A chipping wedge is provided having a longer than usual shaft on the order of approximately 40 to 55 inches long and preferably about 47 inches so that the top of the shaft comes up to about the middle of the golfer's chest when addressing the ball. The shaft includes an upper handgrip at the top of the shaft and a lower handgrip intermediate the shaft at approximately the height where a hand grip would be on a typical chipping wedge. The bottom of the shaft is bent away from the golfer at about a 10-25° angle. A right-handed golfer holds the club with the upper portion of the shaft close to vertical while gripping the club with the left hand on the upper grip at the top of the club and held against the chest and the right hand on the lower grip in the normal position and swings the club in a pendulum type motion.
CHIPPING GOLF CLUB

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to the sport of golfing, and more particularly to a golf club for making “chip” shots.

2. Description of Related Art

Typically, a golfer carries many different clubs during a round of golf, each club having a relatively specialized function. The clubs generally break down into three categories, namely, a putter for hitting the golf ball on the green with no loft, drivers for driving the ball in the air very long distances off of a tee, and fairway irons for hitting the ball various distances off the fairway (or from the rough) with loft. The fairway irons are typically numbered 3 through 9, each higher number designating a club having (1) a shorter shaft and (2) a club head with a ball striking face with a greater angle to the horizon so as to provide greater loft and, inherently, less distance for a given swing strength. The fairway irons also typically include one or both of a chipping club (or chipper) and a pitching wedge. These clubs typically are even shorter than a 9 iron and have an even greater loft angle so as to provide very short shots with loft.

A golfer typically uses a chipping club when the ball is not on the green and, therefore, needs to be hit with loft, but is very close to the green and therefore must be hit softly so that the ball travels a very short distance.

Chipping with a chipping club is one of the hardest aspects of the game for a golfer to learn. This is because golfers usually take a full strength swing with almost any club other than the putter. That is, a golfer typically will select the iron (or driver) having a shaft length and club face angle that will cause a well-hit ball to go the approximate distance the golfer wishes it to go while taking his or her normal full swing. However, once the ball is within a certain distance of the green, e.g. 50 yards or less, even the shortest club with the greatest loft, i.e., the chipper or the pitching wedge, will hit the ball too far if swung with full strength.

Therefore, in connection with chipping, a golfer must display much more swing control than with most other clubs. Accordingly, amateur golfers, sometimes called “hackers”, often have great difficulty chipping. Particularly, they often hit the ball with too much power and send it much farther than desired. Alternately, they “top” the ball, meaning that they held the club too high so that the striking face of the club did not properly contact the ball squarely, but instead the bottom edge of the club head hit the ball and the ball only dribbles a few feet along the ground. Another type of mis-hit is to hold the club too low so that the club head strikes the ground behind the ball before striking the ball, also typically resulting in the ball dribbling along the ground with no loft only a few feet.

Many golfers believe that one of the keys to proper chipping is not breaking the wrists during the swing. In almost all other uses of fairway irons and drivers (all clubs intended to hit the ball with loft), the golfer should break his or her wrists.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide on improved chipping club.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a new chipping club that helps a golfer avoid breaking his or her wrists during chipping.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the principles of the present invention, a chipping wedge is provided having a longer than usual shaft, so as to provide an overall club length on the order of approximately 40 to 55 inches long and preferably about 47 inches, so that the top of the shaft comes up to about the middle of the golfer’s chest when properly positioned for addressing the ball. The shaft includes an upper hand grip at the top of the shaft and a lower hand grip intermediate the shaft at approximately the height where a hand grip would be on a typical chipping wedge. Near the bottom of the shaft, the shaft is bent away from the golfer at about a 10-25° angle.

A right-handed golfer places his or her left hand on the upper grip essentially at the very top of the club with the thumb facing up and the fingers wrapping around the shaft. Preferably, the golfer holds the top of the club against his or her chest (i.e., with the left hand touching the chest). The golfer’s right hand is placed on the lower grip in essentially the normal position as if the person were holding a standard club. The golfer holds the club with the shaft vertical or near vertical and swings the club holding the left hand essentially motionless and swinging with the right hand in a pendulum type motion. The bottom portion of the shaft of the club is angled away from the golfer’s body at about a 10-25° angle, and more preferably about 15°-20° and most preferably about 18° and the club head is mounted to the shaft in essentially a standard fashion. Hence, the club face strikes the ball in the same way as it would in a properly swung standard chipping wedge.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front elevation view of a golfer addressing a ball and holding a chipping wedge in accordance with the present invention taken from a view facing the golfer head on.

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view of the golfer and club of FIG. 1 taken from a view rotated 90° from the view of FIG. 1 and taken from the direction in which the golfer is hitting the ball.

FIG. 3 is a close up view of the bottom of the golf club of FIG. 1 taken from the same angle as FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a close up view of the bottom of the golf club of FIG. 1 taken from the same angle as FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Golf club 100 includes a club head 101, a shaft 103, and upper and lower hand grips 105 and 107, respectively. The shaft may be made of any one or more conventional materials and be constructed in any reasonable fashion. The club head may be essentially any conventional chipper club head. In fact, one of the advantages of the present invention is that, despite the other innovative modifications of the
chipping club of the present invention, the club head 103 still may be essentially any normal chipper club head, as will be discussed further below.

[0018] As is typical, the club head 101 has a ball striking face 109 that typically is flat. The edges of the ball striking face 109 are the lower front edge 111, the upper front edge 113, the heel edge 115, and the toe edge 117. The bottom of the club head, called the sole 119, extends rearwardly from the lower front edge 111 to a rear edge 121.

[0019] Extending generally from the top heel corner of the club head is a hosel 123, which is a tubular extension to which the shaft 103 is coupled to the head. There is a socket in the end of the hosel 123 into which the shaft 103 is inserted. The plane of the ball striking face should be between about 25° and 45°, and preferably about 30°, tilted upwardly relative to vertical in order to provide significant loft to the ball. The aforementioned features of the club head are essentially conventional and any other features not specifically mentioned above may be essentially conventional for a chipper club head.

[0020] The club is between about 40 and 55 inches long, more preferably between about 45 and 50 inches, even more preferably between 46 and 48 inches, and most preferably about 47 inches long. For purposes of United States Golf Association (USGA) approval, a club must be 48 inches in length or less. Therefore, for purposes of USGA approval, the club preferably is less than or equal to 48 inches in length.

[0021] In general, the top of the club should come up to about the golfer’s “letters” (i.e., approximately the middle of his or her chest) when the golfer is properly addressing the ball in accordance with the principles of the present invention. It is contemplated that the club may be provided in a variety of different lengths between about 40 and 55 inches so as to accommodate golfers of different heights. As will be discussed in more detail below, a golfer properly addresses the ball with the club of the present invention standing erect or almost erect and with axis 15 of the upper portion of the club oriented about 0°-15° from vertical.

[0022] The upper grip 105 is positioned at the upper end of the club. It may be a conventional grip for a golf club, extending approximately 6-15 inches down the length of the club shaft. While the grip need not be any longer than the width of the golfer’s hand, preferably, it is longer in order to provide a range of heights at which the golfer can place his or her hand on the grip.

[0023] The lower grip also may be a typical golf club grip. It should be positioned at essentially the normal height above the club head for a chipping wedge. Generally, the bottom of the grip should be about 20-30 inches and preferably about 25-27 inches from the bottom of the club. The preferred length and position of the lower grip in absolute terms depends on the individual golfer’s height and personal preferences with respect to such factors as stance and elbow angle. However, in essence, the lower grip should be positioned to permit a golfer to place his or her right hand (assuming a right handed golfer) on the grip in a comfortable position when holding the club to address the ball.

[0024] In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the lower grip also is longer than the width of the typical golfer’s hand so as to provide a range of heights at which a golfer can grip the club. The lower grip may be about 6 inches long. In this manner, golf clubs of fewer lengths (or even one length) may be able to accommodate golfers of all reasonable heights.

[0025] Alternatively, the upper and lower grips club may be unitary, i.e., may be comprised of a single, longer grip that covers the portions of the shaft 103 covered by the two separate grips in the two grip embodiment. In a single grip embodiment, the single grip may be 20-30 inches long, preferably between about 22 and 28 inches long and, more preferably about 22 inches or 28 inches long. The USGA regulations require that a golf club have only one grip. Accordingly, if USGA approval is desired, the single grip embodiment is preferable.

[0026] With a typical chipper, the club is properly swung with the shaft forming an approximately 30°-45° angle from vertical. However, in accordance with the principles of the present invention, it is desirable for the golfer to hold the upper portion of the shaft approximately vertically, e.g., at a 0°-15° angle relative to vertical, rather than the more typical 30°-45° angle. Different golfers will be comfortable holding the club at different angles; however, most if not all golfers should hold the club so that the upper portion of the shaft is anywhere between about 0°-15° from vertical.

[0027] To permit the golf club to be constructed inexpensively with any standard chipper club head, yet still permit the striking face of the head to strike the ball with the proper orientation, the bottom of the shaft below the lower grip includes a bend. More particularly, the shaft 103 includes a bend approximately 5 inches up from the sole 119 of the club. Preferrably, the club is bent about 10-25°, and more preferably about 15°-20°, and most preferably about 18° in the direction away from the golfer’s body when the golfer is properly addressing the ball. That is, the bend is in a direction from the heel edge 115 to the toe edge 117. Generally, the bend may be positioned anywhere below the lower grip. However, preferably, it is closer to the sole than to the bottom of the lower grip and, as noted above, most preferably is about 5 inches above the sole of the club head. The USGA requires that any bend in the shaft of a golf club be within 5 inches of the sole (bottom) of the club. Accordingly, for purposes of USGA approval, the bend should be less than or equal to 5 inches from the sole of the club, and preferably as close to 5 inches as possible.

[0028] In a preferred embodiment, the bend has no angular component outside of the heel to toe plane (e.g., the golfer’s sagittal plane when properly addressing the ball or the plane of the paper in FIG. 2). However, in some cases, it may be desirable to provide an angular component to the bend in the perpendicular vertical plane (e.g., the golfer’s medial-lateral plane or the plane of the paper in FIG. 1). FIG. 1, for instance shows an embodiment in which the bend has a small component in the medial-lateral plane. Specifically, the bottom of the shaft 103 is bent backward toward the golfer’s rear foot about 3°-5°.

[0029] The club is designed so as to permit a golfer to chip a ball by swinging the club in a pendulum fashion without breaking the wrists and with a high degree of likelihood that the golfer will strike the ball with the club head in the proper orientation and at the proper height and overall position relative to the ball.

[0030] More particularly, a right-handed golfer with a right-handed club will grip the club with his or her left hand
on the upper grip 105 and his or her right hand on the lower grip 107. (A left-handed golfer with a left-handed club would switch hands.) The golfer will grasp the upper grip with his or her left hand with the thumb facing up. The left hand will be above the left elbow, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. The fingers and palm will be wrapped around the grip. Preferably, although not necessarily, the thumb is positioned over the top of the club, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. However, the golfer may choose to wrap his or her thumb around the grip in the opposite direction from his or her other fingers. Preferably, the golfer places his or her left hand in contact with his or her chest. The golfer places his or her right hand on the lower grip with the thumb facing down and with the right hand below the right elbow in essentially a standard golf club grip (except without the left-hand being there). Although not a requirement of the present invention, the right arm should be bent slightly (as it should be for purposes of swinging a conventional iron).

[0031] The golfer stands with his or her body essentially in a putting type position, i.e., with his or her body generally erect, legs straight or with the knees slightly bent, and head facing down to look at the ball. As is typical, the golfer’s lateral-medial plane is generally parallel to the direction the ball is intended to travel. The golfer holds the club so that the upper portion of the shaft 103 is much closer to vertical than if holding a conventional chilling club. For instance, as noted above, the golfer should hold the club such that the shaft if preferably vertical to about 15° from vertical when addressing the ball, i.e., placing the club head on the ground directly behind the ball and with the club face perpendicular to the direction in which he or she desires the ball to leave the club face.

[0032] In order to strike the ball, the golfer keeps his or her left hand as motionless as possible and swings the club in a pendulum fashion using his or her right hand to apply the force to initiate the backswing as well as the forward swing to cause the club to swing and strike the ball. The feet should not move, as in a putting swing.

[0033] Having the left hand in contact with the chest helps keep the left hand from moving and, particularly, from changing elevation so as to help prevent topping the ball or divoting the ground. Furthermore, the pendulum type swing similar to a putting swing is much easier to control in terms of strength than a standard iron type full swing. Also, the hand positions and the length of the club help the golfer avoid breaking his or her tight wrist during the swing. In this manner, the golfer provides a controlled swing and is virtually guaranteed not to break his or her right hand wrist or to “top” the ball or hit the ground behind the ball. Further, the golfer can control the force with which he or she strikes the ball with great accuracy.

[0034] Having thus described a few particular embodiments of the invention, various alterations, modifications, and improvements will readily occur to those skilled in the art. Such alterations, modifications and improvements as are made obvious by this disclosure are intended to be part of this description though not expressly stated herein, and are intended to be within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing description is by way of example only, and not limiting. The invention is limited only as defined in the following claims and equivalents thereto.

1. A golf club for hitting a golf ball with loft, said club comprising:
   a club head adapted to hit a golf ball with loft, said club head having a ball striking face, a heel edge, a toe edge, and a sole of said face;
   a shaft connected to said club head, said shaft selected such that the club is between about 40 inches and 55 inches long, and having a top end and a bottom end;
   an upper grip extending downwardly along said shaft from said top end; and
   a lower grip extending along said shaft and positioned intermediate said top and bottom ends of said shaft;
   wherein said shaft has a bend below said lower grip, said bend being in a direction from said heel edge to said toe edge, said bend having an angle and a height above said club head so as to permit a golfer to hold said shaft substantially vertically yet have said sole of said club head at a proper angle to the ground for chipping.
2. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said bend is about 5 inches from said sole of said club.
3. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said bend is about 10°-25° degrees.
4. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said bend is about 18° degrees.
5. The golf club of claim 3 wherein said shaft has only a single bend.
6. The golf club of claim 3 wherein said bend had no angular component outside of the heel to toe direction.
7. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said lower grip is positioned on said shaft such that a golfer can place a first hand on said lower grip with the club head on the ground and the upper portion of said shaft vertical such that said golfer’s arm corresponding to said first hand is slightly bent.
8. (canceled)
9. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said shaft is about 45-50 inches long.
10. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said shaft is about 46-48 inches long.
11. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said shaft is about 47 inches long.
12. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said shaft is of a length such that, when said club is oriented with the upper portion of said shaft vertical and said club head on the ground, said top end of said shaft is at a height approximately equal to the middle of said golfer’s chest.
13. The golf club of claim 1 wherein said club is a chipping club.
14. A method of swinging a golf club to hit a golf ball with loft, said method comprising the steps of:
   selecting a club having a club head having a striking face with a heel edge and a toe edge, said head connected to a shaft, said shaft having a length such that said club comes up to about the middle of the chest of a golfer, wherein said shaft has a bend below said lower grip, said bend being in a direction from said heel edge to said toe edge;
   addressing said ball with the lateral/medial plane of said golfer approximately parallel to a direction in which said golf ball is intended to travel;
gripping said shaft with a first hand at about chest level and with said first hand contacting said chest and with an elbow corresponding to said first hand positioned lower than said first hand;

gripping said shaft with a second hand intermediate said top and bottom ends of said shaft, said second hand being below an elbow corresponding to said second hand;

swinging said club in a pendulum motion while attempting to hold said first hand motionless against said chest and said second hand applying force to swing said club.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein said first hand grips said club with a thumb of said first hand facing up and said second hand grips said club with a thumb of said second hand facing down.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said golfer stands approximately erect.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein said golfer’s feet do not move during said swing.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein said golfer keeps the elbow corresponding to said second hand bent when gripping said shaft with said second hand and throughout said swinging step.

19. The method of claim 14 wherein said golfer holds said club with the portion of said shaft above said bend between about 0°-15° from vertical.

20. The method of claim 14 wherein said golfer holds said club with the portion of said shaft above said bend about vertical.

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