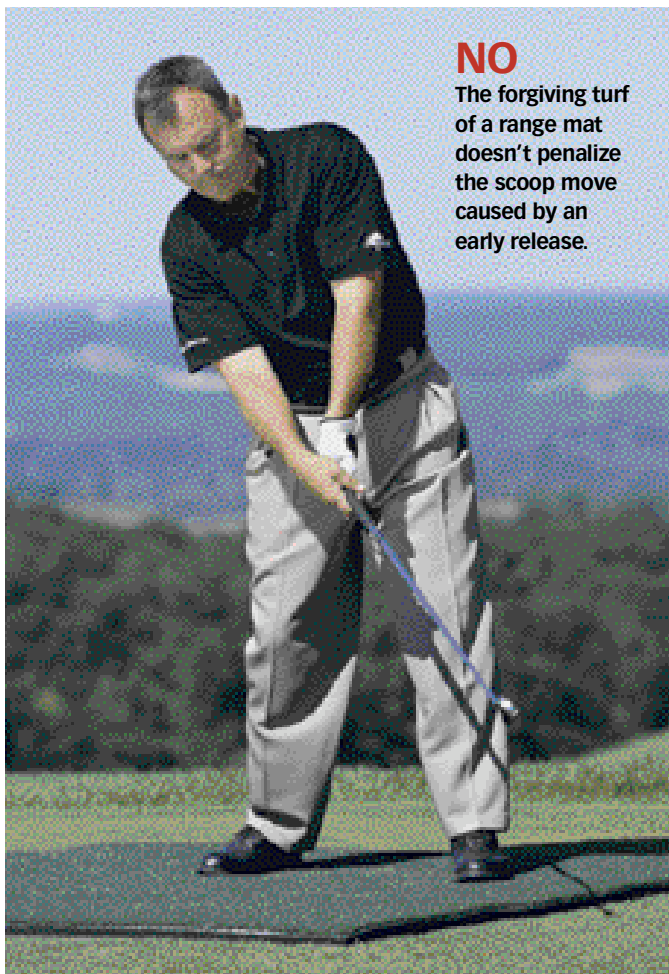


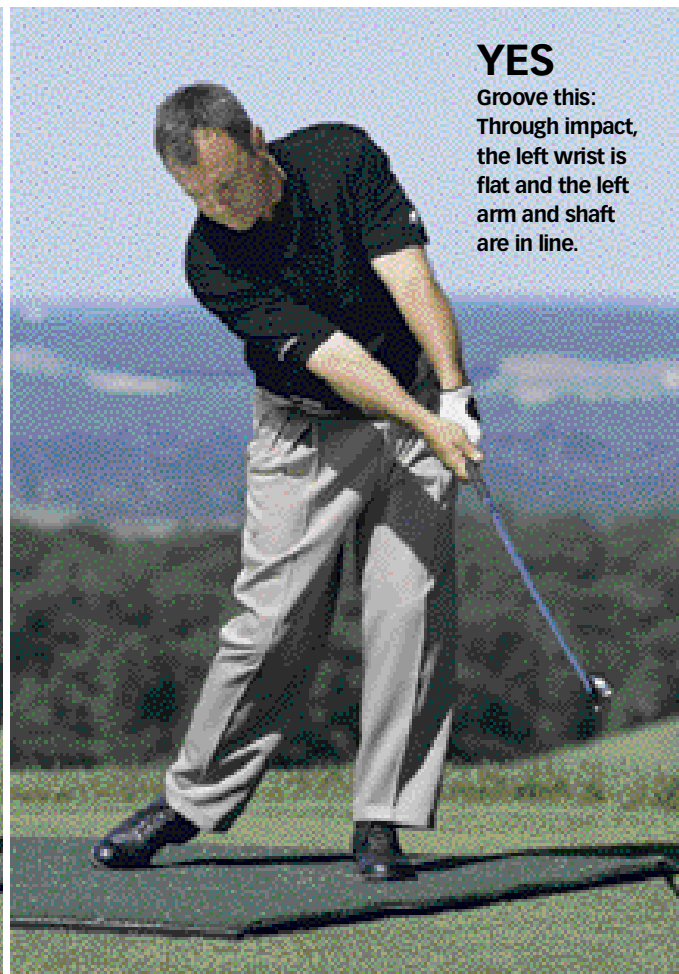


Rick's Practice Tips

What you need to know when hitting off artificial turf



NO
The forgiving turf of a range mat doesn't penalize the scoop move caused by an early release.



YES
Groove this: Through impact, the left wrist is flat and the left arm and shaft are in line.

There are only so many frosty days a golfer can take before breaking down and heading to the local driving range—the one with the heated stalls—to get a golf fix.

Just be careful not to develop a false sense of security. Every spring I have to detox golfers who spent all winter stripping shots on the range, only to discover they can't hit a solid shot on the course. The reason is simple: Artificial turf is in-

credibly forgiving. If you're a scooper or drop-kicker of the ball, mats tend to disguise your swing flaw because, no matter how far behind the ball the club hits the ground, the spongy turf will rebound the club into the ball. What often feels like solid impact, isn't.

When you practice on range mats, focus on swinging down into the ball with your weight rotating toward the target onto a firm left leg. The hands

and wrists pass over the ball before the clubhead makes impact. It should feel like you are "trapping" the ball with the clubhead, with the clubface remaining square at impact. This move ensures that the club will reach the bottom of its arc at the ball, not before it. 🏌️

Rick Smith, voted No. 4 by his peers in Golf Digest's ranking of America's 50 Greatest Teachers, is based at the Treetops Resort in Gaylord, Mich., and Tiburón in Naples, Fla.