

I love lip outs. You heard that right. Hell, I even love the lip out's close cousin, the burned edge.

I can hear what you're thinking: "What? That's crazy, CPG! Lip outs are among the cruelest punishments in the game!"

Allow me to explain.

First and foremost, you need to understand that I'm a club professional as well as a single-digit player. The word "professional" comes with a lot of pressure. The members I play with not only expect me to go low, but demand it. So, every time I tee it up, I face two major challenges. The first is to shoot the lowest score possible, and the second is to constantly be on the lookout for reasons the score could have been better. I call it searching for the elusive "But."

You see, after the round, when someone asks what I shot, I can't simply say "81" or "85." That won't tell the story. People need more context. I need to give them the But.

Here are a few important examples:

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"I shot 88, *but* I was in a deep divot on No. 4 fairway and ended up making triple."

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"I shot 91, *but* my tee ball hit the cart path on the 14th and went out of bounds."

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"I shot 83, *but* on No. 16 Jerry slammed his cell phone in the cup holder during my backswing and I ended up making double."

This is how to let people know your score may sound high, but it wasn't based on anything you did wrong; it was clearly out of your control. In other words, you got screwed. The But is a handy post-round crutch that excuses you for being terrible.

Coming in Hot



Congratulations, You Lipped Out

You now have the best excuse in the game

Club Pro Guy

And nothing in golf is a better example of the But than the lip out.

The main thing we all need to remember about lip outs is that they share a key characteristic with the hole-in-one: Both seem to occur when you least expect it. Both are jarring when they strike. Unlike the hole-in-one, lip outs are usually met with stunned silence instead of celebration. The moment the ball peeks in the hole and violently shoots out, everyone tends to look at the victim and brace for their reaction.

Me? I am silently fist pumping. The lip out is a welcome occurrence because it shows my playing partners that I hit a really solid putt, providing valuable proof that I'm a player with the requisite talent needed to marry line and pace. It also provides me with an excellent post-round alibi to deflect from an otherwise embarrassing score. It's a beautiful But.

Think about it. What's more compelling: telling a group gathered after the round that you shot a ho-hum 87, or explaining that you shot an 88, but you endured the most vicious 360-degree lip out that anyone has ever seen? From there you can create a narrative that if not for that lip out derailing your round, who knows how low you could have gone?

When you get good enough at it, you don't even need to give out scores anymore. When someone asks what you shot, you can simply reply by saying, "Not my day—had two lip outs and burned three edges."

As with a parent who gets sympathy for a sick child, they won't have the heart to hound you for an actual score after hearing that. They'll just move on, leaving your number to the imagination and your reputation intact. ■

Club Pro Guy played 14 seasons on the Mexican Mini-Tour, amassing 17 made cuts. He led the tour in Strokes Gained: Punching Out Sideways (SGPOS) in 1991, 1993-97, 1999 and 2001.

A lip out is golf's most beautiful "But."