - the WebFit Wedge app – is effectively a two-minute Q&A that sidesteps the pain to reveal your ideal grind, identified and explained.

The app needs no special log in or membership credential: simply visit ping.com, pull up the s159 page and look for the links to the WebFit Wedge app, or scan the QR code here with your phone.

Based on the same process they use to fit their tour professionals,

it takes you through a short series of questions, designed to establish your short game preferences and where you need the most help.

The process ends by giving you your best option from the six grinds in the s159 family, plus a second possibility for you to consider - allowing you to follow up with a PING expert or your local PGA Professional. You will also find advice on the important subject of gapping; helping you choose the lofts that will give your wedge game its most effective coverage.

The WebFit Wedge app is a welcome acknowledgement from PING of just how confusing choosing a grind can be... and a genuinely effective way to simplify the whole process.



Scan this QR code with your phone to download PING's free app







