

The 'Bunker Rake' debate

Andrew Acorn rakes over some well worn issues

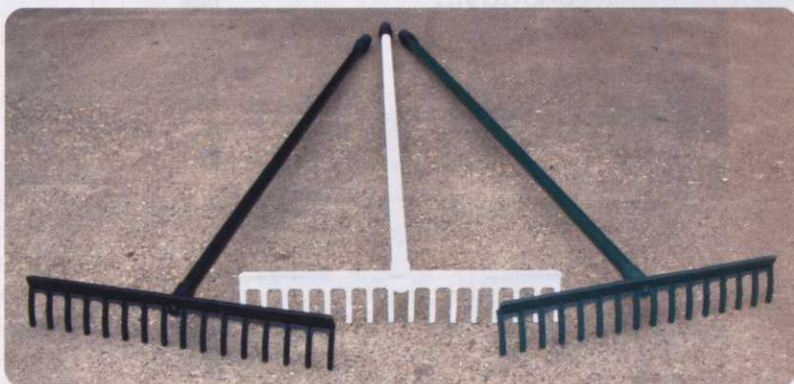
Left in the bunker, outside the bunker, stood up or lying down. This still remains a bit of a 'grey area' with the R&A rules, and it is put into the hands of you at your club in the 'local rules' or how you see them. This also brings into question, 'Which bunker rake is the best one to have? How many teeth should it have, how wide should it be, how long is the handle, which is the best shape, which type of grip should it have, is it a rake for members or green staff to use or is it both?

I was in great debate with five key people from the industry about this fascinating subject during a teatime pint of Guinness in O'Neill's Irish bar within the CNN centre in Atlanta Georgia. On my right was Welsh Course Manager Jeremy Hughes, on my left was rake manufacturer James Buckholt from BMS Europe, opposite was the bunker raking caddie of European Senior Tour player David Oakley and my trade counterpart Terry Adamson next to him was the USPGA Tour Agronomist John Scott and on his right was Andy Campbell MG.

We had collected leaflets and pens from the show and the scribbling on the reverse sides started, the lively conversations went quiet when each of the group started to draw up his designs for the best type of rake for sand traps. Four more pints each, and 68 different sketches later, we had designed the perfect rake. It had long teeth on one side, short teeth on the other side the handle was 3 x piece telescopic. It had reverse side teeth and a bit which levelled the sand as well. All we had to do was get this design patented and manufacture it back in the UK and we would all then be millionaires on the proceeds from the royalties?

But with our fuzzy heads cleared up by later the next afternoon we saw our design as a little impractical to make, and a little impractical to sell to the mass market and agreed that there is 'no' one rake that can do all the jobs you ask of it.

During the build up to the 2001 Open Championship at Royal Lytham & St Annes, we at Acorn Golf received an order from Head Greenkeeper Paul Smith for 80 of the wooden hay rakes, which were to be given out to the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team to rake the bunkers. After the first day of practice a comment made by a well known senior golfer was, that the rakes were leaving lines like ridges in the sand after they had been raked and that this he thought was unacceptable. Another phone call from Paul Smith and we sent the van up and collected the rakes in the evening and between Paul and ourselves we decided to cut approx 3" off each side of the rake to make it shorter and by using the 'band saw' in our workshop saw the teeth in half at a 45 degree angle. We then took them back up the same night for resumption of practice the following day. With the addition of levelling from the back of the rake by the Support Team the championship went smoothly 'in the bunkers' from then on in.



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'Sexy' Rakes

It's hard to get excited by rakes, in fact it is probably a criminal offence to get turned on by them. But Amenity Technology is doing their level best to set a new trend with their revolutionary 'double-team' comprising the 'Silver-Streak' and 'Contour' rakes.

It is a proven fact that golfers remember the details of their round more than they remember the larger aspects of the surroundings. For example; a poor lie in a bunker will be remembered forever, the overall immaculate conditions forgotten after a few short weeks. It is impossible to force golfers to comply with requests to rake bunkers, repair pitchmarks, replace divots etc, but it is possible to make it easier and less of a chore for them to do so.

Complimentary pitchmark forks on the first tee are certainly a good reminder if not a direct plea, providing ergonomically designed rakes in the bunkers are another.

The 'Contour' bunker rake has been scientifically designed to assist with more efficient raking of bunkers while reducing stress to lumber regions and shoulders. By increasing the efficiency of each 'pass' the amount of raking required is significantly reduced. American golf journalist Hal Phillips put his back out while raking a bunker – one look at his swing today will let you know just how debilitating that injury was. Needless to say he was NOT using a Contour rake...

The 'Silver-Streak' rake is designed to prepare the bunker for the best possible playing conditions – the double-headed design promotes both raking and smoothing of sand.

With the 'Silver Streak' currently available on a 'three for the price of two' deal, it is just possible that rakes are about to get sexy after all, well maybe just a little bit.

THE SILVER STREAK RAKE

16" double action head allowing for both raking and smoothing of bunkers. Comes complete with a 48" blue fibreglass handle.



CONTOUR BUNKER RAKE

A dynamic new maintenance bunker rake complete with 22" head and a choice of 54" or 72" wooden handle.

