



The importance of raking bunkers is demonstrated here at the Open Championship 2007

SAND SAVERS

By Scott MacCallum

Golfers today now expect a perfect surface from which to play their bunker shots so a good quality rake is now a necessity.

Bunkers have been a golfing hazard for as long as the game has been played and they have struck fear into the hearts of many who would rather execute their Vardon grip on a hot poker than a sand wedge.

But most professionals will tell you that bunker play is not that difficult and they would miss the green in the sand than in the rough as they would normally back themselves to get up and down.

For that reason bunkers have become a very emotive golfing issue as the top players have tended to forget that bunkers are indeed a hazard and that automatic recovery should be a given. Think back to press coverage you've read and invariably the sand has been too deep, the bunker not firm enough, the sand the wrong type, the base too flat, bunker not raked well enough etc etc etc.

Of course in the old days bunkers were indeed hazards and going into one really did mean a shot dropped. Oakmont GC, scene of Angel Cabrera's US Open win this year, used to be known for its rutted bunkers – deep grooves carved into the bunker sand by specially devised rakes

guaranteeing a tough old time for anyone misfortunate, or unskilled, enough to find them.

But times have changed and greenkeepers give priority to ensuring bunkers are kept in as perfect a condition as they can be and anyone who doesn't rake a bunker once they've played out is considered the golfing equivalent of a pariah.

So rakes are now an important element of a golf course's furniture and the need for effective rakes capable of doing the job has never been greater.

"In the early days, golf bunker sand was smoothed after use by the player upon leaving the hazard by means of using the back of his sand wedge and/or his foot in most cases," said Andrew Cornes, Managing Director of Acorn Golf

"Over the past 20 to 25 years there has been an insurgence of rakes for sand that have appeared in bunkers all over the world. Which one and for which type of sand has always been a point of debate, with golf committees, club management, players and members alike."

Andrew has spent more time than most attempting to solve the conundrum.

“A few years back, in 2003 to be exact, from a debate at the GCSAA show in Atlanta, I wrote an article about preferences on design and manufacture of bunker rake’ it covered short teeth; long teeth; no teeth; flat; curved; flexible; rigid rakes that would tiller sand as well as smoothing sand. Then we looked at which handle is best for players to use - short; bent; flexible shaft design etc.

“On compiling all this data, and along with BMS in manufacture we came up ‘one rake head’ that had covered most of the things everyone involved wanted from a members/greenkeepers or club bunker rake,” he explained.

“To simplify the supply and to cover all needs we decided to produce this head in a ABS polyethelene which is virtually unbreakable, but supply three different colour options for different environments and a choice of three shaft/ handle options to cover all budgets, wood for the lower end to lightweight aluminium for the higher end,” said Andrew adding that these had become the company’s best selling rake.

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