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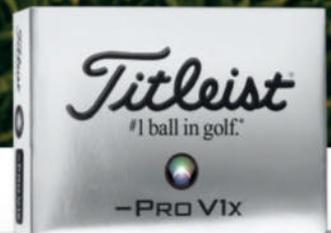


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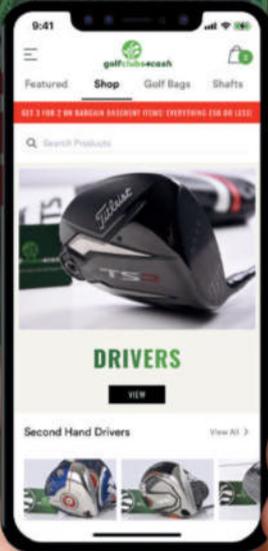
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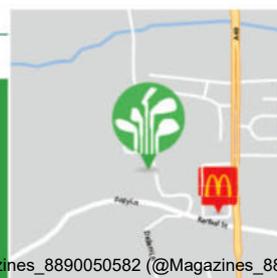
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DON'T MISS THIS MONTH!

Get dialled in from 100 yards with GM Top 50 Coach John Howells

NEW



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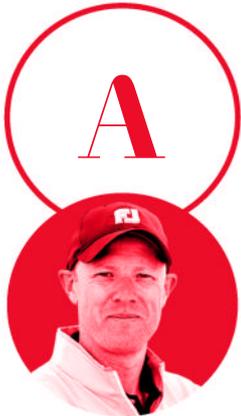
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SCAN TO
EXPERIENCE

Time to shine



Editor
Neil Tappin

neil.tappin@futurenet.com

As I'm sure you're only too well aware, the British weather has served up a rather stop-start summer so far. Unreliable would be the politest way to put it and, of course, time marches on as mercilessly as ever. We already find ourselves in or approaching August 2024 depending on when you read this.

For me, there are two distinct parts of the golfing season. I'm either just happy to be able to get out, play and enjoy the fresh air, or I'm trying to compete, play well and ultimately get my handicap down. Right now, it's the latter.

For those in the same frame of mind, we have a 28-page instruction supplement with this issue that's a must-read. We've teamed up with *Golf Monthly* Top 50 Coach Ged Walters and British golf club manufacturer Benross to provide you with some practical, tee-to-green advice. Ged is an expert at breaking down complex moves and making them easy to understand and implement. His tips are designed to help you score better as the season progresses.

In the magazine itself, we have devoted ten pages to the man of the moment, Bryson DeChambeau. Unashamedly, the reason we've done this is in celebration of one of the game's most interesting and engaging characters. Just as so many top players find safety in withdrawing from the emotion of the game, Bryson embraces the highs and lows and provides a window into a world very few are good enough to experience. We look at his impact on the game, his unique club line-up and offer an explainer on *that* bunker shot at the US Open.

I hope you find our look at Bryson as inspiring as we've found it to produce. If so, you might well have some summer golfing success of your own to enjoy. I certainly hope so.



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YOUR VIEW

The pick of the letters and emails to hit the *Golf Monthly* offices this month



Should Tiger be allowed to play in signature events?

Tiger's free pass

With June's news that the PGA Tour is to allow Tiger Woods a free pass into the skewed signature events, isn't it time that the moral high ground preposterously taken by Jay Monahan, Woods, Rory McIlroy et al is thrown out with the bath water? LIV was a pariah due to sporting integrity, they said. Well, the tour has killed that line by fiddling a

way to allow a fading star – a big name but, sporting wise, an irrelevance – to play in limited-field events for however long he wants to continue picking up loose change.

This does nothing to help golf and nothing to help Woods. It's rather pathetic that the second-best golfer ever to live is accepting charity from the Tour due to the fact he can no longer hack it. How can there be world ranking

points awarded to no-cut, no-qualifying events that allow Tiger to play when he's ranked below most LIV players?

Mark Dougall, Coaltown of Wemyss

It's good to talk

I was interested to read the letter from Stephen Smith [letter of the month, Open issue] and I wish him well in his

prostate cancer journey. I am a recently retired GP and current senior captain at Chartridge Park Golf Club. I have chosen Prostate Cancer UK as my charity this year. Four of us did the 72-hole golf marathon in July and raised over £7,000. I have also raised awareness about prostate cancer by doing some interactive talks at the club, which have been well received.

Not only have there been good discussions about the complicated and evolving subject of PSA screening, but I have also been able to encourage men to share personal stories. These accounts have been moving and it's great that men are becoming more open about the most common male cancer.

Steve Brown, Amersham

Ace achievements

I've just finished your July issue's crossword. I might have cheated a bit – it wasn't easy! The 12-across clue – 'Englishman who made a hole-in-one in

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It should be challenging to escape from bunkers

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Having read recent articles regarding the bunkering of golf courses, I feel I must offer my own thoughts. I have played golf for well over 50 years, occasionally to a high standard, and have played almost 200 different courses in that time. Now on to bunkers.

Yes, I've been fortunate enough to have played the Old Course in St Andrews seven times and the bunkers there are something to behold. However, not all courses could ever dream of that type of bunkering. But still, in the professional game, how many times when in trouble do you see a seasoned

pro play for a bunker as they've got more chance of an up-and-down from there than from some tangly rough in a hollow at the edge of the green?

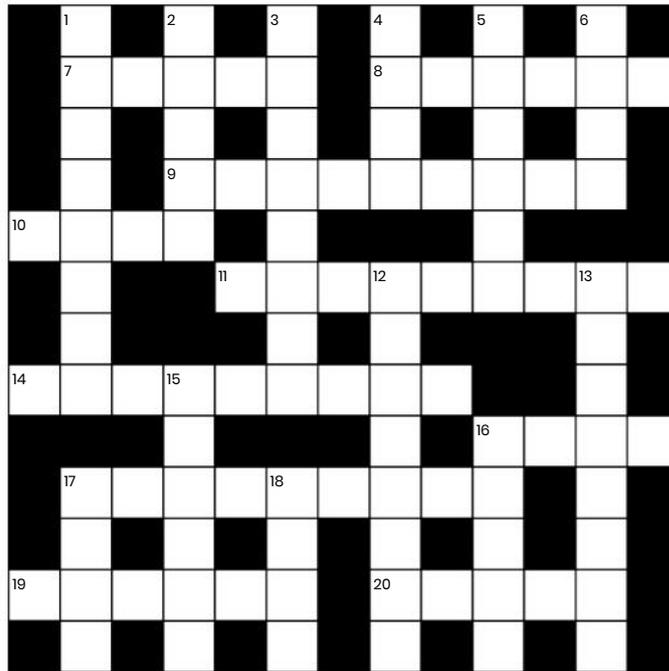
I've also played too many courses where the state of the sand – no, lack of sand – in the bunkers simply makes them farcical hazards. More like mud pits than sandy bunkers. Yes, good bunkers are great, but poor-quality bunkers should be banned, along with those used on the professional tours that pose no real difficulty when it comes to players escaping them.

Roger Whitaker, Casterton



CROSSWORD

Compiled by Tait



the Ryder Cup' – got me initially thinking Howard Clark, but subsequent research leads me to believe that four Englishmen have achieved this feat – Paul Casey, Nick Faldo and Peter Butler, too. Incredible! Almost as amazing as Sean O'Driscoll's letter of the month in the same issue – four holes-in-one in 11 days!
Matthew Boote, via email

Green fee greed

Photography: Paul Severn, Getty Images

I wanted to write to express my concern that some – perhaps many – golf clubs are now getting more than a little greedy when it comes to visitor green fees. I completely understand that it's entirely up to them what they charge and whether or not they really want visitors, but since Covid things seem to have gone through the roof, not just at the top courses, which have always come at a premium price, but also at many courses lower down the pecking order. Some are now charging prices that, quite frankly, they are not really worth.

I know Covid had a big effect, with formerly struggling clubs suddenly finding themselves in a much healthier position, and also that the cost-of-living crisis has had a big impact on clubs' bills and outgoings in many areas. But I've seen distinctly average clubs charging £70, £80 or more, which pre-Covid were desperately 'giving away' green fees at £20 just to get people through the door.

It would be a sad day if golf regressed to the old days, when many were restricted to municipal golf as members' clubs put up barriers by either not accepting visitors or effectively pricing them out of the market. I know that, as ever, supply and demand will ultimately play a big role here, and that clubs do have bigger bills to pay, but what worries me is just how easily and eagerly private members' golf clubs seem to have reverted to their old ways.

Marlon Davies, Cheltenham

Across

- 7** A sail unfurled at Open course (5)
- 8** _____ of the Dyke, the Old Course's 16th (6)
- 9** Puts point concerning Queen's 10th at Gleneagles (4,5)
- 10** Partially using Cobra equipment on Carnoustie's 5th (4)
- 11** Or as blast out to three under par (9)
- 14** Pale ale poured for us shakily by 2016 Scottish Senior Open winner (4,5)
- 16** Scottish golfer born in Shrewsbury (4)
- 17** Club invented by Gene Sarazen (4,5)
- 19** Parts of a course (6)
- 20** Championship won last year by Celine Boutier (5)

Down

- 1** View at Hesse's 3rd (8)
- 2** Type of rating (5)
- 3** Colour of Augusta's 5th (8)
- 4** Superb shots during pace-setting round (4)
- 5** Protection for Tommy (6)
- 6** Sarah who won Commonwealth Trophy through niblick emphasis (4)
- 12** Been dear to play round royal club (8)
- 13** Golf ball maker (8)
- 15** Last year, he won his second US Senior Open 13 years after his first (6)
- 16** English 33-year-old golfer named after Tom Watson (5)
- 17** Partly reassuring for American golfer on DP World Tour (4)
- 18** Hill in Surrey (4)

ANSWERS

Down: 1 Panorama, 2 Slope, 3 Magnolia, 4 Aces, 5 Armour, 6 Kemp, 12 Aberdeen, 13 Spalding, 15 Langer, 16 Lewis, 17 Surt, 18 West.
 Across: 7 Afta, 8 Corner, 9 Pint stoup, 10 Brae, 11 Albatross, 14 Paul Eales, 16 Lyle, 17 Sand wedge, 19 Greens, 20 Evian.

WIN!



The letter of the month winner receives a year's supply (six dozen) of the best Titleist golf ball for his or her game





● PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

Home glory for MacIntyre at Scottish Open

Photography: Getty Images



● **Congratulations on winning the Genesis Scottish Open. How much of a dream come true is that?**

I think I lost my voice after the scream on the 18th hole! I thought I was short. Look, I've put a lot into this. I've changed a lot within the team and I've worked hard. I wanted the Scottish Open badly. The crowd was unbelievable. I got a bit of luck on 16, but you need a bit of luck to win golf tournaments. I couldn't believe it when I heard a clunk under my foot and I was standing on a sprinkler head. I got lucky with the drop; it was meant to be.

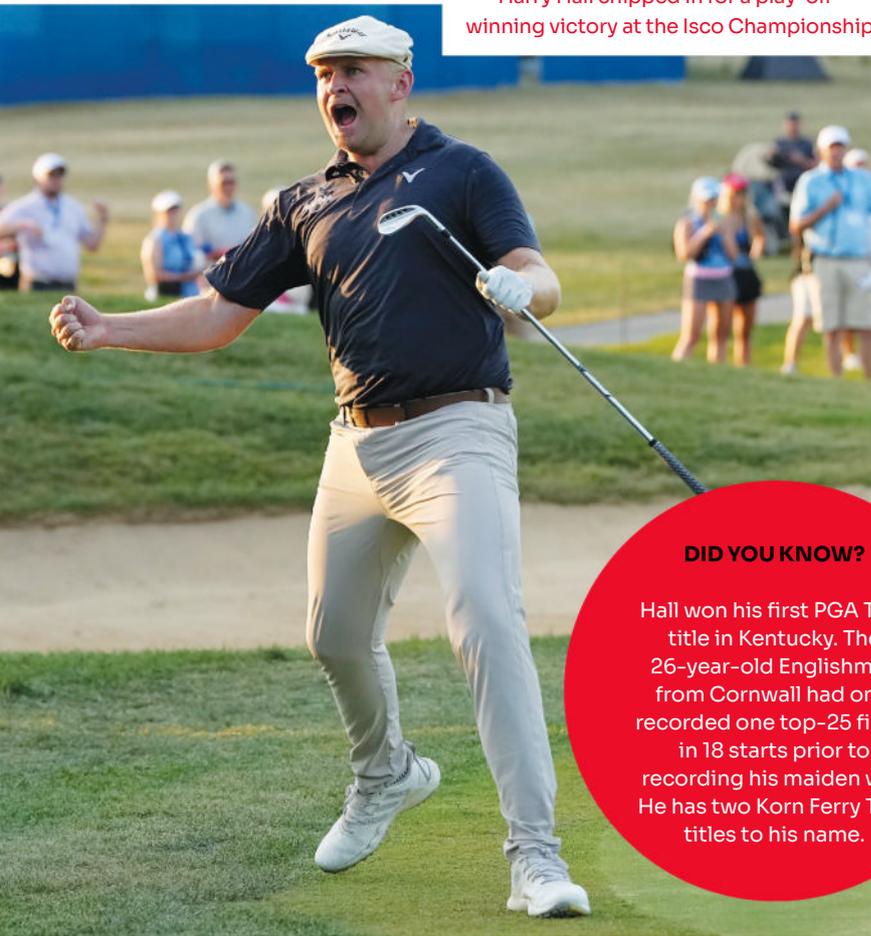
● **Is it everything you hoped it would be?**

It is. I mean, the crowd support, the support of the Scottish people, has been unbelievable. I was close last year, but I had my chance this time at the end. I kept saying to myself, 'just take a chance, take a chance.' I took it. I can't believe it. I tell you, I'm going to celebrate this with my family, friends and everyone here. I'm going to celebrate this one hard.

● **You've spoken about being a fighter. Where does that come from?**

I'm from a working-class background. I've got two older sisters and my parents foster. We've got a foster boy just now that's been with us for six, seven years. I was given a great opportunity by my whole family. We used to have a horse for my sisters but couldn't afford to do both, and my sisters gave up the horse to give me a chance to go and travel within Britain. A lot of people might say 'he doesn't quite have this, he doesn't quite have that', but I've got fight and that's all I need.

Harry Hall chipped in for a play-off-winning victory at the Isco Championship



DID YOU KNOW?

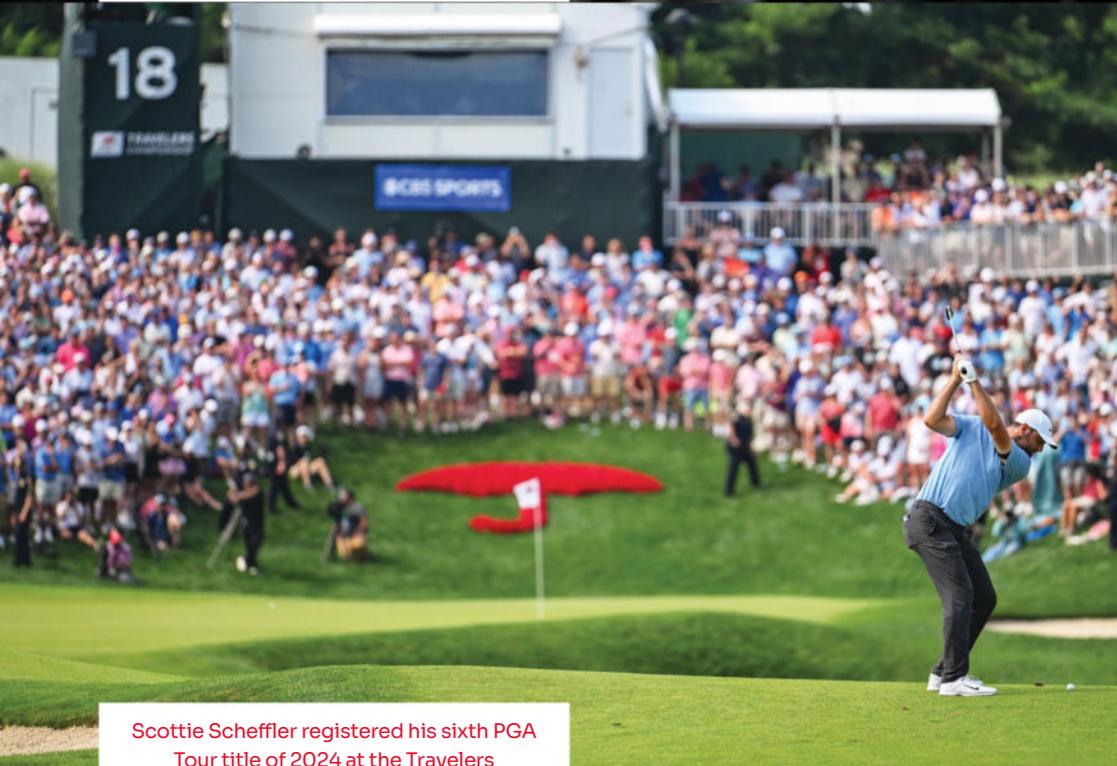
Hall won his first PGA Tour title in Kentucky. The 26-year-old Englishman from Cornwall had only recorded one top-25 finish in 18 starts prior to recording his maiden win. He has two Korn Ferry Tour titles to his name.



Amy Yang landed her first Major at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship



Scotland's Ewen Ferguson won his third DPWT title at the BMW International Open



Scottie Scheffler registered his sixth PGA Tour title of 2024 at the Travelers



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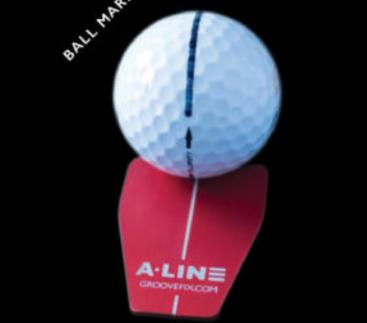
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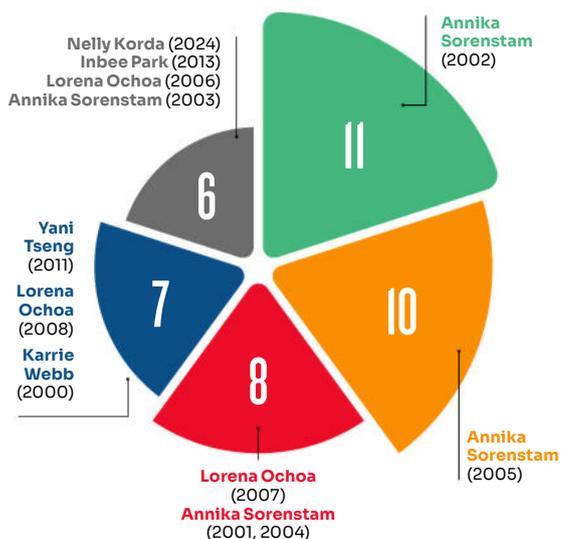
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● MONTH IN STATS



Weeks between **Marcel Siem's** first and most recent (Italian Open) DP World Tour wins

● MOST LPGA TOUR WINS IN A SEASON THIS CENTURY



● NATIONS WITH MORE THAN ONE WIN IN CURRENT DPWT SEASON



● THE GAME

18,609,297.81

Nelly Korda's average earnings per LPGA Tour event to the end of June, including three missed cuts in 11 starts

59

Hayden Springer became the 13th PGA Tour player to shoot a 59

3.48

Scoring average on the par-3 12th at Lancaster CC in the US Women's Open

● LONGEST COURSES EVER PLAYED ON THE DP WORLD TOUR (YARDS)



14

Age at which **Justin Rose** first tried to qualify for The Open at Scotsraig in 1995

50

Years between **Bernhard Langer's** first and final DPWT events (1974-2024)

66

Years since an amateur posted back-to-back PGA Tour top-tens before **Luke Clanton**



● IN THE NEWS

Furue's fabulous finish secures maiden Major title

Ayaka Furue won the first Major title of her career at the Amundi Evian Championship after an eagle at the 72nd hole gave the Japanese player a one-stroke victory. Furue finished the event on 19-under following a closing 65 at Evian Resort, where she played her final five holes in five-under-par.

After starting with three consecutive birdies from the 14th hole, Furue then burst past eventual runner-up Stephanie Kyriacou to clinch a dramatic and deserved success.

The young Australian was in pole position to land her own first Major Championship with just a couple of holes to play, only for a costly chunked chip near the 17th green to drag her back into the pack heading down the last.

With three players – including clubhouse leader Patty Tavatanakit, who had made an eagle on the last herself – on 17-under as the sun set on a superb event, a wayward drive from

Kyriacou allowed Furue, the 2022 Women's Scottish Open winner, to charge through the opening and roll home a mid-range putt for a timely eagle.

Kyriacou managed a birdie, regardless, but it was not enough to force a play-off and the Japanese woman continued her country's success in Majors this year – Yuka Saso reigned supreme in the US Women's Open at Lancaster CC in June.

Immediately after her victory, 24-year-old Furue said: "Breathtaking. It's incredible and I'm so speechless. I didn't believe that I could get a Major win, so I'm so happy right now. I feel so honoured to be the winner of a Major Championship."

Furue became the fourth Japanese woman to win a Major, following on from Hisako Higuchi at the 1977 LPGA Championship, Hinako Shibuno at the 2019 AIG Women's Open and Saso at this year's US Women's Open.

Major glory for Furue in France

● IN BRIEF

Slumbers urges caution over prize pools

Outgoing R&A chief executive Martin Slumbers believes golf needs to be financially sustainable as he explained his decision to increase the 2024 Open prize pool by a nominal amount. "If you look at golf as a pyramid, however strong the pyramid is at the top, it can only be sustained in

the long term if it's equally strong at the base," he said.

Lowry defends Diamond after US Open

The criticism Rory McIlroy's caddie Harry Diamond received following the US Open was

enough to make close friend Shane Lowry furious. "It makes my blood boil, to be honest," Lowry told *BBC Sport NI*. "They don't see how hard Harry works and how good he is for Rory."

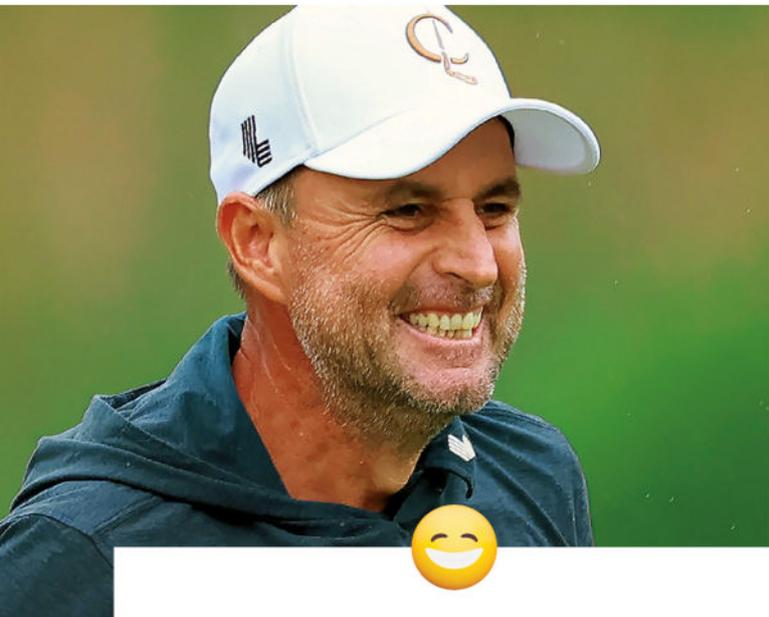


R&A chief executive Martin Slumbers



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● **SHORT GAME**



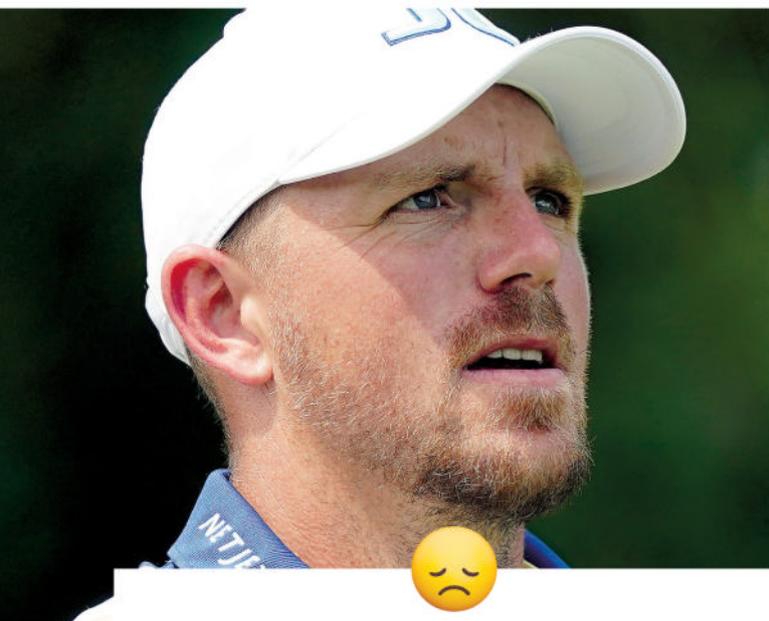
“I WAS HONEST AND UPFRONT ON WHY I JOINED LIV. IT WAS PURELY FOR THE MONEY”

Richard Bland told *Golf Monthly* he is not ashamed to talk about the reasons for his switch



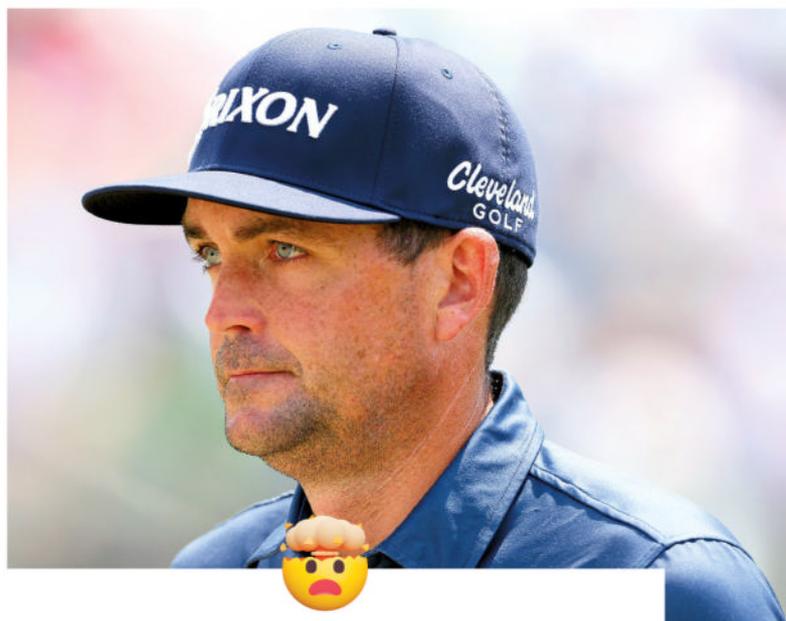
“I THINK IT WAS QUITE RIGHT TO GO ABSOLUTELY WILD. WE DID A GOOD JOB OF THAT!”

Robert MacIntyre looks back on the celebrations after his thrilling Scottish Open win



“I’M TRYING TO CHANGE MY ATTITUDE BY BEING A BIT MORE POSITIVE. I JUST LACK A LOAD OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AT THE MOMENT... YEAH, IT’S HARD”

Matt Wallace opens up on how tough pro golf can be



“I’M GOING TO HAVE THE 12 BEST PLAYERS ON THE TEAM. I DON’T CARE WHERE THEY PLAY”

New US Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley hints there will be space for LIV Golf players in his team for Bethpage Black

THE GAME

2

Robert MacIntyre became the second Scot to win multiple PGA Tour titles in the same season in the modern era.

8

MacIntyre's win in Scotland was the eighth consecutive week a Titleist golf ball player had won on the PGA Tour.

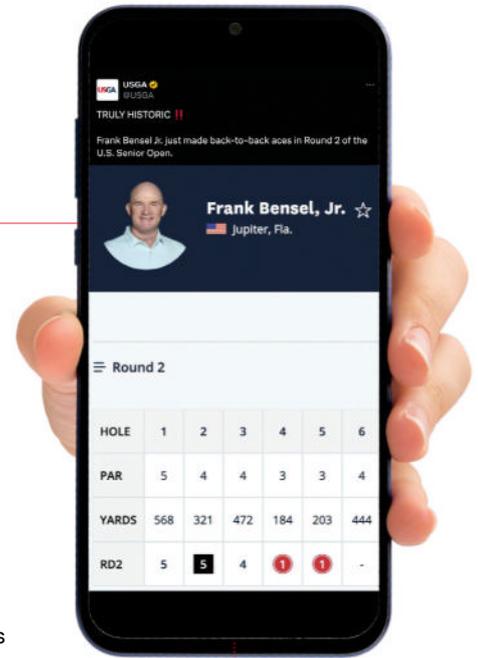


Photography: Getty Images, USGA. Who am I? answer: Moe Norman

● SOCIAL SCENE

History made at the US Senior Open

Holes-in-one are hard enough to come by on their own, but Frank Bense Jr achieved the almost impossible by recording two aces on back-to-back par 3s at the US Senior Open. The incredible feat took place on the 184-yard 4th and 203-yard 5th at the Newport Country Club in Rhode Island. The odds of two aces in the same round have been reported as 67 million to one, but no one has yet thought to work out the figure for consecutive holes. Unfortunately for Bense, he followed up with seven bogeys in the next ten holes to miss the cut. Perhaps his mind had started to wander to his post-round bar bill.



Have you ever seen this before?

● WHO AM I?

Answer in credit to the left



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● GOOD MONTH, BAD MONTH



Stewart Cink

The five-time Ryder Cup player admitted he was "disappointed" not to have been chosen as captain for Bethpage Black.



Leona Maguire

The 29-year-old became the first Irish golfer to win on the LET with a victory at the Aramco Team Series.



Will Zalatoris

Injury forced the American to withdraw from the Rocket Mortgage Classic and he then missed the Scottish Open cut.



Adam Scott

The Australian may have had to make do with 2nd at the Scottish Open, but it was his best PGA Tour finish since 2021.

● **WHAT'S IN THE BAG?**

Ewen Ferguson

The Scot picked up his third DP World Tour title in Germany this July



Driver: Titleist GT3, 10°, Fujikura Ventus Blue 6 X shaft.



Irons: Cobra King Tour (4-9), Nippon N.S. Pro Modus3 Tour 130 X shafts.

Putter: Titleist Scotty Cameron Phantom 5.5 Tour Proto.



Ball: Titleist Pro V1.



Fairways: Titleist TSR2, 15°, Graphite Design Tour AD-DI 7 X shaft; TaylorMade Stealth 2, 21°, Graphite Design Tour AD-VR 8 X shaft.



Wedges: Titleist Vokey SM10, 46°, 52°, 56° & 60°, Nippon N.S. Pro Modus 3 Tour 120 S shafts.



● **SPOTTED ON TOUR**

Tour sauce

Justin Thomas used a tour-only Scotty Cameron 9.2 putter to card a round of 62 on the opening day at the Renaissance Club.



Nelly's newbies

Nelly Korda's updated irons with a fresh P7MC stamp on them suggest a new TaylorMade cavity-back model is on its way to market very soon.



From green to black

Jon Rahm has switched into the Fujikura Ventus Black 7X shaft, ditching the Aldila Tour Green he'd been using since college.



● **GEAR NEWS**

Cameron Davis claimed his second PGA Tour title at the Rocket Mortgage Classic in Detroit using a Titleist TSR3 driver, Titleist 620 CB irons, Titleist SM10 wedges and a Titleist Pro V1 ball.

Davis Thompson romped home at the John Deere Classic using a Titleist TSR3 driver, Ping G430 Max 3-wood, Titleist 620 MB irons and an Odyssey White Hot OG #7 putter.

Marcel Siem used a Callaway Paradym Triple Diamond driver, Callaway Epic Speed D 5-wood, Callaway Apex TCB and MB irons and an Odyssey 2-Ball Ten Broomstick at the Italian Open.

Guido Migliozzi played a TaylorMade Qi10 driver, TaylorMade Brnr mini driver, TaylorMade P7MC irons and TaylorMade MG4 wedges en route to taking the Dutch Open crown.

Ayaka Furue used a Bridgestone B3 SD driver, Bridgestone Tour B JGR 3-wood and Bridgestone Tour B X-CB irons to land the fourth women's Major of the year at the Evian.

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Golf trip with friends: would you rather stay in a golf hotel or dormy house?



Fergus Bisset

A golf-obsessive who studied at St Andrews and is a member at Banchory in Aberdeenshire



Jeremy Ellwood

A 22-year *Golf Monthly* veteran who plays as an artisan at Royal Ashdown Forest in Sussex

● **Golf hotel**
Says Fergus Bisset

This is a straightforward one for me. There's no comparison between bunking in a dormy house and luxuriating in the serviced comfort of a top-quality golf hotel. If you had the option to fly first class, would you take it over a sweaty squeeze into the middle seat of row 34 in economy? I don't care how much camaraderie there might be between those enduring the discomfort of 'cattle class' together – I'd opt for the big seat and the glass of Champagne!

A golf hotel delivers the ultimate accommodation for a golf break with friends. When you arrive, the concierge will be an expert in dealing with your awkward golf luggage and the check-in team will know when your tee bookings are and advise on your best logistical/dining options to fit around them.

Once ensconced in your spacious room (no sharing), you might choose to use the hotel facilities – it will probably have a spa, at least a gym. Then you can meet up in the bar feeling clean and refreshed to share a laugh and drink before your hotel-quality dinner. If you want to have a few more drinks, the bar will remain open for residents. If you just want a good night's sleep, that's an option too!

The hotel team will likely arrange your transport to the clubhouse and your clubs will be waiting – they may even have been cleaned!

Staying in a golf hotel means you barely need to plan anything – it's all done as part of your package. It's always supremely relaxing and I'd take it every time over the prospect of the shared rooms and communal showers of the average, crumbling dormy house.

● **Dormy house**
Says Jeremy Ellwood

I've written before about my fondness for the dormy house on my solo travels, but surely not over and above the enhanced facilities, late-night bars and added luxury of a nice golf hotel when travelling with friends? Well, yes.

It's not usually about the standard of accommodation, for decent hotel rooms will knock spots off the typical dormy room, which is generally a little more basic and often more compact. But with your best golfing mates, what really is a room other than a place to lay your head after a cracking day's golf followed by a never-ending flow of banter, which improves in line with the flow of wine?

Yes, out of season this may have to take place away from the golf club, but the taxi – or designated driver – ride to the local curry house is all part of the dormy experience. Breakfast next day will invariably be superb and the following morning is all part of the appeal as you wander out, coffee in hand, to soak it all in ahead of the battle to come and hoped-for journey-home bragging rights.

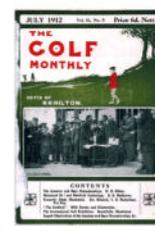
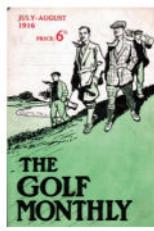
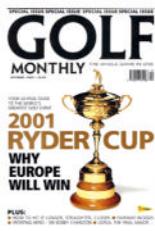
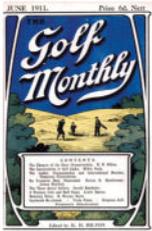
Isn't there more atmosphere in a hotel restaurant, you may say? Possibly, but often it's someone else's atmosphere, not yours. Who hasn't eventually found themselves irritated by

the increasingly loud, and sometimes boorish, behaviour of the men's golf club away weekend on a nearby table? No such problem at the dormy house where all the commotion is self-generated.

It's all just a little more cosy, isn't it? Think friendly corner shop rather than supermarket chain, where, yes, you can get pretty much everything you want but will walk out as anonymously as when you entered.

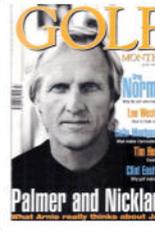
We put the same question to our X followers...



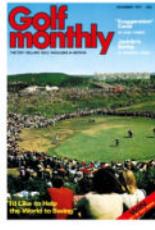
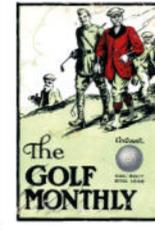


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● STAY AND PLAY

Oulton Hall

Jeremy Ellwood returns to this QHotels Collection 27-hole golf hotel near Leeds to finally play the nine-hole loop still missing from his CV

● **The golf**
Calverley: par 71, 6,482 yards;
Hall: par 36, 3,181 yards
 Oulton Hall is a four-star hotel with 27 holes of golf on the southern outskirts of Leeds. The 18-hole Calverley course is complemented by the nine-hole Hall course, which gets up-close to the grand Georgian mansion by its 3rd green.

On this visit I played the front nine on the Calverley layout before enjoying the back nine on the excellent TrackMan driving range. On that front nine, the 2nd is a secluded par 3 at the far end of the range while the 7th is a fine long downhill banking left past some houses.



Oulton Hall's elegant mansion

Coming home, you'll remember the tough par 3s at 11 and 14, the latter probably requiring headcover removal off the tips.

As for the risk-reward par-4 15th, its sunken green should probably not be your goal off the tee unless the pinpoint

power-draw is your thing. Even the lay-up needs a precise strike!

● **The accommodation**
 Oulton Hall's elegant mansion dates back to the mid-19th century. Prior to

being restored and turned into a hotel in the early 1990s it had been a private residence and a hospital before falling into ruin.

It is now a lovely place to stay blending a taste of yesteryear with everything the modern traveller wants. There are some impressive suites in the main house, while all rooms in the modern wing have been refurbished recently. There's an excellent pool and gym, while both restaurants have a lively buzz whether the Calverley Grill in the mansion or the Claret Jug over in the golf clubhouse.

● **Best deal**
 Oulton Hall is part of The QHotels Collection and offers various stay and play packages from one night with two rounds to three nights with unlimited golf. Prices start from £120pp and one in 12 goes free for larger groups. There are also 'early bird' rates if you book early for 2025. For the best deals and tee times, visit the 'golf breaks' page at oultonhallhotel.co.uk/golf.



There's water to ponder on the Hall nine's 6th hole

Oulton Hall, Rothwell Lane, Leeds, LS26 8HN
 T: 0113 282 1000
 E: stay@theqhotelscollection.co.uk
 W: oultonhallhotel.co.uk

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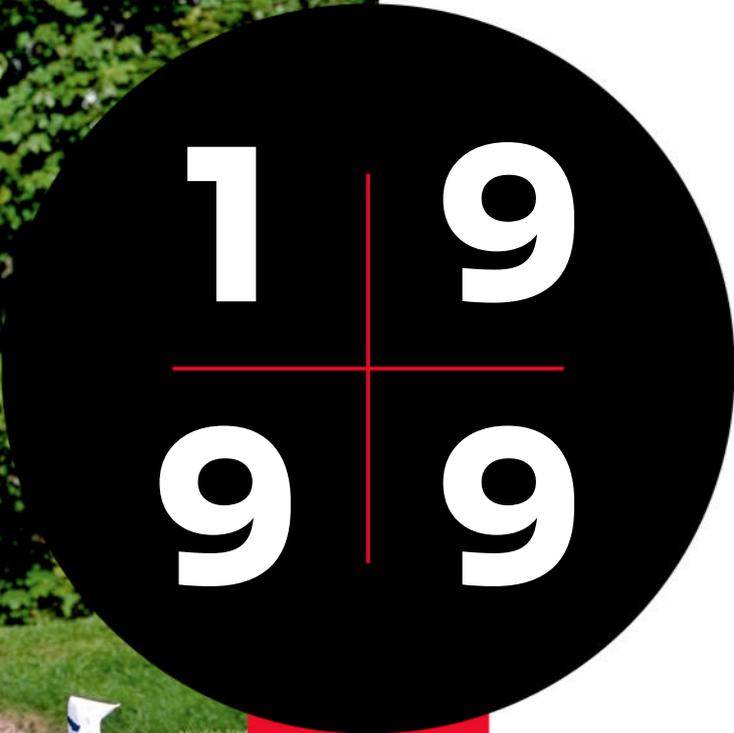
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● FROM THE ARCHIVES...

Mayhem in Massachusetts

A lot of the talk around next year's Ryder Cup is about the potential for a hostile atmosphere for the European team, playing in front of a partisan New York crowd. While spectator involvement and passion from the players has become part of the spectacle in recent stagings, it's been known to cross the line, most infamously at Brookline 25 years ago. GM editor at the time, Colin Callander, had some strong words in the aftermath...

"The atmosphere at The Country Club resembled a battleground as swarms of intoxicated American supporters circled around the course shouting obscenities at the visiting side, as well as at their wives and families," he said.

"Much has been written about the behaviour of the crowd at Brookline, so it suffices to state at this juncture that the lapses in etiquette were every bit as bad as even the most hysterical headlines suggested.

"However, much worse, to my mind at least, was the incident on the 17th green, the one involving various members of the American entourage, simply because it was perpetrated by people who should have known a lot better."

He concluded: "The incident was the worst act of poor sportsmanship I have ever witnessed on a golf course. It is something which the authorities, not to mention the players themselves, have to address."

The US team swarm Justin Leonard on the 17th green



For access to the full article and the rest of the Golf Monthly archive, visit: golfmonthly.themagazinearchive.com



ELSEWHERE...

● Paul Lawrie won The Open Championship at Carnoustie in a play-off against Jean van de Velde after the Frenchman's 18th-hole meltdown.

● Payne Stuart sealed the last of his three Majors with a 15-foot birdie putt at Pinehurst in the US Open. He tragically died just four months later.

● Jose Maria Olazabal took the second of his Masters titles, while Tiger Woods won the US PGA.

AND BEYOND...

● After a decade of preparations, the Euro was launched in January.

● Actor Oliver Reed died from a heart attack while filming *Gladiator* in Malta.

● US president Bill Clinton was acquitted in his impeachment trial over his affair with Monica Lewinsky.



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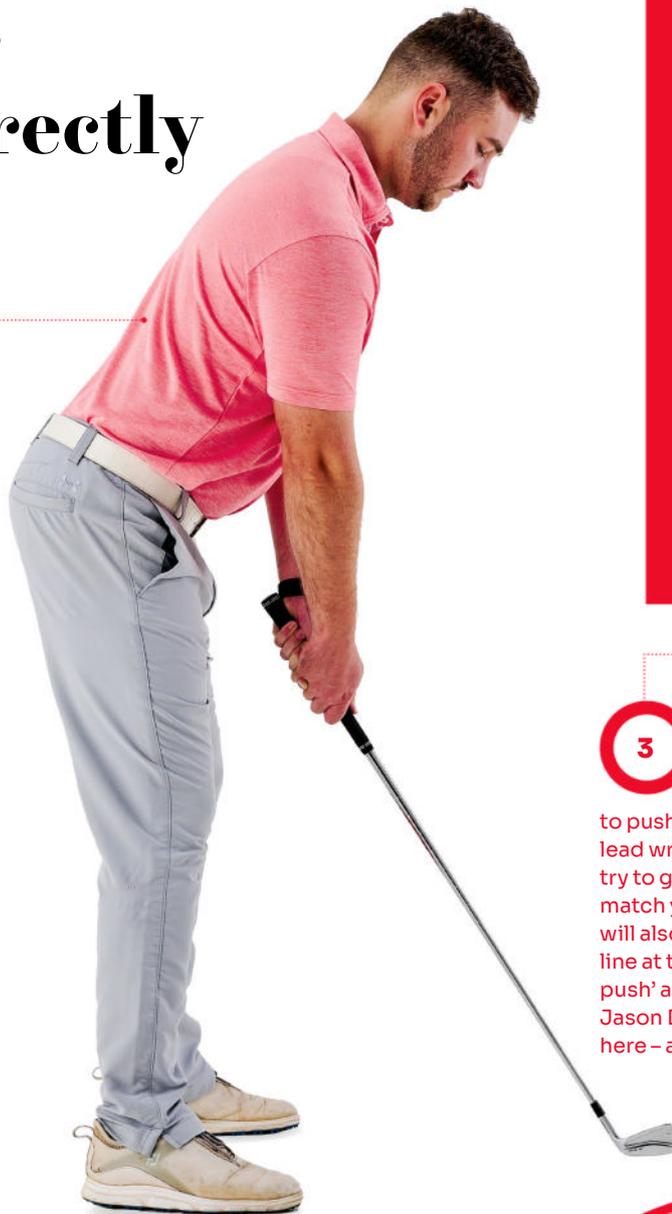




● QUICK TIP

Start your swing correctly

By Top 50 Coach Josh Mayo



1

One bad strike and some golfers 'lose it' for the rest of the round. To start the swing correctly you need to groove good, solid habits. Here, I'm in a strong and engaged posture. Good posture requires a neutral (straight) spine and a bit of flex through the knees. Hinge forward from the hips to send the chest towards the ball. The arms should be relaxed, hanging under the body.

3

You may have seen Justin Thomas using this drill as part of his pre-shot routine. Start to push the club back using the lead wrist and lead shoulder and try to get the leading edge to match your spine angle. The shaft will also be parallel to the target line at this point. Think 'gentle push' as you start your backswing. Jason Day is slow and deliberate here – a good example to follow.

2

The first part of the golf swing, the takeaway, can set off a series of events in the rest of the swing that make it difficult to square up the clubface at impact. You can see here that my hands have started the backswing too quickly, rolling the clubface open and behind the body. If this happens, it can often lead to a big slice, rather than the penetrating flight that you get from a nice square clubface.



Rehearse and rehearse again
Once you get into the position in point three below, stop, check and then complete your swing. And repeat!

Photography: Ollie Curtis

PROTECT YOUR GOLFING ADVENTURES

Golf is a great sport, but bad things do happen. Protect yourself

One of the joys of the game is that the ordinary club golfer can play at some of the sport's greatest venues; courses where the top pros battle it out for the highest honours. A club cricketer cannot just phone up the MCC and arrange a game at Lord's, nor can Sunday morning footballers arrange a kickabout for themselves and their mates at Wembley. But golfers can play courses on the Open Championship rota.

This year's venue, Royal Troon, accepts visitors on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and even has an online booking system to make things easy. Next year's venue, Royal Portrush, accepts visitors six days a week.

If you are planning a trip to one or more of the best courses in the UK, you may think that your household insurance automatically covers your golf gear when out and about. But this may not be the case for every household insurance policy, so it is worth checking to see if your golf equipment is covered.

If your policy doesn't cover this, you might be interested in exploring speciality golf insurance. Not only can this support you in replacing your gear should something go wrong, but it can also bring other benefits. For example, The Insurance Emporium's policies can cover golf membership fees and tournament fees should you be unable to play due to illness or injury sustained while playing golf. There is also new-for-old equipment replacement, and the provision of hire clubs.



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Readers of *Golf Monthly* can qualify for a discount on their golf insurance premiums with The Insurance Emporium. They can get a 5% discount (use promo code: GMONTHLY), which can be combined with one of its other discounts – an introductory offer of 20% and a 10% discount for club members – subject to a maximum total discount of 30%.

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to 30, 60 or 90 days depending on policy type – is included automatically. This can be extended to 120 days per year under the 'Extended Worldwide Cover' optional benefit.

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Opus Platinum has tungsten added into the topline to create a lower flight

This ultra-premium blue finish will be available in the Opus Platinum



An aggressive face blast helps to increase friction



● LAUNCH OF THE MONTH

Callaway Opus Wedges £179



The S-Grind is the most popular of Callaway's four grind options

Following on from the success of the Jaws Raw line, Callaway is bringing to market a fresh new family of wedges, Opus. Taking feedback from its extensive staff of tour players, Callaway has significantly refined the shaping and profile in the new Opus line, incorporating a higher toe peak, more radius in the leading edge and smoother hosel transitions to enhance the aesthetics.

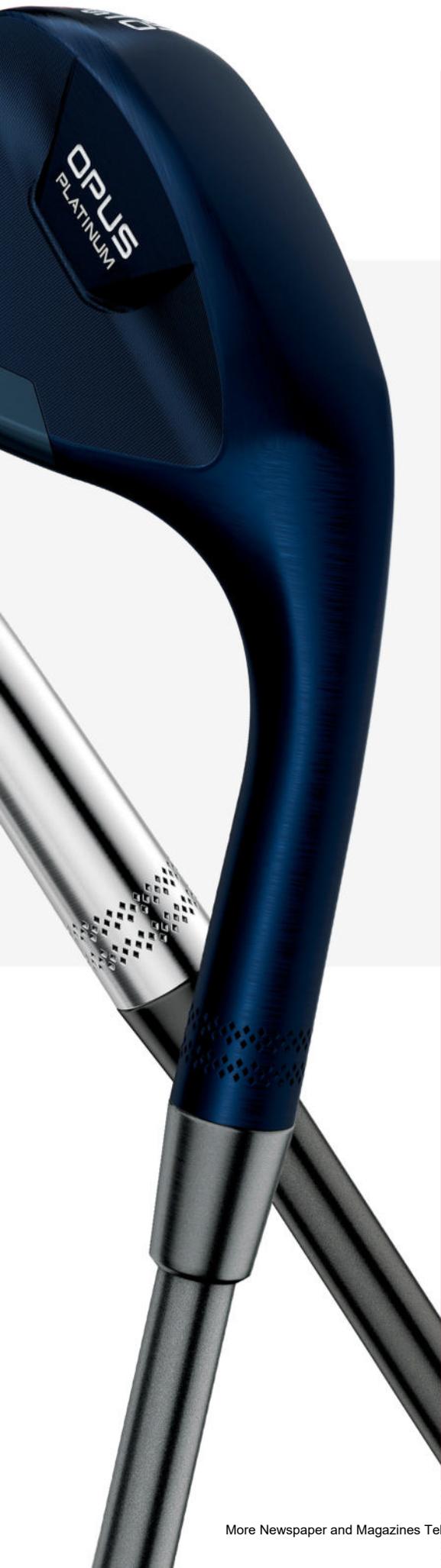
grooves, facilitating more grooves and, as such, spin; furthermore, Callaway has continued with its offset groove-in-groove feature that maintains spin when opening the face; and finally, a brand new aggressive face blast has been added to increase friction and once again optimise spin output.

● Introducing what it refers to as Spin Gen technology, Callaway is providing a full new groove package designed to provide users with the maximum amount of spin possible, which is achieved by combining three key elements on the face. First, the Opus wedges feature reduced distance between

● The Opus wedge family is available in numerous bounce and grind options such as S, W, C, and the T-Grind, which has proved extremely popular on global professional tours.

● The main two retail finishes will be brushed chrome and black shadow. However, a raw version is available through custom order for those who prefer the rusty look.

By Joe Ferguson



Q&A: PAUL WINTERHALTER

Associate product marketing manager at Callaway Golf

What elements have changed from Callaway's previous family of wedges?

We've got an all-new Spin Gen face technology, which is all about a new groove package and enhanced surface roughness. We have worked harder with our tour players than ever before and this is the most tour-validated wedge in Callaway's history. It's actually been worked on with our tour players for over 18 months under the Jaws Raw guise. We are excited to get these changes out to the rest of the public now.

Tell us something about the 2024 range that most people out there won't know?

The name Opus harks back to the days of Mozart and Beethoven creating their magnum opus, which essentially is the greatest achievement of an artist or writer. We really felt that this product was befitting of the name Opus.



A higher toe peak is a key aesthetic change in the new Opus wedges



Smoother hosel transitions are one of the hallmarks of the Opus



“HAVING PREVIOUSLY SEEN HOW EFFECTIVE THE GROOVE-IN-GROOVE TECHNOLOGY IS, I AM EXCITED TO FIND OUT WHAT THE ADDITIONAL GROOVES AND ROUGHER FACE WILL DELIVER”

JOE FERGUSON, GM STAFF WRITER

● NEW LAUNCHES

Garmin Approach Z30 rangefinder £389

By Dan Parker



● Four years on from its most recent release, Garmin has launched the Approach Z30 rangefinder. In a market that is somewhat saturated, Garmin has continued to improve and innovate, showcasing game-improving technology in a sleek, clean device that enhances the brand's offering.

● Crystal-clear viewing optics and 6x magnification are the minimum expectation nowadays, but it's the impressive new Range Relay technology that is likely to catch a tech-loving golfer's attention.

● Once paired via Bluetooth with another device in the Garmin family, or the free Garmin Golf app, the Z30 rangefinder will transfer the information across. The distance will be displayed and you'll also be provided with a bird's-eye view of the green you are playing towards and the exact pin location on that green.

● The Approach Z30 rangefinder has been designed to capture desired targets extremely quickly, providing precise yardages and producing a vibration when the flag has been captured. PlaysLike technology is also present on the Approach Z30, where the yardage given is calculated using factors such as elevation change, air density and wind speed. This is a function that can be turned off with a click of a button, so the device can be used in tournaments.

A tactile, premium finish allows the Z30 to fit nicely in the palm of your hand

The device's 6x magnification is now industry standard

Garmin's PlaysLike technology can be switched on and off to comply with tournament rules



GM SAYS

Those who already use Garmin products will benefit most from the Z30. It seamlessly integrates into the Garmin ecosystem and you'll benefit from even more on-course information.





Teardrop TD-7 putter £239

This large mallet offers a smooth and consistent roll through radial face design. The head will assist golfers looking for help with alignment.



Galvin Green Mannix polo £89

A lightweight, breathable polo shirt perfect for hotter days. The Molecule print and double-cuffed sleeves offer a modern, classic look.



Seed SD-02 golf ball £25 per dozen

A four-piece, tour-level golf ball designed with a larger core and cast urethane cover. It aims to provide impressive distance with low spin.



Callaway Paradym Ai Smoke Ti 340 mini driver £449

This driver alternative offers interchangeable weights and an adjustable hosel to dial in ball flight.



Ben Hogan FW817 package set £349

A 12-piece set that prioritises forgiveness. It comes with a forged titanium driver, cavity-back stainless steel irons and a forgiving mallet putter.



Abacus Huntingdale shorts £80

With four-way stretch and two front and back pockets, the Abacus Huntingdale shorts provide the perfect blend of functionality and style.



Ram FX 02 Milled putter £79

This mid-size mallet will offer good levels of stability and forgiveness, while providing a consistent roll and soft feel from the CNC-milled face.



Ecco Street 720 shoe £160

A highly versatile shoe that is available in four colour options and is fully waterproof, thanks to the leather Gore-Tex upper.



**BEST
2024 CART
BAGS**



Motocaddy Protekta - £289
With noise-reducing 14-way divider.



Sun Mountain H2NO Staff - £389
Has a lightweight nylon waterproof coating.



PowaKaddy Dri Tech - £269
With a heat-sealed waterproof fabric.



Big Max Aqua Sport 360 - £279
Has an extra-large garment pocket.

● THE GAME

● LOVE TO PLAY

AL ZORAH

● UAE

GF: £80

Stats: par 72,
6,522 yards



The United Arab Emirates are home to a treasure chest of top-quality golf courses with a good number of the country's clubs having played host to professional championships at the very highest level. Many of the best courses are in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, but there is also fine golf on offer with a more welcoming green fee just up the coast in Ajman.

The very distinctive Nicklaus Design development at Al Zorah in the smallest

of the seven Emirates is just a 30-minute drive from the international airport in Dubai. The course is beautifully located bordering a wetlands nature reserve, which is home to flamingos, egrets, herons and birds of prey.

The proximity to this tidal, mangrove swamp means that wooden boardwalks link some of the holes, the appearance of which changes greatly as the water ebbs and flows throughout the day. It is both a

serious test of golf, which earlier this year hosted the first Clutch Tour event in the country, as well as a very scenic and engaging course to see and play. It is also maintained in excellent condition.

The four par 3s are a real highlight, each taking full advantage of the swampy setting, while the tees on some holes are set out into the mangroves.

Words **Rob Smith** Photography **James Hogg**





Wayne Riley

A former member of the European Tour and two-time winner, Wayne is part of the Sky Sports golf team. He writes exclusively for *Golf Monthly*

● OPINION

By the time you read this, you'll know who won The Open Championship. But I wanted to write about two very different but equally heartwarming victories that took place in the same week just before the final Major of the season: Bob MacIntyre at the Scottish Open and Harry Hall at the Isco Championship.

The Isco – a co-sanctioned, opposite-field event – gives some lesser lights from the PGA and DP World Tours an opportunity to gain a two-year exemption with the world's best golfers playing elsewhere. It was an opportunity Hall seized with both hands. Coming into the tournament, the 26-year-old Cornishman had just one top-25 finish in 18 PGA Tour starts. Now, he's a winner on the world's best golf circuit.

It's impossible to say at such a young age, but that win could have been the difference between a journeyman career and one where he enjoys continued success on the PGA Tour. He's now exempt until the end of the 2026 season, so he can plan his schedule with more certainty, enjoy more weeks off and play with a freedom not afforded to those struggling to crack the top 125 in the FedExCup standings. And the manner of his victory? It doesn't get much better than chipping in on the third extra hole of a multi-man play-off. Good on you, Harry.

I was so pleased to see MacIntyre win his national championship at the Scottish Open, as well. The atmosphere was incredible and you could feel the emotion when his putt on the 72nd hole tip-toed into the cup. I've never seen bigger crowds at the Scottish Open. It was a great moment. You don't often see Bob that charged up.

He played fantastic golf, but he also got one of the luckiest breaks of all time on the 16th hole. He went to address his ball and his metal spikes clanked against a sprinkler head deep in the thick stuff. He was able to move it to a cleaner lie and hit the resulting shot to 10ft before knocking in the putt for eagle. Still, you get plenty of bad breaks in this game. Hats off to him for seizing the moment and becoming the first Scotsman to win the Scottish Open since Monty in 1999.

MacIntyre is now looking like a world-class player. He's inside the world's top 20 and has a great demeanour to go with a strong all-round game, highlighted by his putting. He will only continue to improve, too. Great players close tournaments out how he did in Scotland. He has the guts and game to go on and win a Major Championship. He'll be a member of the European Ryder Cup team for many years to come, too.

Speaking of the Ryder Cup, I was really surprised when I heard the news that Keegan Bradley had been appointed captain of the US team. It sounds like it came as quite a shock to Keegan, too! He's only 38 years old and he'll be 39 when the matches take place next September. Appointing him is a really interesting decision. It feels far too early for him to be a captain, but the US is trying something new and I actually think it'll turn out to be a good move. It's not something you can really turn down, either.

I know Tiger did, but he's got a lot going on right now with the PGA Tour/LIV Golf discussions, the launch of TGL and trying to compete on tour. He's also great friends with JP McManus and I'd bet my house on him getting the captaincy at Adare Manor in 2027.

But back to Keegan. I think he'll be a really good captain – he's passionate and all the players love him. I remember watching him at Medinah in 2012 and he was running around like a chicken with its head cut off. He loves the Ryder Cup and he's close to all the players. However, if he makes the team on merit, I can't see him being a playing captain. I don't think that's possible, so the PGA of America will need to have a contingency plan in place. But good luck to him – I'm sure he'll do a grand job.

“MacIntyre has the guts and game to go on and win a Major Championship”

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Alison Root

Alison Root is *Golf Monthly's* women's golf editor. You can find her on Instagram @rootalison

● OPINION

Women's golf is in the best place it's ever been, with greater interest and more females playing - right? For the most part, this is absolutely true: the professional game is finally receiving the attention it deserves, prize funds are up and there's greater TV coverage. Additionally, more women, especially those in the 25-35 age group, are showing an interest in the game. But if you're a female golf club member of a diminishing ladies' section, I completely understand why you might ask, "Where is this influx of women?"

Despite The R&A, national federations and golf clubs investing significant time and effort into initiatives aimed at encouraging greater female participation, many of which have helped, the Covid-19 pandemic has had the most significant impact in recent years. The pandemic led to a surge in people playing and women's golf was the biggest beneficiary.

In the UK, the number of women taking up golf more than tripled in 2020, with almost 1.5 million playing at least one round that year. By 2022, 20% of adult golfers on full-length courses in GB&I were female, compared to 15% in 2019. According to 2023 data from Sporting Insights, just over a quarter (28%) of the 7.3 million adults in GB&I who engage with golf through on-course and alternative formats are women.

However, for many everyday club golfers like myself, these numbers can be confusing because the growth has not been there for us. As more women take up the game, they're finding different ways to enjoy it, like using simulators, participating in society golf or joining emerging women's communities. Then there are the golf influencers, who focus on their own game

and the lifestyle associated with it, rarely promoting memberships. I get it - golf culture has changed (it needed to) and this is a proven approach to attract women.

There are more women under 35 than ever playing golf, which is fantastic, but the demographics at most clubs across the UK, where the average woman's age is 64, present a challenge. While golf allows people of all ages and abilities to play together, it's not particularly appealing for a young woman to join an environment where most members are the age of her mother or grandmother!

Recently, I had a conversation with a man from Manchester whose 33-year-old daughter has started to show an interest in the game. He was asking, "Where does she play?" At his home course, the women's section is really small, and there is no one of a similar age. It's unlikely that clubs will attract many 25- to 30-something female members until there's a nucleus of that age group already there.

This is a good problem to have - we're moving in the right direction. It's just a shame that after beating the drum for so long to attract more women to the game, it feels segregated at the grassroots level.

We have traditional members on one side and new-age golfers on the other. For many ladies' sections to thrive and survive, the industry and clubs will need to work even harder to demonstrate the benefits of membership, perhaps offer non-traditional playing options and, most importantly, create a modern, welcoming atmosphere.

When all is said and done, women are transitioning to club membership, it's just not happening at the speed or volume we would hope. For example, since England Golf launched iGolf, the programme allowing non-members to gain a handicap, from over 46,000 subscribers, 10,700 have transitioned into membership of affiliated golf clubs, of which just 5% (534) are women.

Times have changed, and women's golf has moved into a new era. With more women playing in various ways and chatting about golf, word of mouth and social media is helping to introduce others to the sport. While progress may be slow in some areas, we're still in a better position than ever.

“It’s a shame the women’s game feels segregated at the grassroots level”

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THE GREATEST SHOWMAN



Fergus Bisset looks at how **Bryson DeChambeau** has become the hottest property in golf and why he's so important to the future of the game

Photography

GETTY IMAGES

Until this year, Bryson DeChambeau was golf's 'Mr Marmite', both widely loved and hated. But, after an incredible run and some exceptional PR work from Camp Bryson in 2024, he's morphed into 'Captain Nutella' and now only the most cynical opponents of spreads don't enjoy a bit of him.

Bryson truly has been a breath of fresh air in professional golf this season. Disputes at an organisational level of the game seem trifling when Bryson takes to the fairways or simply to the screen. He's compelling viewing. In fact, he offers the most compelling viewing of any player in our game since Tiger Woods.

On course, he plays golf like no other top-level star, ever. His blend of meticulousness, eccentricity and aggression makes spectators raise eyebrows, let out whoops of joy and groans of disappointment. And Bryson embraces their emotions and responds in kind. He lets it all hang out, hollering and fist-pumping on his unique and merry

way round the course. In an era of identikit golfing robots, the burning beacon of Bryson has been lit to guide golf into a new and exciting future. He might just be the most important figure in the game today.

It's amazing that someone we see competing at the very highest level so infrequently should be of such

consequence to the game, but perhaps it highlights his box-office appeal. Owing to his move to LIV Golf, Bryson has only taken on the cream of the crop in the Majors this season. But in those events, not only has he outshone everyone in terms of results, but he has also outshone everyone in the way he's gone about delivering them.

At Augusta, he was tied for 6th, but he stormed out of the blocks with a scintillating 65 that included five birdies in his last seven holes. Then, in round three, after something of a struggle all day, he holed out for birdie from the 18th fairway and looked genuinely touched by the huge roar the shot elicited from the patrons.

At Valhalla for the US PGA Championship, he rode a wave of fan support all four days, closing with a round of 64 to finish just one behind the excellent Xander Schauffele. Bryson didn't win, but he created a captivating atmosphere in Kentucky that week. He put on a show right up until his final putt clawed its way into the hole – pure theatre. The spectators, the TV fans and the pundits were won over.

But many of those pundits felt that Bryson wouldn't have a chance at the US Open. He had been good at bombing it round Valhalla and reaching 20-under-par, but there was a consensus that the ►

precision and control demanded by Pinehurst #2 would be too much for him. How wrong they were. Bryson went up against another of golf's great characters, Rory McIlroy, and he came out on top. As disappointing as that was for British and Irish golf fans, few could deny the 2024 US Open produced some of the most exciting golf we've seen for years.

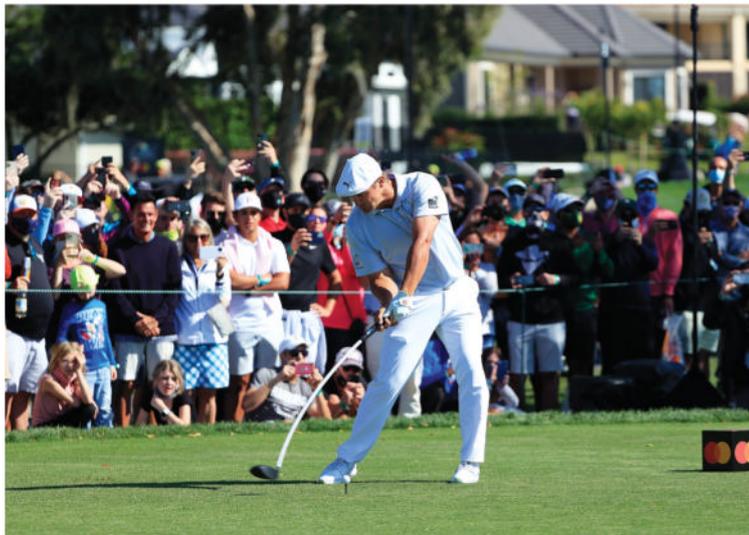
● **GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT**

Golf needs characters. Through the history of the game, it's been characters who have inspired youngsters to take up the sport and caused non-golfers to pay attention. Characters attract eyeballs!

From Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones to Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Arnold Palmer, Seve Ballesteros and, of course, Tiger Woods, characters define the great eras of golf and drive its popularity forward. Bryson is doing the same. He plays with flair, taking on shots that others wouldn't see (or be able to pull off). He demonstrates a wide array of skills (not just bombing) and he plays with tenacity and with his heart on his sleeve.

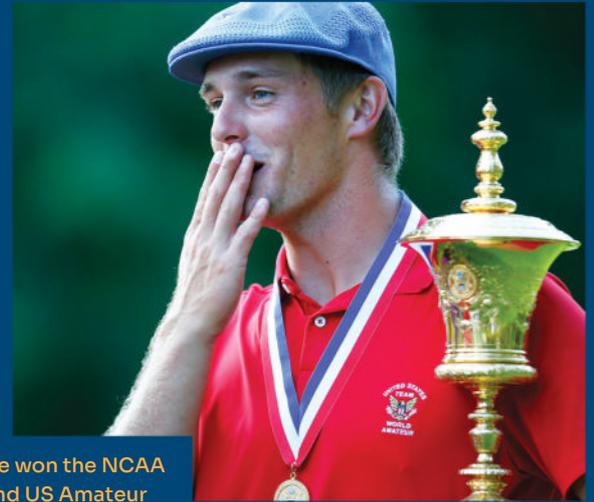
As admirable as Scottie Scheffler's golf has been in 2024, it hasn't been very exciting. Xander Schauffele's swing is a thing of beauty and his ice-cool demeanour is impressive, but it isn't exactly thrilling. Bryson swashbuckles, swipes, blasts and swaggers his way round the course. That's what people want to see and that is what golf needs. Bryson is a maverick and an innovator and that interests people, not only golfers.

One of the things that interests golfers about Bryson, though, is his analytical and scientific approach to performance – one that has earned him the nickname 'The Scientist'. He decided to play golf with one-length irons, something no other top



“I’M NOT HERE TO DECIDE THE FUTURE OF EQUIPMENT IN THE GAME OF GOLF, BUT I CERTAINLY DO KNOW WHAT WORKS FOR ME”

↑
Taking on the water at Bay Hill in 2021



He won the NCAA and US Amateur titles in 2015

professional in the men's game has done before or since. He has worked out everything from his ideal grip size (massive) to the micro-improvements to be found by floating balls in Epsom salts. “Essentially, we do it to make sure the golf ball is not out of balance,” he explained to the press at Pinehurst.

Before, and then during, lockdown, he decided to build muscle and develop more speed to become a longer hitter. He succeeded. He became the longest hitter in elite pro golf. At first, fans weren't sure of the new 'Super Bryson', but it didn't take long to see the appeal. At Bay Hill in 2021, he said he might attempt to drive across the water, directly to the green on the par-5 6th. It was a ludicrous carry, and many thought he was just having a bit of fun. But he backed himself, went for it, made the carry and punched the sky with two outstretched index fingers as the ball was in flight. It was a cool shot and a cool image.

Bryson does it his own way, from using the clock face to describe his shorter shots (“this is a 10.30” means the club goes back to 10.30 and then through to 1.30) to giving all his clubs unique names. Much like in his early days in the public eye when he wore a flat cap in tribute to Ben Hogan, the nicknames he gives his clubs demonstrate his knowledge of and interest in golfing history. Herman Keiser (his 46 degree) and Jimmy Demaret (his 50 degree) are so named as those two were Masters Champions of 1946 and 1950 respectively.

He examines every technical element of the game. He has even 3D-printed his own clubs! But there are no secrets. He's happy to talk about what he's doing with the press and with fellow pros.

“I'm always here to give information. I'm an open book. I've always said that. Even to any of the players,” he told the *Associated Press*. “I do things a little different... I'm not here to

BRYSON DECHAMBEAU



decide the future of equipment in the game of golf, but I certainly do know what works for me.”

● A RAPID RISE

DeChambeau was born in Modesto, California, in 1993. He went to high school near Fresno and then to the Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He won both the NCAA and US Amateur titles in 2015, played in the Walker Cup of that year and then turned professional in 2016. He enjoyed swift success, earning his PGA Tour card for 2017 and winning in his first season – the John Deere Classic.

He won four times in 2018 and then secured the first of his two US Open titles at Winged Foot in 2020. In that event, he played a blistering final round of 67 to win by six from a faltering Matthew Wolff. DeChambeau moved to fifth in the world rankings and was bookies’ favourite going into the Covid-delayed November Masters of 2020. He was feeling extremely confident.



Bryson and Brooks had a well-publicised spat in 2021

Bryson does tend to speak plainly and has overstepped the mark on occasion. He did so prior to that 2020 Masters. The newly ‘powered-up’ Bryson told the press that the par (72) of Augusta was really a 67 for him because he can hit all the par 5s in two “no problem”. Nobody really likes to hear someone speak that arrogantly about one of the world’s most iconic courses and few were disappointed when Bryson failed to match his par of 67 once in that event, finishing T34.

In 2021, he had a well-publicised falling out with Brooks Koepka, ostensibly originating from Koepka alluding to Bryson’s slow play. But a few ill-advised comments from DeChambeau (particularly one criticising Brooks’ physique) did little to curry favour with the golfing public, many of whom agreed with Koepka’s views on slow play. That reputation for arrogance was starting to stick. Not good PR for anyone.

But, in terms of PR, the toughest thing for DeChambeau to deal with (something Koepka has also faced) was his decision to move to LIV Golf. Although there are fans of the new circuit, there’s still a strong tide of

opinion saying that those who made the move did so just for money, and that they have hurt golf by acting solely in their own financial interests.

Bryson received a reported \$125 million for joining the Saudi-backed golf league. As a ‘scientist’ and rational thinker, the choice to go in that direction must have seemed the logical one. From a purely financial perspective, it probably was. But it definitely hurt his reputation with sports fans and it has meant most people, given viewing figures for LIV remain relatively low, now only see DeChambeau play a handful of times a year.

That meant DeChambeau had to employ a different strategy to win back favour with the public. He knew he needed to be more approachable and less overconfident. It’s testament to his character that he was willing to work on those things.

“Just thinking back three years ago, the landscape was a lot different,” he said prior to this year’s US Open. “I tried to show everybody who I was. I didn’t do it in the right way and could have done a lot of things better.”

GOLFING MAVERICKS

Walter Hagen: 1892–1969

‘The Haig’ was the winner of 11 Majors between 1914 and 1929, and countless other tournaments. But he was as well known for his showmanship and flamboyance. He dressed immaculately, he made friends with the Prince of Wales and he greatly

advanced the standing and status of professional golfers in the early 20th century.

Seve Ballesteros: 1957–2011

He played like a matador, strutting the fairways and staring down shots and the opposition. He was a magician around the greens and one of the game’s great escapologists. For many golfers growing up in the 1980s, there was only one player they wanted to emulate – Seve.

Arnold Palmer: 1929–2016

A true swashbuckler, Arnie won an army of fans thanks to his daring and aggressive style of play. He ripped drives and long-irons, he smoked cigarettes and generally looked super-cool. He also won no fewer than 62 PGA Tour titles, including seven Majors. He inspired a generation of golfers.

Lee Trevino: 1939–

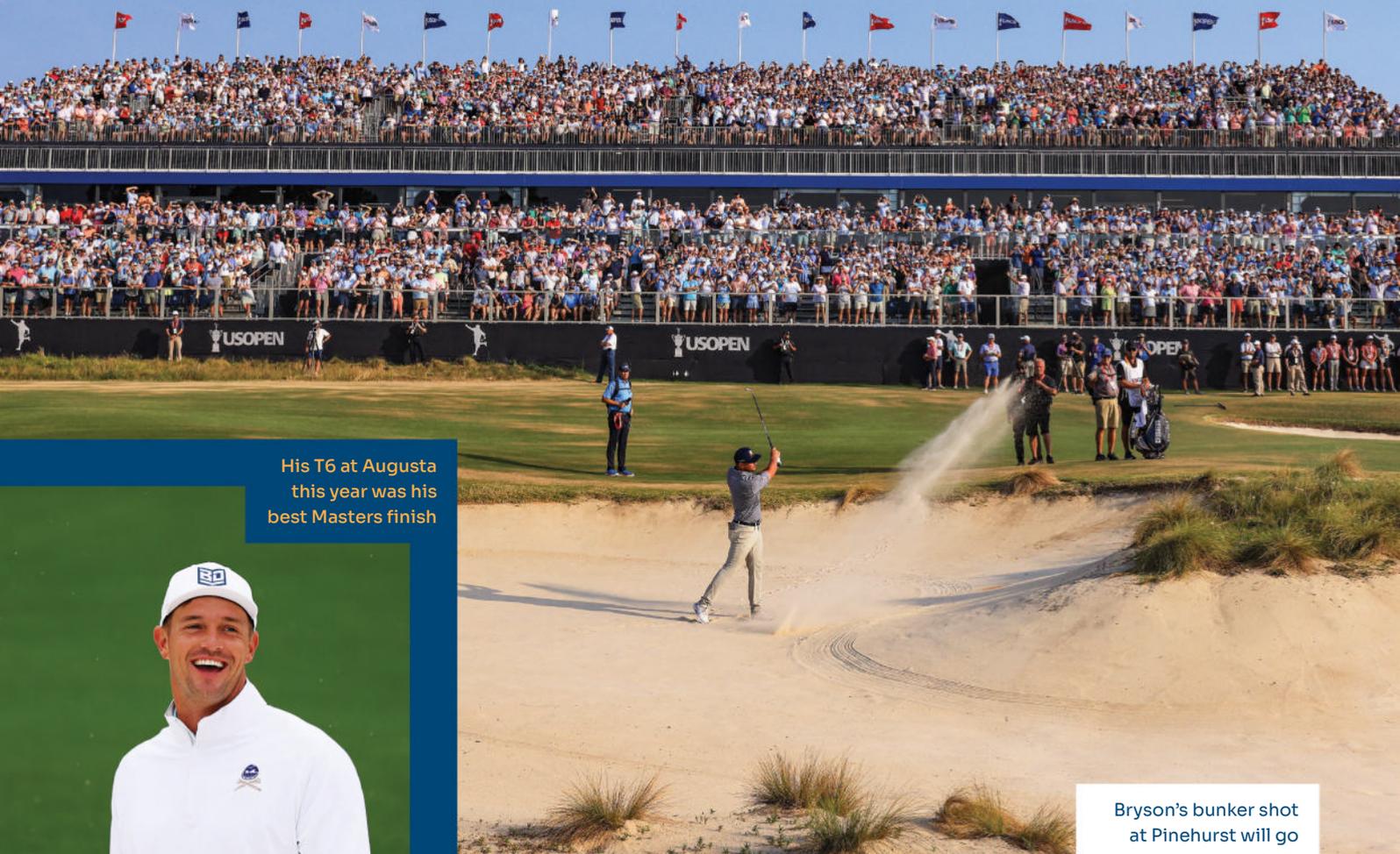
The great entertainer. Nobody in the game’s history has had as many quips at their disposal to keep the galleries interested and opponents on their toes! Trevino was a six-time Major Champion who played with huge skill and possessed a superb short game.

John Daly: 1966–

“Grip it and rip it!” Long John was the first true power player to emerge in the new era of metal-headed drivers at the start of the 1990s. Wholly unpredictable, he was majestic at times but was prone to total self-destruction at others. John has done it his way and has enjoyed some great times.



The late, great Seve won five Major Championships



His T6 at Augusta this year was his best Masters finish



Bryson's bunker shot at Pinehurst will go down in history

“I TRIED TO SHOW EVERYBODY WHO I WAS. I DIDN'T DO IT IN THE RIGHT WAY AND COULD HAVE DONE A LOT OF THINGS BETTER”

With a strong team around him, Bryson started to produce more social media content and people lapped it up. His YouTube channel now has nearly 800,000 subscribers and his funny, sometimes even self-deprecating videos across social media show his human side. Even those who still hold a negative view of Bryson would struggle not to laugh at the video which came out showing him working on fist pumps and cap-doffs using weight machines in the gym.

On the course, Bryson interacts with the fans more than almost any other player. He signs autographs during breaks in play and he chats to the crowd. When he was debating with his caddie

whether to take driver from the tee on the par-4 13th in the third round at Pinehurst, he turned to the crowd and pleaded, “Please don't boo me!” before taking an iron from his bag. It was a moment that recalled great showmen like Lee Trevino and Seve Ballesteros, stars who always used the crowds to their advantage. They played the entertainer and the galleries loved them for it.

● **GIVING SOMETHING BACK**

And the approach has paid dividends for Bryson. Following his popular win at Pinehurst, the US press has referred to him as ‘The People’s Champion’. It’s quite a turnaround for golf’s Mr

Marmite and it’s a moniker the 30-year-old can’t quite believe.

“I’m humbled, very humbled by it,” he told the *Associated Press* at LIV Nashville just after his US Open triumph. “Getting to a place where I finally get to showcase my true self and show others what this great game means to me. It’s given me so much. It’s time for me to give back.”

And Bryson has certainly given back in 2024. He has dazzled with his golf in the Major Championships, including playing one of the greatest shots of all time. His bunker blast on the last at Pinehurst to shatter Rory’s already cracking heart will go down as one of the most skilful and courageous strokes in golfing history. He has also made us laugh, think and, most importantly, talk about golf. His absence from so many of the game’s most significant events owing to his allegiance to LIV Golf is a big loss for the sport. It should be a key driver for the powers that be to reach a resolution. We all want a bit more of Bryson.

● SIGNATURE SHOT

BRYSON'S BUNKER BRILLIANCE

● What was the shot?

1

Bryson DeChambeau's head must have been spinning when he found his drive on the 18th (72nd) hole at Pinehurst in June. He was well out

of position in the scrub – and it got worse. His second shot left him in a bunker 55 yards from the pin.

It would not have been an easy shot to face in a normal situation. But with the US Open on the line, the long escape from the trap looked horrid. He hit the ball to 3ft 11in. According to golf statistician Lou Stagner, the chance of hitting it inside 4ft was approximately 1.7%.

By **Top 50 Coach**
Dan Grieve

Photography
Getty Images,
Tom Miles

● **How did he play it?**

2

Club golfers will appreciate just how easy it is to get the ball first and thin it long, or take too much sand and barely get the ball out.

Bryson set himself a really strong platform at address, adopting a driver-width stance. It looked like he was really pushing pressure down into the sand, which helped him to apply the

speed with his chest rotation instead of driving his legs too hard.

I also noticed little to no shaft lean at address; he kept the loft and bounce on the club, which helped it to slide through the sand easily. Then, he really thumped down as he released the clubhead, exploding the sand under the ball, which carried it high and forward the required distance. The fact he was using a one-length club probably helped him here as he could generate more clubhead speed.

The key is speed with a lot of release of the clubhead



● **What can you learn?**

3

Long, high bunker shots require good speed from your chest rotating and not the legs driving too hard. The key is speed with a lot of release of the clubhead. You do not want the leading edge digging into the sand (particularly when there is a lot of sand). Bryson released the bounce fast, which helped the sand explode upwards and carry the ball over the ridge at the front of the green.

He had to go high as he had an upslope to carry first. If you have more green to work with and the lip of the bunker isn't too high, try using less loft, even a 9-iron (Bryson used his 55-degree wedge).

Set up as you would for a normal greenside bunker shot. The narrower sole and less loft will propel the ball quicker and help it run more. You can take two to three inches of sand, so it is safer in terms of contact. With less loft, you do not need to hit the ball as hard, either, making it easier to manage the strike point.



● EQUIPMENT

MAD SCIENTIST TO MAJOR CHAMPION...

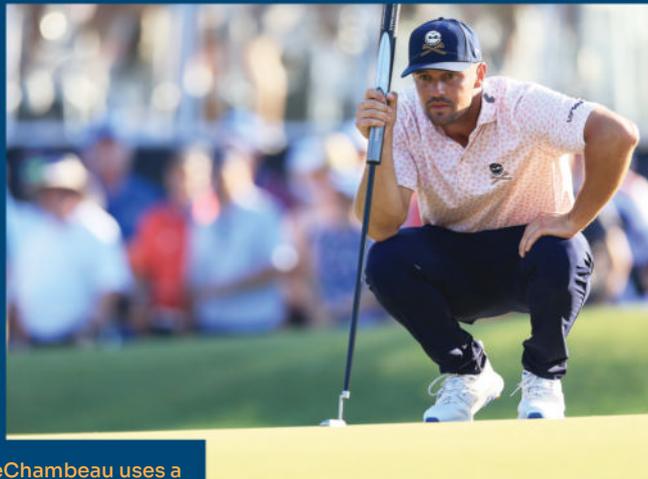
GM gear guru Joe Ferguson looks back on Bryson's equipment journey, from his first set of one-length irons to his current unorthodox line-up

A

s a self-confessed equipment nerd, I have watched on in fascination while Bryson DeChambeau has revolutionised the game, not just with his unconventional swing, but also through his innovative approach to his equipment choices. His journey with golf equipment reflects his commitment to science, innovation and a willingness to challenge traditions.

I first became aware of DeChambeau while watching the young American in a flat cap win the 2015 US Amateur Championship with a set of one-length irons. His equipment story began a long time before that, however. At the age of 15, he developed a keen interest in the physics of golf, which led him to Homer Kelley's iconic book *The Golfing Machine*. Fascinated by the concept of a single-plane golf swing, the young Bryson decided to create a single-length set of irons from some old Nike clubs in his coach Mike Schy's workshop.

Those who know their golf equipment will know that iron heads get progressively heavier from the long-irons down to the wedges, so creating a uniform weight involved adding and removing an awful lot of mass manually. This resulted in a rather agricultural-looking set of irons that are now on display in Schy's Golf Academy in Fresno.



DeChambeau uses a putter like no other

DeChambeau has been a one-length iron player ever since, but that is not where the unorthodox nature of his equipment choices ends. Almost throughout the bag, Bryson does something a little different from the rest, and even his golf balls are not immune to the 'scientific' treatment. He believes wholeheartedly in the accumulation of minimal gains and nowhere is that better displayed than through his practice of balancing his golf balls using Epsom salts, or his insistence on lining up the ball to ensure he strikes a particular part of a particular dimple when putting.

The list is almost endless, but other nuances in his equipment include his extremely upright, armlock putter with descending loft technology and a forward-facing flat grip, comfortably the thickest grip in professional golf, and a driver set-up inspired by his brief dalliance with competitive long-driving. Wherever you look throughout the bag, Bryson is challenging the boundaries of conventional thinking, pushing for

more and believing he is the man to uncover things in golf equipment that no one has previously considered. Lest we forget his 2017 experiment with side-saddle putting on the PGA Tour!

As an enthusiast, tinkerer and tester, I absolutely love Bryson's attitude towards his equipment. Progress relies on people who are not prepared to just accept what they are presented with as their only option, and DeChambeau embodies that.

Generally, the logic behind his experiments has been sound. Take his Jumbo Max grips, for example. His rationale was to question why golf is the only sport to use a grip size not much thicker than a hosepipe when other sports, such as baseball, hockey and cricket, all utilise much larger handle sections. It makes perfect sense when you think about it, but the point is not many do think about it.

As Steve Jobs famously said, "Here's to the crazy ones, the rebels, the troublemakers.... Because the ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."



WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

Driver	Krank Formula Fire (6° at 5°)
3-wood	Krank Formula Fire (9°)
5-wood	Krank Formula Fire (12°)
Irons	Avoda Prototype (5-PW)
Wedges	Ping Glide 4.0, 46°, 50°, 56° and 60°
Putter	SIK Pro C-Series Armlock/LA Golf Proto
Ball	Titleist Pro V1x Left Dash

Interview: Mark Townsend Illustration: David Lyttleton



Planes RAINS & AUTOMOBILES

Steven Dashevsky tells the extraordinary story of how he broke the world record for playing golf on six different continents in the shortest period of time



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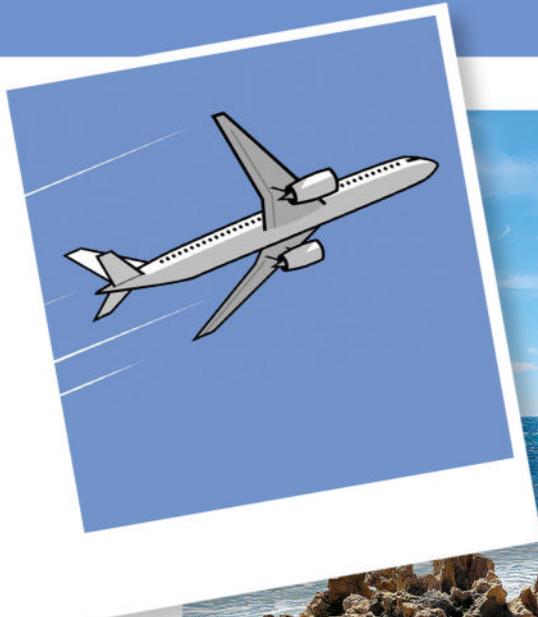


MIAMI!



Steven Dashevsky 2024





Steven's quest started close to the sea south of Perth in Australia



Like plenty of avid golfers, Steven Dashevsky had always dreamed of playing golf around the world, taking on some of the best courses and seeing some spectacular sights. Then, when he hit 50, he took things to an altogether different level when his competitive nature took over. Along with his good friend Nick Solski, he had the idea of eclipsing the world record for playing a round of golf on each of six continents.

"Unless you are competing seriously, you are just hitting the ball around and you are just a tourist," explains the financier, who was born in Kharkov in Ukraine and now resides in London. "This was the only feasible golf-related sporting record that I could reasonably beat while achieving my dream of going around the world and doing something that nobody else has done."

After months of planning, he settled on a route from Perth to Dubai to Casablanca to Madrid to Bogota to Miami and even a practice round in Singapore. There were a number of rules and regulations to stick to, among them that you couldn't drive yourself to the course, which had

to be at least 6,000 yards long, and that somebody at the club had to verify your start and finish time.

Back in London was Dashevsky's colleague, Nadia, who would spend the four-plus days helping to coordinate the pair's movements while, on the ground, a bundle of people helped Dashevsky enter the *Guinness Book of Records* with a six-continent time of 104 hours, 15 better than the previous best. But that barely touches on the story of what happened, as Dashevsky himself reflects here...

Secret Harbour Golf Links, Perth

We were meant to be playing another course in Perth but that wasn't in great condition. We ended up seeing a sign for Secret Harbour and playing there instead and it was fantastic, a great design.

Everybody moves at a slower pace in Australia and it just calms you down. The people were super-friendly and bought into the idea of what we were doing. It made for the perfect, spontaneous start to the record bid. In our short time in Perth we met a lot of people – this seems to be what happens in Australia – and I learnt the words 'ute' and 'joey' and discovered how Aussie Rules works.

Whether kids selling balls on the course or a chat in the clubhouse, it's easy to see what makes Oz such a memorable place. As it quickly transpired, Perth would turn out to be the calm before the storm... literally!

2 The Els Club, Dubai

If you were making a TV programme about this leg of the trip, you could not have scripted it better. Part of the challenge was about being able to adapt and react and we certainly had to do this in Dubai. In planning this leg, there were only direct flights from Dubai to Casablanca, our next stop, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. For the logistics to work we picked the Tuesday.

I woke Nick up with three hours of our 11-hour flight from Perth to Dubai to go as we had a problem. The weather in Dubai

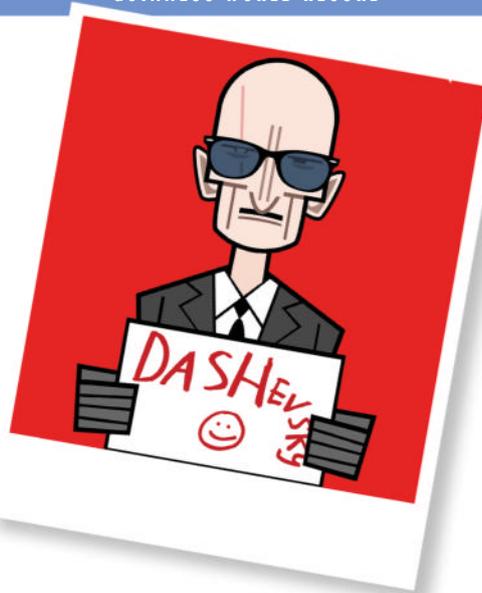


was forecast to be biblical with thunderstorms coming in. We considered switching to Oman or Qatar but it looked to be the same there. We arrived at Dubai Creek at 6am and the course was closed. After more discussions about getting another flight, we headed to The Els Club, half an hour inland. The weather looked okay but we played three holes and then, in the space of a few seconds, got absolutely soaked – like a bucket of water had been dropped over our heads.

For some reason we played two more holes, before calling it a day when the lightning arrived. The trip looked to be scuppered! We had some breakfast and a shower, in which time things began to brighten up a bit.

The club gave us two caddies, one with a buggy and one a little truck because there were tunnels the buggy wouldn't be able to get through because of the rain. The buggy would drive us, we'd get loaded to the truck to go through the tunnel and the buggy would go around. The caddies were something else, overseeing the next two hours and somehow getting us round, despite the rain starting again on 18.

We took a taxi to the airport but many highways were already closed due to the storm and we



“THE DRIVE FROM DUBAI TO ABU DHABI WAS LIKE ONE OF THOSE CATASTROPHE MOVIES WITH PEOPLE TRYING TO ESCAPE THE CITY”

missed our flight by five minutes, which turned out to be a miracle in itself as that plane soon had to abort and those on board got stuck at the airport for three days. As there were no taxis out there and hundreds of people in the taxi queue, we had to scramble and catch a tram, got stuck midway in Dubai and ended up in the Ritz-Carlton after a walk through knee-high water. I've never been wetter. The water was coming in from the ceiling and we had a drink at the bar to consider our options. Everyone was trying to get a taxi and, after an hour, we came to an agreement to be taken to Abu Dhabi. We met the vehicle in the now underground boating station and set off.

The drive from Dubai to Abu Dhabi was like one of those catastrophe movies where people are trying to

escape the city. You would see abandoned vehicles; there was nobody on the road; and there was a huge lake in the middle of the highway. It was like the end of civilisation. Our big break came when we got the last tickets on a flight from Abu Dhabi to Morocco.

3 Casa Green Golf Club, Casablanca

The original plan was to arrive in the evening, have dinner with my daughter and her boyfriend and play at 7am the next day before having a nice lunch and boarding a plane to Madrid. We had to be able

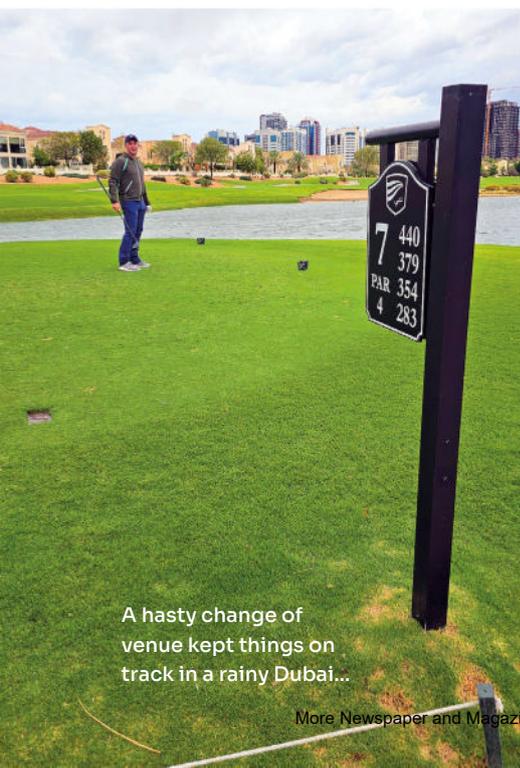
to play in Spain or we couldn't then get the flight to Bogota, our next destination, the same day.

The reality was that we were now

due to land from Abu Dhabi at 7.30am – it turned out to be an hour late – then we had a 12.45pm exit time for Spain. So we had four-and-a-quarter hours to get through customs, take a 30-minute cab ride, play 18 holes, get back to the airport and fly out.

I called Nadia to look for alternative arrangements but, as we got off the plane, there was no line at passport control and my golf bag was already there within five minutes. I grabbed a taxi, negotiated the fare to the course and told him I would happily pay extra if he could get me there in 20 minutes. His beaten-up Mercedes did the job and my daughter was already waiting for me at the club. She got everything – the green fee, scorecard and cart – and off we went. By the time Nick arrived at the course I had already played ten holes.

The other stroke of luck was meeting Eddie, the caddie master. Every French word I knew came out as I tried to explain the rush and he got so switched on. He would drive the cart, give me a line on the greens, hand me the right club and then meet me as I came off each green. Then he called a cab to get us back to the airport. It was just perfect. People really wanted this to happen, like the taxi driver, Eddie and my



A hasty change of venue kept things on track in a rainy Dubai...



... where the hotel's underground car park was also under water

daughter and her boyfriend. It was always about more than just me, and I really wouldn't have been able to do it without Nick, in particular. It was such a big collective effort because they wanted to help somebody fulfil this ridiculous middle-age dream.

We made it to the airport and were the last ones to check in but they then told us we hadn't paid for our golf bags. The lady printed something off, I ran off to pay and we were ready to board when she told us we'd only paid for one bag! After some frantic back-and-forth negotiations, they were really helpful and we set off for Madrid.

4 Santander Golf Club, Madrid

The guy who picked us up from the airport in Madrid looked like a contract killer – tall, bald, black suit, Mercedes. We arrived at Santander's beautiful clubhouse and nobody was playing, which was perfect for our plans. This was a chance to breathe a little bit after everything that had happened. And, in the middle of all this chaos, we just had a very pleasant round of golf. I think we halved it on the last hole and then off we went to Bogota, as you do.

5 Los Lagartos Golf Club, Bogota

We arrived in Colombia after a nine-hour flight and, for the first time, stayed in a hotel, albeit only for four hours, in which time we had to dry our clothes which were still wet from Dubai. Golf courses



Los Lagartos in Bogota was Steven's favourite course out of the six



Probably some very apt reading material for the many flights

“I THINK WE HALVED OUR MATCH ON THE LAST HOLE AT SANTANDER AND THEN OFF WE WENT TO BOGOTA, AS YOU DO”

here are private but Nadia has a Colombian friend and we got to play one of the most exclusive private clubs for around £100. The course is in the mountain jungle, hard but beautiful. It was the best course we played.

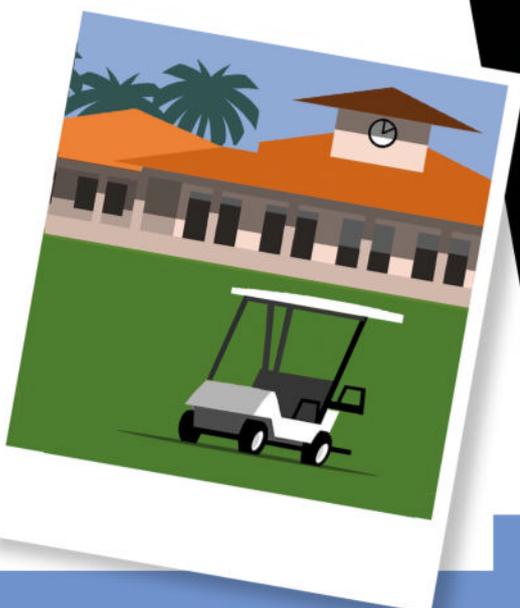
The front nine was okay, but we started on the back nine, which has some of the most beautiful holes I've ever seen. Likewise the clubhouse, which was very picturesque and really gave you a view of the good life in Colombia. In the afternoon I even managed a

couple of museums in Bogota before heading to our final destination in Miami.

6 Trump National Doral, Miami

My parents live in Miami and my brother and his wife flew in from New York, so this was a great place to finish. We wanted to end on a high so took a BMW X7. Everyone in America drives big cars and we wanted to arrive in style at Trump National, where everything is plastered with Trump's image. There are pictures of him in the hallway, locker room, pro shop and coffee shop, plus, of course, there are the 'Make America Great Again' hats, so you immediately get a sense of where you are. It's expensive but it runs like clockwork and the level of service is just impeccable.

In all the excitement of our final day we realised we'd left the duty free bag at the airport but, thankfully, the Trump employees came to the rescue and we had champagne and four glasses waiting for us on the 18th green of



the Red Tiger course. We actually played with an American couple who were having cocktails on the 3rd and didn't care about their golf. I'm probably the opposite and slowed the record down by driving back to one tee when I couldn't see any red stakes after a pushed drive. But, after 104 hours, we putted out and celebrated with a glass of champagne, surrounded by my family.

The following morning, at 7am, I booked another tee-time as I wanted to break 90, just for peace of mind. On the last hole I began to cry, not because I hadn't shot in the 80s, but, for the first time, the enormity of the past four and a bit days finally began to hit home.

The 24 hours with almost no sleep in Dubai were like nothing else. Yes, someone could beat the record of playing golf on six continents in the shortest period of time but nobody could beat the record of being able to play 18 holes on the day of the worst storm to hit Dubai for 75 years because you will have to wait another 75 years to do that! That is the record within the record and that one is unbeatable.

The next time

The trip took 104 hours and we had about ten hours' sleep overall. It doesn't matter where or how you sleep – you're not tired, you're always focused. My body only crashed 24 hours after the final hole. After we finished, I went out for lunch and, that evening, I went to my friend's restaurant in Miami and stayed out till midnight.

I have some back problems but I felt no pressure, no pain and no need to sleep. It's like your body gets elevated to a different level. We got on the plane and just woke up wherever. It didn't matter what time it was as my body just rearranged itself. Mental focus and feelings of excitement triumphed over middle-aged body needs and that's what this trip was ultimately all about.

But, of course, we've already thought about how to shave some time off if we were to try it again. You'd start in Papua New Guinea,

which is Australasia, and from there you can fly to Istanbul, which gives you Europe. It's then a two-hour flight to Antalya in Asia, from where you can then go to Cairo for the African leg. Then you'd fly again to Bogota and on to Panama. That way it could be done in three or three-and-a-half days as the *Guinness Book of Records* defines Panama north of the canal as North America and that would be the shortest route. The world really is quite a bit smaller than you think.



Champagne all round after the final putt had dropped in Miami





A FITTING STAGE

Words Alison Root Photography Getty Images

The AIG Women's Open looks set to deliver on a grand scale in August as the game's very best female players join battle on the world-famous Old Course in St Andrews for just the third time



he AIG Women's Open is the fifth and final women's Major of the season and, out of all the Major Championships, this is the one the world's best female golfers most aspire to win. This year, the 48th edition of the event holds even greater significance as it returns to the Home of Golf and one of the most famous courses in the world – the Old Course at St Andrews – from August 21-25.

The Women's Open dates back to 1976 but was only recognised as a tour event by the LPGA in 1994 and as an official LPGA Major in 2001. From 1990 to 1996, the event was held exclusively at Woburn Golf Club, but in 1998, then-sponsor Weetabix decided to rotate the championship around the UK's best and most famous links courses, such as Turnberry, Royal Lytham & St Annes, Royal Birkdale and St Andrews. Mirroring the rotation of the men's Open Championship venues, this was a smart move that helped raise the profile and prestige of the Women's Open considerably.

It became known as the AIG Women's British Open in 2019, an alliance between the American multinational finance and insurance corporation and The R&A, organisers of this event since 2017. The tournament was then rebranded in 2022 by removing the 'British' to align with The R&A's men's championships.

The partnership between The R&A and AIG has been highly successful, with both organisations dedicated to championing the evolving landscape of the women's game. Last year, AIG extended the initial five-year partnership through 2030. Since the partnership began, prize money has more than doubled, with this year's winner set to take home well over \$1 million from a total prize fund of \$9 million.

For The R&A, the AIG Women's Open is one of its showcase events, demonstrating its



The 11th shares a green with the 7th at the far end of the Old Course

commitment to elevating women's golf by shining a light on the most international line-up of the year. Of course, there is no better place to do this than St Andrews.

While the Old Course has witnessed many memorable moments, from Seve's famous fist pump in 1984 to Tiger winning the Claret Jug to achieve his first career Grand Slam in 2000 and Jack Nicklaus standing on the Swilcan Bridge to bid an emotional Old Course farewell in 2005, this will be only the third time that this women's Major has graced these hallowed links.

The Women's Open first came to St Andrews in 2007, when the then World No.1, Lorena Ochoa, led from start to finish, finishing four strokes clear of Sweden's Maria Hjorth and South Korea's Lee Jee-young to secure her first Major title. The last visit was in 2013 when Stacy Lewis claimed her second Major after closing with back-to-back birdies to triumph by two shots over South Korea's Choi Na-yeon and Park Hee-young.

The next champion will have many options for celebrating in the magical town, which has a village feel, but she might



Stacy Lewis triumphed by two at St Andrews last time round in 2013



Lorena Ochoa celebrates her four-stroke victory at St Andrews in 2007



just want to follow in the footsteps of Ochoa and Lewis, who celebrated their triumphs at the Dunvegan Hotel, renowned as one of golf's finest 19th holes.

Georgia Hall, the 2018 AIG Women's Open Champion, competed in 2013 at St Andrews as a 16-year-old, sharing lowest amateur honours with Lydia Ko and winning the coveted Smyth Salver. "I think the atmosphere will be incredible," Hall says. "It's not just about winning the Women's Open but winning at St Andrews."

● **How it unfolded last year**

Unlike the men's Open Championship, the AIG Women's Open is not played exclusively on links courses. Last year, it was held for the first time at highly regarded Walton Heath in Surrey, where players faced a stern test on a composite layout featuring holes from both the Old and New courses stretching across vast heathland.

With firm fairways lined by dense heather, gorse and fescue, as well as the testing nature of the greens, the course thoroughly examined the players' skill sets, demanding pinpoint accuracy.

Lilia Vu rose to the challenge in magnificent fashion, stealing the spotlight and claiming her second Major title of the year following her breakthrough victory at the Chevron Championship. Not only did Vu lift the unique fluted trophy crafted by Edward Asprey and claim the winner's cheque, but she also became the first American woman to triumph at two Majors in the same season since Juli Inkster in 1999.

Vu entered the final round tied at the top on nine-under with British favourite Charley Hull. The home crowd was willing the Englishwoman to close out her first Major title, but Vu had other ideas and quickly took control. Birdieing the 2nd hole, with Hull then bogeying the 3rd, she surged

ahead by two and never looked back, despite Hull producing the shot of the championship, holing out from a bunker for an eagle on the 11th. Vu shot an impressive five-under 67 to secure a 14-under total and a six-shot victory over Hull, who finished runner-up for the second time in Majors, one of four LPGA Tour runner-up finishes overall in 2023.

Reflecting on her incredible victory, Vu said, "It just comes down to not thinking about winning, just playing one shot at a time. This golf course forces you to do that. It really tests you. My only goal was to drive the ball well and give myself chances for birdie.

"This has been the best crowd I've ever played in front of in my life," an emotional Vu added. "I will remember this moment forever. They've been so great. Even though they were rooting for Charley, they clapped for me too."

● **Returning to the Home of Golf**

In contrast to the course at Walton Heath, the Old Course on Fife's rugged coastline is a classic links layout. The strength of the prevailing sea winds, an abundance of bunkers (112 in total) and numerous



2022 champion Ashleigh Buhai in the festival village at Walton Heath last year

Celine Boutier, China's Ruoning Yin, Canada's Brooke Henderson and Japan's Yuka Saso, while Ireland's Leona Maguire and Australia's Hannah Green have the ability to make a strong impact on the leaderboard.

Picking a likely winner from such a vast group of talented athletes is challenging, as history shows that this prestigious Major is often full of surprises. In 2019, Hinako Shibuno burst onto the scene at Woburn, sinking a birdie putt on the 18th to claim the title by one shot from Lizette Salas, despite never having ventured beyond Japan's borders or competed in a Major before.

The following year, Germany's Sophia Popov, ranked 304th in the world and having only qualified the week before, produced the week of her life at Royal Troon to edge out Thailand's Jasmine Suwannapura by two. Then, in 2022, South Africa's Ashleigh Buhai claimed her first Major after an epic four-hole play-off in fading light at Muirfield.

● A modern fan experience

Last year at Walton Heath, The R&A executed its plan to shift from a traditional spectator village to a modern festival-style experience, combining sport and entertainment to attract new audiences. The plan paid off, creating an inclusive atmosphere that appealed to those less familiar with the sport. This approach will be repeated at St Andrews.

A highlight of Walton Heath was a music concert by global superstar Ellie Goulding, which likely contributed to the impressive attendance of 51,000 fans, up from 33,303

the previous year – a 53% increase. At St Andrews, the Saturday evening headline act will be BRIT- and Ivor Novello-nominated singer-songwriter Tom Grennan, a passionate golfer who admits to spending too much time on the course.

At the heart of the festival village, fans and families will be able to enjoy lawn games, mini-golf and shopping. There will be a Sessions Stage with a variety of prominent figures from women's sport, business and entertainment discussing all the latest hot topics. In keeping with the festival atmosphere, there will be food trucks and bars and, naturally, there's no better place than St Andrews to try your hand at golf. A team of up to 12 PGA

pros will be on hand for a free 15-minute lesson, whether you're a regular or a newcomer.

To encourage children and young people, The R&A will continue the successful 'Kids go free' programme on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. It offers free entry to the championship for those under 16 when accompanied by a paying adult. A number of ticket offers are available including a £5 discount for Mastercard holders.

Played on the world's most famous course, with great golf guaranteed plus a fun and inclusive atmosphere off-course, this year's AIG Women's Open has all the ingredients to showcase and elevate women's golf.



Royal Porthcawl will host the AIG Women's Open for the first time in 2025

WHERE NEXT?

Royal Porthcawl Golf Club in South Wales will host the 49th edition of the AIG Women's Open in 2025. The club is no stranger to prestigious championships and team events, having hosted the Senior Open in 2014, 2017 and 2023, as well as the British Masters, Walker Cup, and Curtis Cup.

Regarded as the No.1 course in Wales, the links regularly features on any 'best courses never to have held an Open' list. Successfully staging the AIG Women's Open could be an excellent showcase for the club.

In 2026, the championship will return to Royal Lytham & St

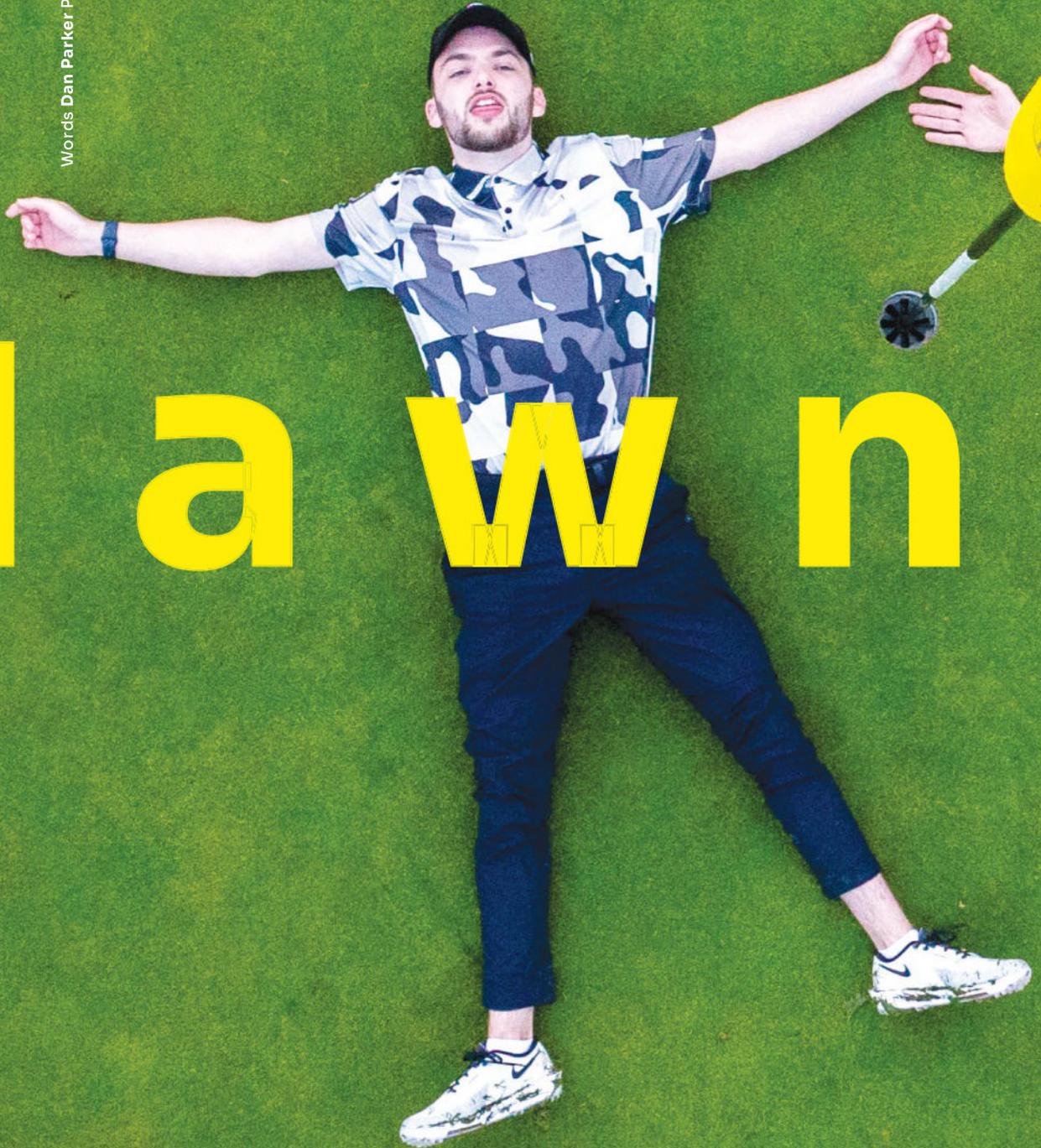
Annes in north-west England for the sixth time. Some of the biggest names in women's golf have won their Majors at this famed links. Sherri Steinhauer took the title when the club first hosted the championship in 1998 and won again in 2006.

Swedish legend Annika Sorenstam claimed her only Women's Open here in 2003, becoming just the sixth player to complete the LPGA Career Grand Slam. The course has also seen two British winners: Catriona Matthew in 2009, just 11 weeks after giving birth to her second child, and most recently, Georgia Hall in 2018.

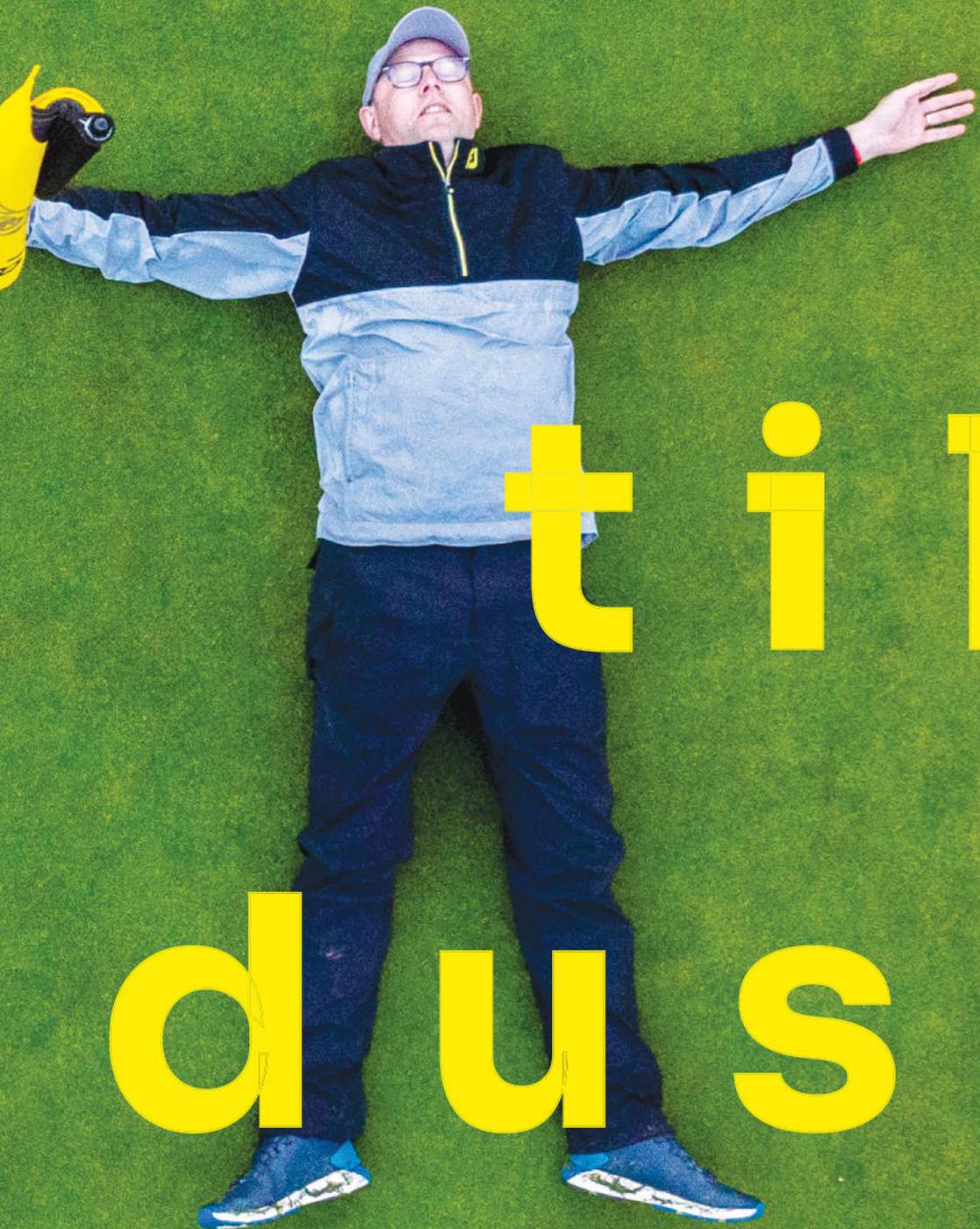


F r o m

Words Dan Parker Photography Howard Boylan



d a w n



till

dusk

Why would you put yourself through four rounds in a day? Perhaps to raise funds for Prostate Cancer UK as an intrepid GM duo did in May...

P

Fresh-faced and keen ahead of the opening drive at Burhill



Round one complete and a narrow match play win for Neil

rostate Cancer UK's Big Golf Race was launched back in 2020 and has already seen more than 10,000 golfers take on the endurance challenge. In just four years, it has captured the imagination and fundraising spirit of a huge number of UK golfers, so we thought it was time to give it a go ourselves. Earlier this year, *Golf Monthly* editor Neil Tappin and staff writer Dan Parker, plus special guests, travelled to Burhill Golf Club in Surrey to take on the challenge and raise as much money as they could for Prostate Cancer UK.

The Big Golf Race has three different challenge levels to choose from: a 36-hole 'half-marathon'; a 72-hole 'marathon'; and the epic 100-hole 'ultra-marathon'. Neil and Dan, who opted for the 72-hole marathon, were among more than 5,000 people due to take part this year, with all funds raised going towards life-saving research and the opportunity to save more men's lives.

● Round 1 - 5.45am

The team's first tee-time was on Burhill's New course at 5.45am. Those who often play at first light will know the peace and tranquility of a golf course at this time of day and the early summer's morning was the perfect way to begin the marathon ahead of them.

While the pair had already started fundraising via their JustGiving page some months prior, they decided another fun way to continue adding to the pot would be to play four different formats over the day, all for money that could then be donated to the fund. Not only would this keep a competitive and fresh edge to all four rounds, but it would also be an opportunity to keep adding to the fundraising total. For the first round, Neil and Dan played a game called



PROSTATE CANCER UK BIG GOLF RACE

'The Longest Yard'. In this format, you play normal match play but with each hole worth its yardage in pennies. For example, the opening 365-yard hole on the New course was worth £3.65 to the winner. Played cumulatively across all 18 holes, it was worth a potential £62.67. The person in debt at the end of 18 holes would then donate that much money to the JustGiving page. Simple.

In principle, The Longest Yard felt like a fun format. However, the close nature of the contest meant that Dan's minor £2.16 deficit didn't do a lot to nudge the donation figure up. At one point, Dan was around £13 up on Neil, before a back-nine collapse saw him surrender the lead in full. However, it inspired them to come up with some more fruitful fundraising efforts for the rest of the day.

After a fast opening round as just a two-ball, the pair finished just before 8.30am, giving them enough time for a spot of breakfast and a sit-down before their second round on the New course, where they would be joined by their first guest of the event...



A cheeky little snifter to keep them going during round two

● Round 2 - 9:15am

For the second round, Neil and Dan were joined by fellow *Golf Monthly* staff writer Barry Plummer. This fundraising challenge was a particularly pertinent one for Barry, whose father and grandfather have both experienced recent brushes with prostate cancer.

"My family was shocked to find out that my grandad had been diagnosed with prostate cancer, but the events that followed exemplified why it's so important for men to get checked regularly," Barry told us.

"Following the news, my dad and uncle were advised to have tests. The results came back showing my dad also had prostate cancer, despite no obvious symptoms. They both went through treatment and fortunately recovered.

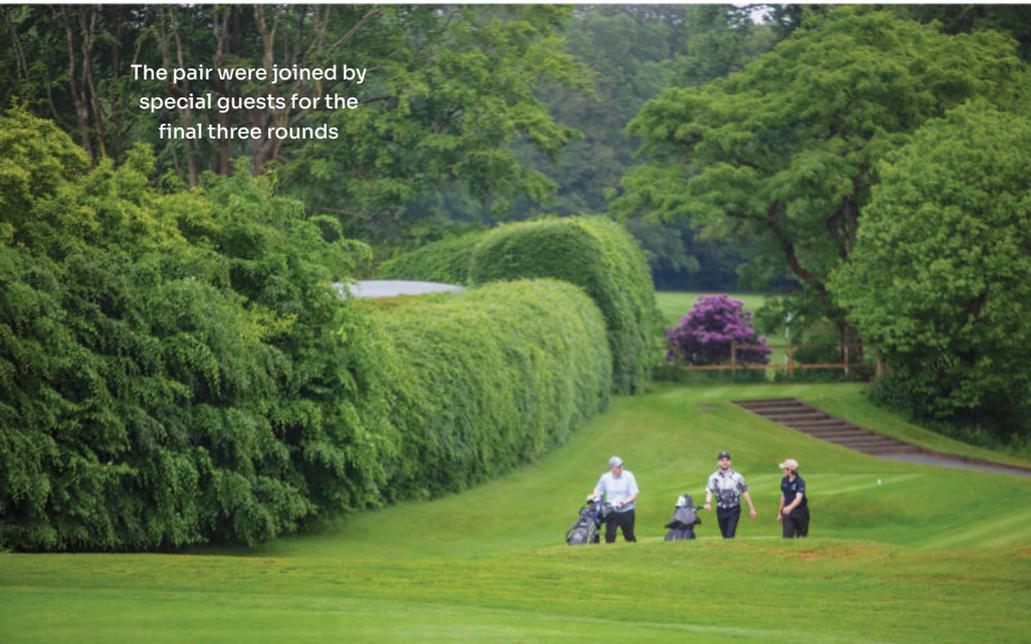
"I hate to imagine what might have happened had my dad not been told to get checked, and while it was hard to process at the time, the sad news about my grandad may just have saved my dad's life."

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men, with one in eight getting it in their lifetime. As Barry's experience shows, you're at a higher risk if your dad or brother has had prostate cancer. Black men are more at risk as well as those over 50 years of age. What's more, prostate cancer doesn't have any symptoms, so if you fall into any of these risk brackets it's vital to get tested and not wait for a sign. The earlier it is found, the easier it is to treat.

Thankfully, both Barry's family members overcame the disease due to early detection. Prostate Cancer UK's top priority is funding the research to stop prostate cancer killing men. By investing millions to find better treatments and better tests that can spot fast-growing cancers early and by making sure people are aware of the symptoms, Prostate Cancer UK's work directly helped Barry's father and grandfather to get tested and be treated for the disease before it was too late.

Over the course of the second round the team played a simple format, just keeping track of individual Stableford scores, with the two worst scores across ▶

The pair were joined by special guests for the final three rounds



Prostate Cancer UK is a charity dear to the heart of GM's Barry Plummer (left)



the 18 holes donating £20 to the JustGiving page and a further £10 going into the pot for each birdie made in the group.

This format proved to be a much more fruitful fundraising effort than the first round, with Dan coming out on top in the Stableford. He was also the only one to make a birdie, bringing the total raised between them for round two up to £50.

● Round 3 - 2.00pm

With half an hour between their second and third 18 holes, Dan and Neil had time for a quick sandwich and change of clothes to freshen up ahead of two more rounds of golf. The final two rounds of the day would take place on Burhill's Old course, a beautiful and classic test of golf that winds its way through more tree-lined terrain than the New.

For the third round, the pair were joined by Prostate Cancer UK ambassador and fundraiser, Rob Green. Rob, who plays his golf at Chigwell Golf Club in Essex, has completed four Big Golf Races and taken part in other fundraising events to raise over £30,000 for Prostate Cancer UK.

Along with three mates, Rob completed four rounds in a day last summer in memory of his dad, Charles, who died from prostate cancer in 2015. "Prostate cancer doesn't just impact the person who has been diagnosed," Rob told us. "It impacts those around them, too."

"I think it's everyone's dream that we can be at a stage where, when we hear that someone has prostate cancer, you don't get that horrible feeling inside you – that worry – and you say, 'Okay, this is something we can deal with.'

"I want to raise as much money and awareness as I can for a charity that's investing in research to diagnose and support people as early as possible. Playing 72 holes in a day is a way of doing something I love with a group of lads, supporting a charity close to my heart – and I love a challenge!"

Rob gave both Neil and Dan a much needed moral boost and injection of energy as the rain settled in for the afternoon. His enthusiasm and words of encouragement were welcome, along with some key tips on how to best execute the Big Golf Race marathon. Staying well hydrated, stocking up with plenty of food and having a change of socks for each new round were invaluable pieces of advice that helped the pair battle through their marathon day.

Having done multiple Big Golf Races before, Rob has concluded that, contrary to what you may expect, the third round is where most people actually play their best golf. This was especially true for Neil, who excelled in the third-round skins game. Playing for £1 a skin, Neil's 15 skins to Dan's zero and Rob's three led to a further £27 going into the fundraising coffers.



Prostate Cancer UK ambassador Rob Green joined them for the third round

Not singing, but certainly laughing in the rain: Dan enjoyed Neil's hosel rocket

This pure shank from Neil provided much-needed light relief during a rainy fourth round



● Round 4 – 6.00pm

Time was getting away from the *Golf Monthly* team as they approached the final round, so it was straight from the 18th tee back to the 1st where they were greeted by their final guest, Josh Jackson.

Josh is one of the most promising young golfers in the country. At just 12 years old, his handicap index of 2.5 is already impressively low and tumbling quickly. Unerringly accurate and impressively powerful off the tee, Josh also has the sort of sure-handed short game that would be the envy of most club golfers. With his dad, Mark, on the bag, the pair were the perfect addition to the group for the final-round push.

The team decided to play a scramble format for the fourth round with a major fundraising incentive. For each birdie made, Josh's dad would kindly donate £10 to the cause, with *Golf Monthly* matching that for £20 per birdie. In a scramble format, off the yellow tees and with three single-figure handicappers, we fancied our chances of raising some serious cash on the final stretch.

While this format meant we'd be playing no fewer shots than normal, it did mean we found ourselves in much friendlier positions than if we were taking our own drives exclusively. Unsurprisingly, Josh did most of the heavy lifting during the final round as the team went hunting for as many birdies as possible.

For Neil and Dan, tiredness was well and truly setting in. This came into full effect on the 5th hole where Neil followed his perfect drive with one of the cleanest hosel strikes imaginable. The sequence in question was captured brilliantly by the photographer – it was an epic shank that left all three players doubled up with laughter.

After spurning some good birdie chances on the front nine,

Prostate cancer risk awareness

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer found in men, with one in eight men getting the disease during their lifetime. Your risk increases if you are over 50, have a father or brother who has had prostate cancer or you are black.

Unfortunately, prostate cancer has no clear symptoms, so it is vital that you get yourself checked. Don't wait for a sign – the earlier the disease is found, the easier it is to treat.

Check your risk online at prostatecanceruk.org in 30 seconds and learn about a free blood test you can get from your GP.

the team was only two-under at the turn. Birdies on the 12th and 13th preceded the first eagle attempt of the day on the 14th. A stunning 3-wood approach from Josh saw him bring the ball to attention on the green from 240 yards away, all in the driving rain. While the three eagles putts sneaked by the hole, the tap-in birdie formed part of an incredible run on the back nine. Dan's chip-in on the 16th was to be the final birdie of the scramble round, and the team shot an impressive six-under in round four, which added a further £120 to the fundraiser.

As the clock struck 9.15pm, the final putt dropped. Four rounds of golf, 46,000 steps and the best part of 24 miles walked. Neil and Dan's Big Golf Race came to an end just as darkness descended on Burhill. Quite frankly, if you can have as much fun as we did in the pouring rain taking on The Big Golf Race, every golfer has it in them to enjoy their own version of this fundraising golf endurance test. The differing challenges are designed to help golfers of all abilities raise money for this vitally important cause.

The team did no training, no real preparation, yet their bodies and minds managed to make it through the marathon day intact, having had a great time doing it. We'll not pretend it's an easy challenge – far from it – but regardless of the strains on both body and mind over 16 hours of golf, The Big Golf Race is serious fun. So, get your mates together, pick a date, find a course, take part in the Big Golf Race yourself and help save more men's lives in the process.

And finally... smiles all round as the 72-hole marathon comes to an end at 9.15pm



Off 2.5 at just 12 years old, Josh Jackson brought some game to round four

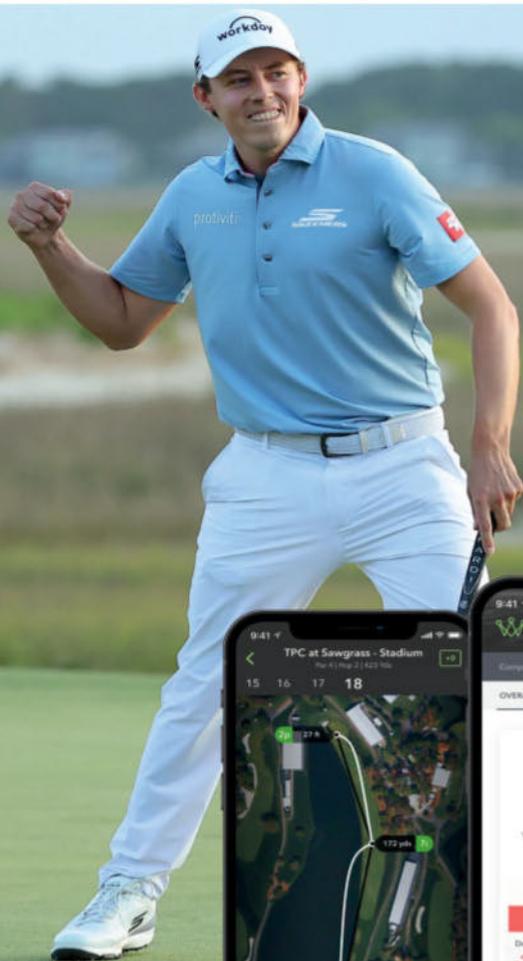


How to sign up for The Big Golf Race

Signing up to The Big Golf Race couldn't be easier and there are even opportunities to win great prizes. Go to prostatecanceruk.org/TheBigGolfRace to book and create your Big Golf Race. In a few easy steps you'll be ready to

go with a dedicated golf team on hand to provide support, before, during and after the event.

The Prostate Cancer UK Golf Society Facebook group is also a great way to meet like-minded golfers and receive ongoing support. The challenge can be the perfect way to meet new people with a similar goal and forge relationships, all while supporting each other to make a positive impact on the lives of everyone affected by prostate cancer.



Matt Fitzpatrick
 U.S. Open Champion
 Arccos Tour Ambassador



AUTOMATIC SHOT TRACKING

STROKES GAINED ANALYTICS

SMART CLUB DISTANCES



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Photography
Howard Boylan

GET DIALLED IN FROM 100 YARDS

Working on three vital elements can
really tighten up your pitching

● By Top 50 Coach John Howells
with Mark Townsend

Most of us know how far full wedge shots go as we make full swings all the time, but then have little idea when we need a half or three-quarter swing. We'll have a chip and a full shot in our locker... but with 60 yards in between where we don't know what to do! For me, three aspects make up the 'wedge distance triangle': centredness of strike; low dynamic loft at impact (usually 15° less than static loft); and variations in swing length to increase/decrease clubhead speed. All three are vital for success when it comes to accuracy inside 100 yards... ▶



ARCCOS

OFFICIAL DATA
PARTNER

The strike

SET-UP ESSENTIALS

1

You need to make sure that you hit the ball out of the horizontal centre of the face, so not out of the heel or toe, and also out of the vertical centre, so you're not catching it fat or thin. In order to do this you need to get a couple of things right at set-up. I like to see the ball just forward of centre in my stance, with the left foot turned out, weight favouring my left side a bit and maybe even a little forward shaft lean.

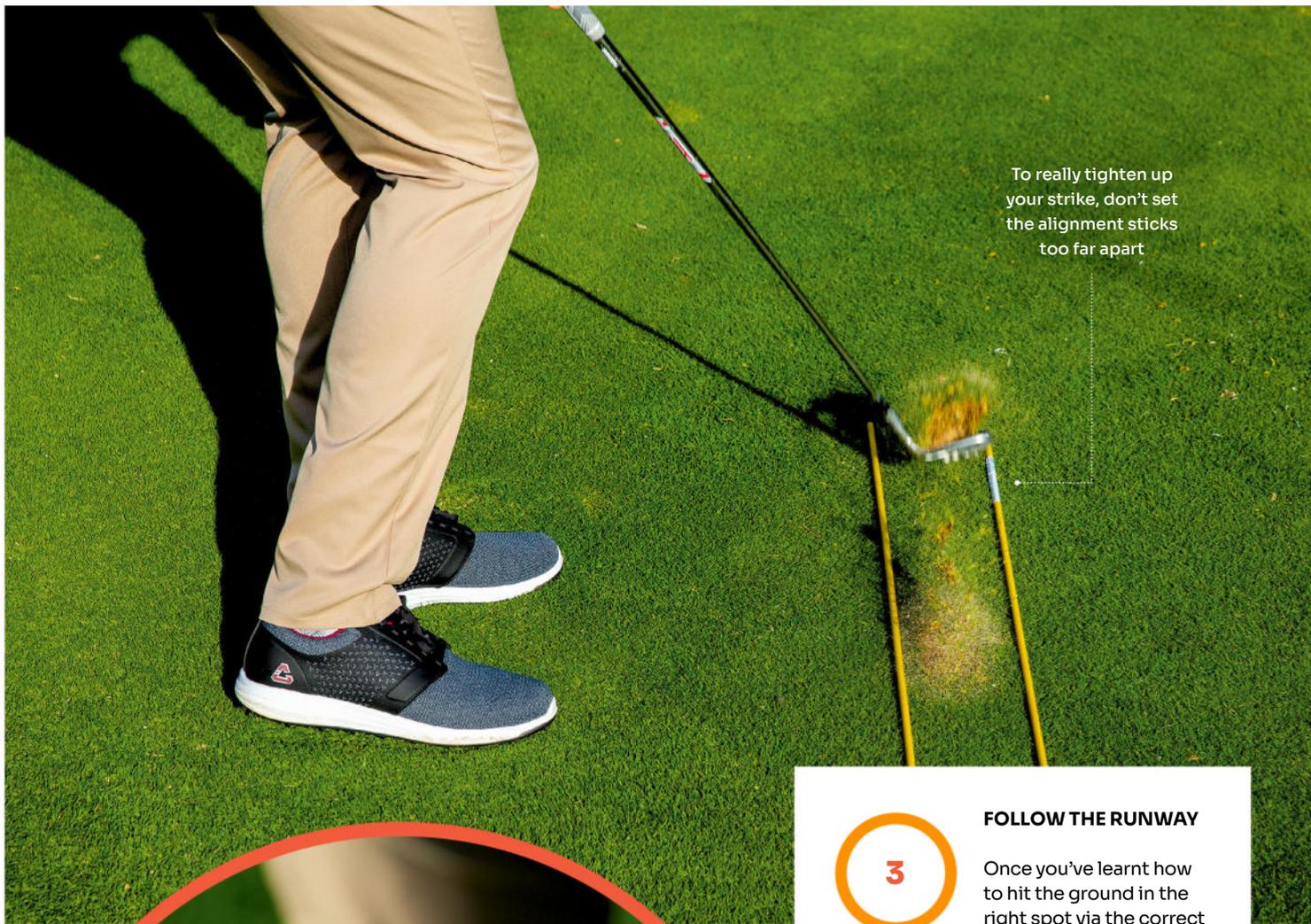
Set the ball just forward of centre with your weight favouring the left side



2

KEEP IT CENTRED

Now make a nice centred backswing. You don't want to sway your head away from the ball or move your weight excessively over to the right as that's going to cause you real issues with contact. You want to hit the ground either level with, or slightly after, the ball. If you can do that you're going to get the ball first, divot second and achieve that nice compressed contact with the ball. Notice how the top players pitch the ball on tour – they're looking to hit it very low and spiny as this makes it easier to control their distance.



To really tighten up your strike, don't set the alignment sticks too far apart



FOLLOW THE RUNWAY

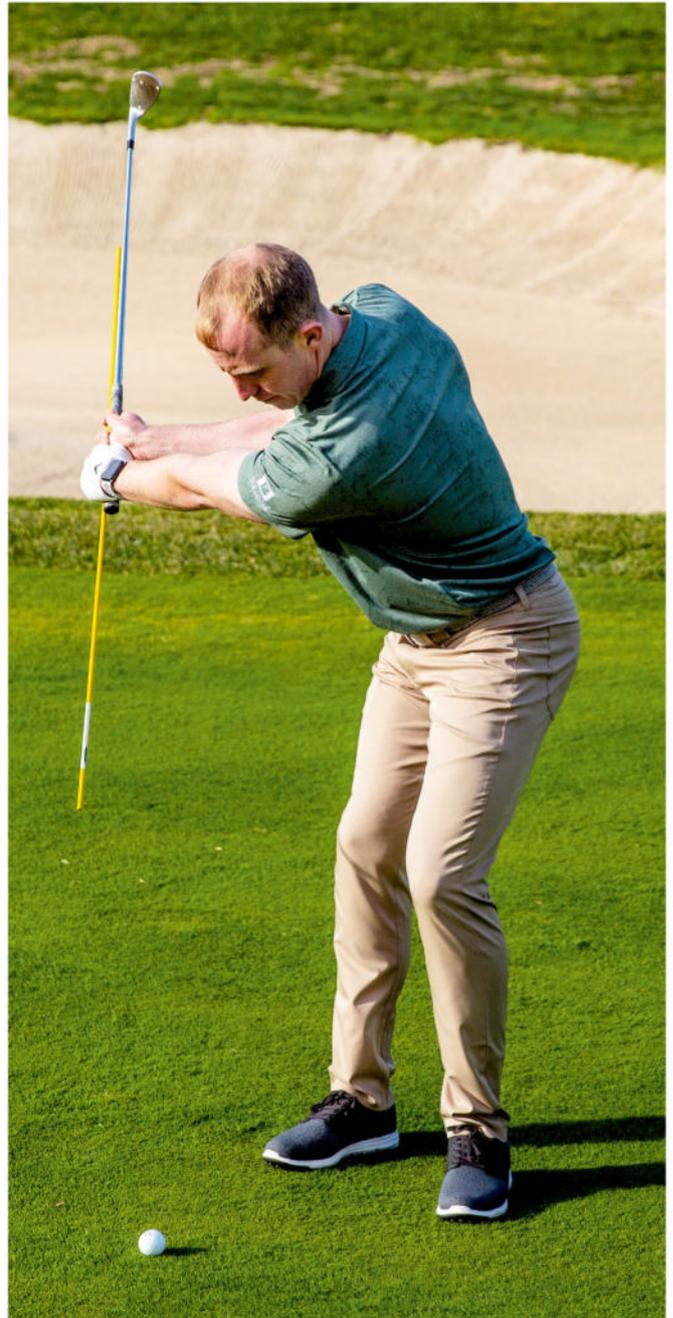
Once you've learnt how to hit the ground in the right spot via the correct set-up and staying centred, it's time for the runway drill. Put a ball in the middle of two alignment sticks and try to hit it without clipping the sticks. Don't give yourself much margin for error as it's all about trying to land the club in the horizontal position correctly. Practise finding the perfect centred strike as this will allow the ball to come off the face at a consistent speed with a controlled amount of spin and launch.



REVEALING THE TRUTH

Use some strike (or foot) spray on the face of your wedge to give you instant feedback as to what is happening at impact and whether contact is high or low in the face, out of the heel or toe or, ideally, in the middle. It's a great addition to your armoury as it gives you clear evidence about strike location with no need for any guesswork.

Keep dynamic loft low



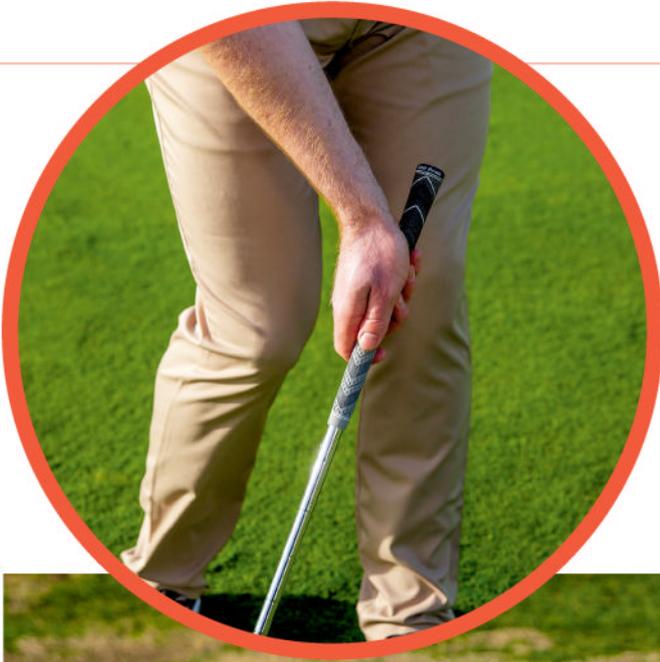
ONE HOP AND STOP

The second aspect of my wedge distance triangle is low dynamic loft – the amount of loft on the face at impact. The best players probably deloft their wedges by around 15° for a 70-yard shot, so a 58° wedge will ideally deloft to around 43°. Try to have plenty of forward shaft lean through impact to deliver the club at the right angle. This will give you a nice low launch angle and high spin with plenty of friction so the ball grabs low on the grooves to give you that nice one-hop-and-stop effect on landing.



THE IDEAL DELOFT DRILL

So how can we do that? Grip the club together with an alignment stick about halfway down the stick as here and take your normal grip with the stick just outside your left hip (above left). This generates a nice amount of forward shaft lean even at address. We're not necessarily looking for that normally but it does help with this drill as you're trying to make sure that when you swing through, the stick doesn't touch your left rib cage. Do slow repetitions at first (above) then build up to longer swings.



THE ROLE OF THE WRISTS

With this drill you have to be aware of wrist angles – the right wrist should be cupped through impact (left) before angling out after the shot. Crucially, you need to turn your body pretty well. If you don't and you stop at impact and try to hit the shot too much with your hands, you're going to get really bruised in this drill. Start by making little shots back and through, trying to brush the ground with that nice low dynamic loft. Then, take your normal set-up position with the ball just forward of centre and a bit more weight on the left side, make a good centred backswing, and really try to deloft the club through impact.



Different drill, same benefit
 To promote this move, set two balls fairly adjacent to each other. Hit the first ball and the second will act as an instant reference to show where your divot started. Get it right, as below, and you'll create that nice low compressed divot that means you're hitting the ground in the right place.

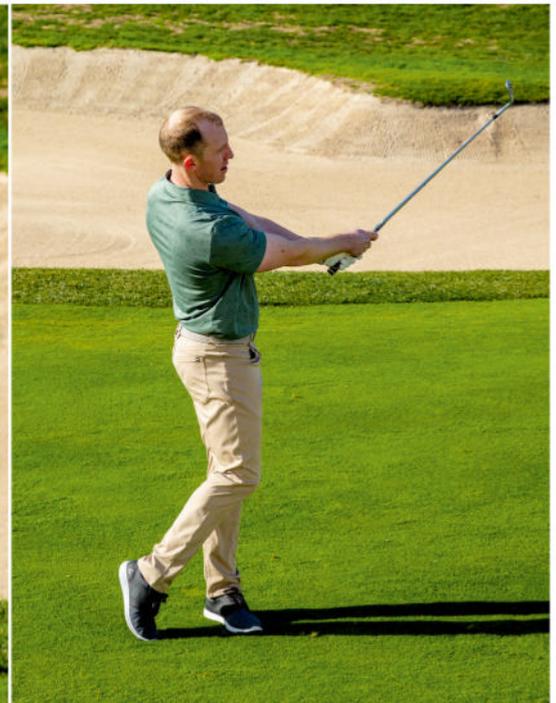


Deloft the club through impact to prevent the stick striking your rib cage

How to control swing length



Honing three distinct backswing lengths will bring added versatility to your wedge game



CLOCKFACE SYSTEM

The third aspect of the wedge distance triangle is to generate the different clubhead speeds that control ball speed and how far the shot carries. So, how can we vary that easily? This is something that various instructors have talked about a lot over the years and one very good option is to adopt a clockface system in your wedge game. It's very simple and revolves around how far back you swing your left arm.



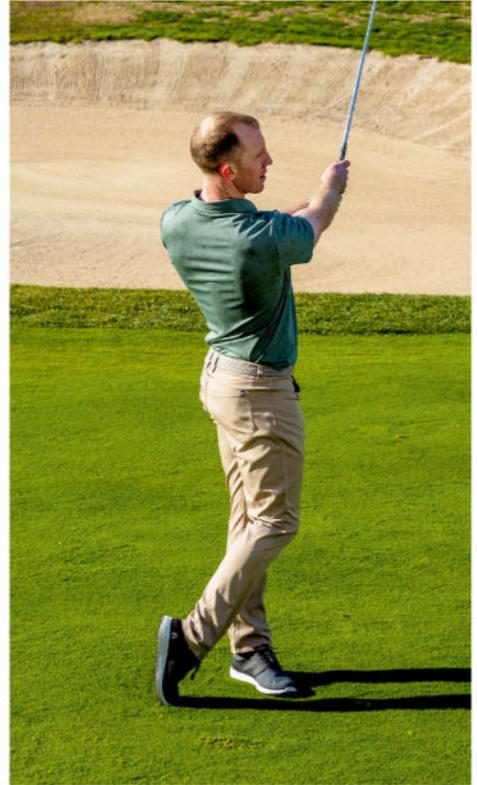
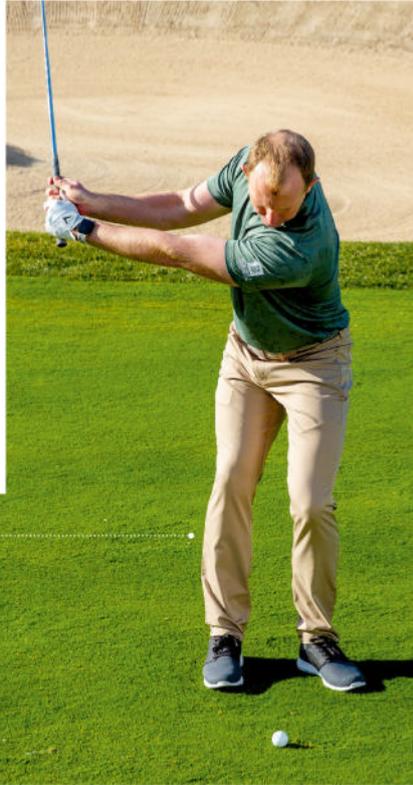
THREE OPTIONS

By swinging to different points, like 8 o'clock, 10 o'clock and all the way up to a full swing, you will have three different lengths of backswing that will obviously then give you three different clubhead speeds coming down. You can call them what you want but it's a great starting point to have these three different swing lengths. And it's worth working on them in front of a mirror as feel and real can be very different things.

10

MIRROR IMAGE

If you adopt a clock system using shorter-than-normal backswings, make sure things are symmetrical on the way through. If you go back to about 9 o'clock in the backswing, go through to about 3 o'clock in the follow-through. You want them to mirror each other and be pretty symmetrical but it won't always be exact – the follow-through will generally be longer than the backswing. What you don't want is to make a short backswing and then try to do all the work on the follow-through.



Backswing and follow-through lengths should ideally mirror one another fairly closely



11

A HANDY REMINDER

I carry four wedges so, with three different swing lengths, I have up to 12 different carry yardages. Some people write these on a chart and put it in their golf bag but this can quickly get forgotten so I think the best way is to attach them to the back of your shafts (above). Very few people do but it's such a common-sense approach

to understanding your wedge distances. Then, when you pull the club you know how far those three different swings go.

Many of us carry a laser or can get to a range where the shots are measured so can pay close attention to carry distances from our different swing lengths. From a custom-fit perspective, it's important to have 4-6" gaps between wedges. With pitching wedges becoming stronger over time, you want to make sure you don't have a big gap down to your next wedge.

ARCCOS STATS

FROM 100 YARDS IN THE FAIRWAY

Percentage of shots that finish more than 25 yards (75 feet) from the hole by handicap

0.0 index	4.2%
5.0 index	7.1%
10.0 index	11.0%
15.0 index	14.5%
20.0 index	20.5%

Data provided by Arccos via the tracking of more than 7,000,000 shots worldwide

Shot on location at
Infinitem Resort, Spain





How to handle tricky stances



BALL BELOW FEET

2 The main mistake here is having the ball too far forward in the stance. It should be fairly central as the downswing will be quite steep and the ball is further away than on a flat lie. Exaggerate your knee flex and tilt your posture over until the club hits the ground. Don't sit back and try and fight gravity because gravity will always win!

1

All of us will encounter tricky stances, whether it's the ball above our feet, below our feet or on varying degrees of upslope or downslope.

These, along with all sorts of other difficult stances, will occur during most

rounds of golf, especially if we play on undulating courses. Many of us fail to cope with these stances simply because we don't know how to adjust our set-up and technique to counteract the lie or slope. But for the most part they are easy to overcome if you make a few small adjustments, as I explain below.



3

BALL ABOVE FEET

To play this shot, you need to imagine you're swinging a baseball bat and flatten out your swing. Rehearsal swings with the club at waist height will help groove this rounded move. Keep ball position central – if it's too far forward you'll either catch the ground early or top it. Again, the key is to be at one with the slope. Don't fight it.



4

UPSLOPES AND DOWNSLOPES

On downslopes the biggest mistake is not to grip down enough, while on upslopes it's important your shoulders are perpendicular to the slope. If you're on an upslope your weight should favour your lower foot, while on a downslope it should favour the upper foot.

How do I control pace better on long putts?

By GM Top 50 Coach **John Howells**

If you watch the world's best players, one thing that sets them apart from club golfers is their ability to lag long putts dead. You've probably heard the saying 'aim for the dustbin lid' – the sort of close-range target that leaves you with a makeable putt inside three feet. But working on pace control is something few

golfers practise – we tend to just play to a close-range hole on the putting green. Hitting practice putts to distant targets will improve your pace control, though.

One of the best things you can do out on the course is to walk the entire length of a putt. This will really help you to dial in to the distance, improve your depth perception to the hole and gauge how long your stroke has to be.

Keep your tempo consistent

Just because you are a long way away does not mean you need to alter your stroke or technique. A longer backswing will produce a longer roll-out if you maintain a consistent tempo.

Photography: Tom Miles





How can I get my alignment right?

By Top 50 Coach **Jo Taylor**

With alignment, we want everything to be parallel if we're not trying to shape a shot. Few of us work on alignment and many of us have our feet pointing one way, our shoulders another and then have to make adjustments in the swing to hit it straight. It's worth having a process to get it right and sticking to it. Stand right behind the ball and in your head draw a line from you to the target through the ball. Track back on that line, find something 6ins in front of the ball, align the club to that, then set your feet parallel to the target line. If you align your feet first then the clubface, the club generally points a little right.

All pointing the same way

Feet, shoulders and clubface should all be on parallel lines. At the range, set a club down along your toe line to check where your feet are aiming. Shoulders are trickier, but if there's a mirror, hold a club across your shoulders and check in the mirror, or get a friend to help you.

Why do I miss short putts?

By GM Top 50 Coach **Katie Dawkins**

There are many reasons, from technique to simply nerves, but more than anything, it often just comes down to being lazy with our aim. A short putt requires very accurate aiming. Once you've read the line you must be able to aim the putter precisely. I find that drawing a line on my ball gives me a great visual cue. If the putt is straight, aim the line at the hole; if it's to the left or the right, aim inside or outside the hole according to the break. This marries perfectly with the centre mark or line on many putters. If you only have to focus on aiming the putter at the line, you can almost forget everything else, make a confident stroke and hole out.

Trust, don't look

Once you've decided where to aim using the line on the ball as a guide, keep your eyes down, glued to a spot on the ground until you've hit the putt. Don't be tempted to peek early. Listen for the ball to drop.





INSTRUCTION

SHORT GAME

By Top 50 Coach
Gary Munro

Shot on location at
Infinitem Resort, Spain



How to find the right stroke length for every putt



There are three variables you must get right – you need to strike the ball correctly, control swing length and control tempo. Here, we focus on the last two. I've set up a putting mat (below) with two tees equidistant from the ball. To start, just work on making sure the putter head travels the same distance back and through. If you can match this with the same consistent tempo, the ball should always travel the same distance.

Stroke length should match up back and through



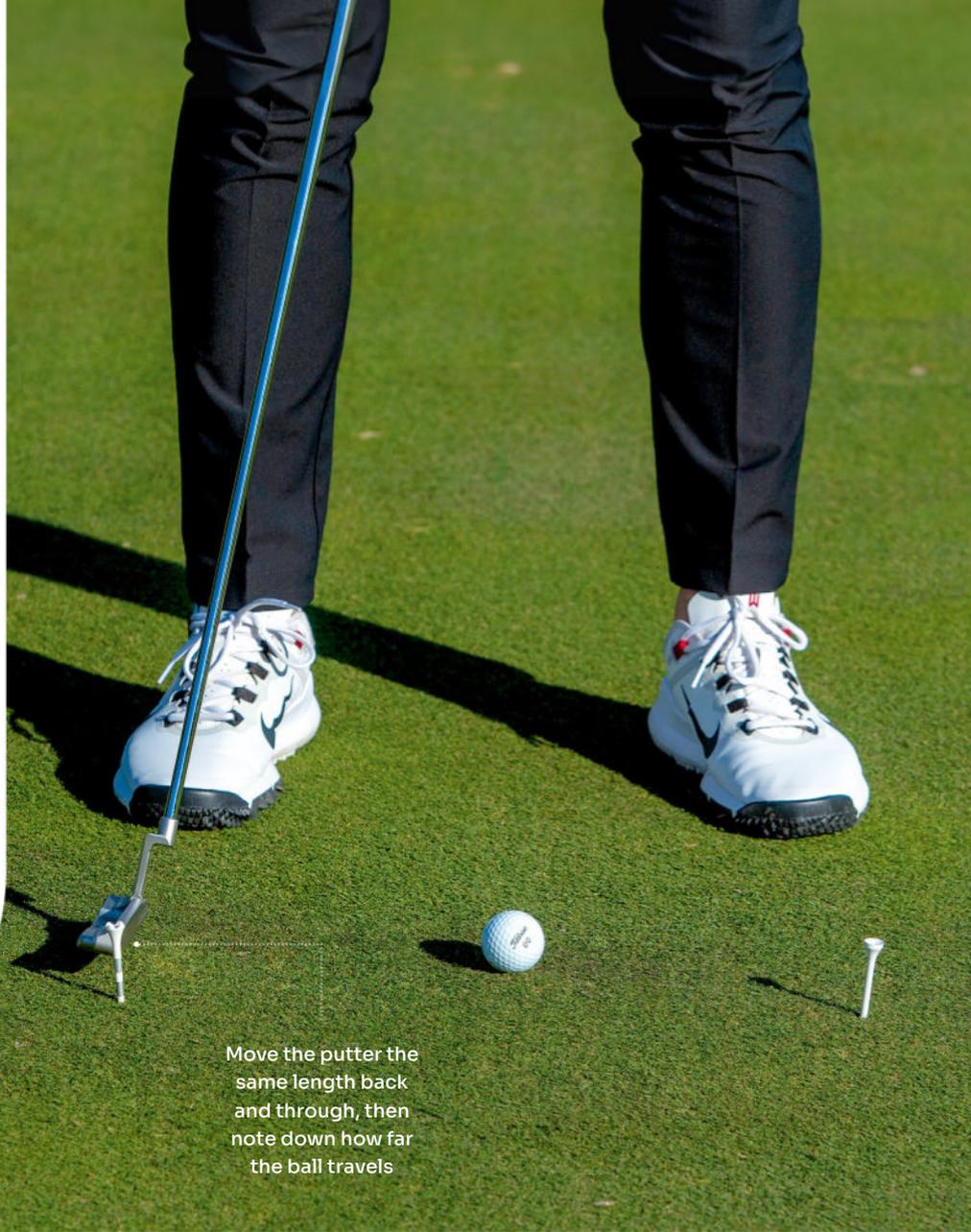
2

For this drill you need three balls and a flat surface. To start, take the putter back to the inside of the right foot and stop at the inside of the left

foot. Hit three putts, pace them out and mark down the results. Then repeat to the outside of each foot, measure and make a note; then, to one putter head beyond each foot. Now, for a flat putt, you know where your putter needs to travel to.



This is a drill that Bryson DeChambeau uses regularly



Move the putter the same length back and through, then note down how far the ball travels



3

Now we've worked out how far the ball travels with different-length putting strokes, how can we turn this into a nice feel drill? On the golf

course, as you set up beside your ball, look at your target and just try and rock your shoulders back and forth to get a sense for how much speed you will need to get the ball to the target. It's like throwing or rolling a ball, you look at the target and you gauge how far back and through you need to move your arm. This encourages a more instinctive way of putting, improves your visualisation and dictates your swing length. Then, set up to the ball and pull the trigger.

Make your practice strokes looking at the target not the ball



A Rules official assists Viktor Hovland with a drop during the Memorial Tournament

By David Wilson
rules manager at
The R&A

● FROM THE TOUR

BALL AT REST ON A MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION

Even the best in the world hit it offline from time to time and, on occasion, they find their ball on artificial items brought to the course by spectators. David Wilson explains what happens then, with reference to one such incident for Viktor Hovland.

These artificial items are classed as movable obstructions, provided they can be moved with reasonable effort and without damaging the obstruction or the course. The typical movable obstructions that club golfers encounter include bunker rakes or small signs placed in the ground. But tour pros may encounter a variety of items that have been brought to the venue by the fans.

This is just what happened to Viktor Hovland in June's Memorial Tournament at Muirfield Village where an errant shot came to rest on a spectator's towel, a movable obstruction under the Rules. Hovland called for a Rules official to assist and, as his ball was on the movable obstruction, he was entitled to free relief, within one club-length, not nearer the hole from the estimated point directly below where the ball was at rest.

Hovland made his best attempt to mark the location of his ball, which, depending on the size and shape of a movable obstruction can be tricky. He

removed the towel and was then able to measure one club-length and drop within this semi-circular relief area to continue playing.

He had to drop the ball rather than place it because no part of the ball was touching the ground. If a ball is resting against a movable obstruction but touching the ground, which is perhaps a more common scenario, the procedure is different. If that had been the case here, Hovland would have had to remove the towel, leaving the ball in position.

If a ball moves when removing a movable obstruction, there is no penalty and it should be replaced. And, if it won't come to rest when being replaced due to a slope, for instance, then it should be placed at the nearest point, not nearer the hole, where it will come to rest in the same area of the course that it was lying in originally.



MOVABLE OBSTRUCTION ESSENTIALS

- You are entitled to free relief from a movable obstruction.
- If your ball is lying on a movable obstruction, you must drop within one club-length of where the ball is at rest.
- If your ball is instead resting against a movable obstruction, you remove the obstruction and replace the ball.

Photography: Kevin Murray, Getty Images

YOUR QUERIES RESOLVED



Q I know that when you have a double-hit with an iron shot or when chipping there is no longer a penalty. But what if you have the yips with the putter and it happens when you are trying to sink a two-footer? Is there a penalty? And what constitutes a push stroke?

Keith Howe, via email

A You are correct in that there is no penalty for accidentally striking the ball twice and this applies to putts, too, where it would only constitute one stroke being made. A push stroke would be when there has been an intention for little or no backswing to be made, and the ball has been struck in a motion similar to a shot in billiards or shuffleboard, perhaps with the bottom of the putter face. But if it is a case of the yips and simply a short backswing, then there would be no penalty.

David Wilson, The R&A



The Rules have changed since T.C. Chen's infamous double-hit in the 1985 US Open

● R&A WINNERS

Each month, the readers whose queries are featured will receive a Royal Troon 152nd Open pin flag and a large, double-sided Claret Jug ball-marker.

Q While playing a match, I hit a tee-shot which appeared to be going out of bounds towards a group of bystanders, though neither I nor my opponent saw it land. I subsequently played a provisional, but then found the original in bounds. With no definitive proof as to whether it had rebounded onto the course or was thrown back, I played it as it was lying. Was this correct? If not, what should I have done?

Davelef, GM website forum

A The key here is that there was no definitive proof. A ball is only treated as moved if it is known or virtually certain it has been moved by something or someone. In this case, the bystanders would be classified as an outside influence. We require a standard of 95% certainty in order to proceed as if the ball has been moved, so if neither you nor your opponent saw what happened and there was no other evidence available, playing the ball as it was lying was the correct thing to do.

David Wilson, The R&A



What do you do if you're not sure if your ball has been moved by an outside influence?



GROUND UNDER REPAIR

Ground under repair is any part of the course defined as ground under repair by the Committee, whether it's marked as such or not. Ground under repair also includes a selection of things, even if not defined as such by the committee – a hole made in setting up the course, for example, where a stake has been removed, or a hole made where work is being carried out to lay a pipeline. Aeration holes, however, are not ground under repair.

Grass cuttings, leaves or other material piled for later removal are ground under repair, as is any animal habitat (a bird's nest), for

instance, that might be damaged by your swing or stance. Worm casts or insect activity are not classed as ground under repair – they are loose impediments and are dealt with under Rule 15.1.

It's worth noting that ground under repair includes not only all ground inside the edge of the defined area, but also anything rooted in the defined area and any part of that rooted object growing above the ground outside the edge of the defined area. So, any part of a tree (above the ground) that is rooted in

ground under repair is ground under repair, unless the part in question is attached or below the ground outside the ground under repair, such as a protruding tree root.

In the definitions of The Rules, Ground Under Repair is classed an Abnormal Course Condition from which you are entitled to relief under Rule 16.1, provided the ball is lying on or touching the area of ground under repair, or the ground under repair interferes with either your stance or the area of your intended swing. If your ball lies on the putting green, you would also be entitled to relief if the area of ground under repair intervened on your line of play.

You don't have to take relief from ground under repair. You have the option to play the ball as it lies, except when the committee has designated that area of ground under repair a 'no play zone'. An area may be designated a no play zone for any reason, but it would likely be to protect the course, young trees or an environmentally sensitive area. If the ground under repair is a no play zone, then you would have to take complete relief under Rule 16.1.

“YOU MAY PLAY THE BALL AS IT LIES EXCEPT WHEN THE COMMITTEE HAS DESIGNATED IT A ‘NO PLAY ZONE’”



If you take relief, you must take complete relief, including stance and area of intended swing

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE

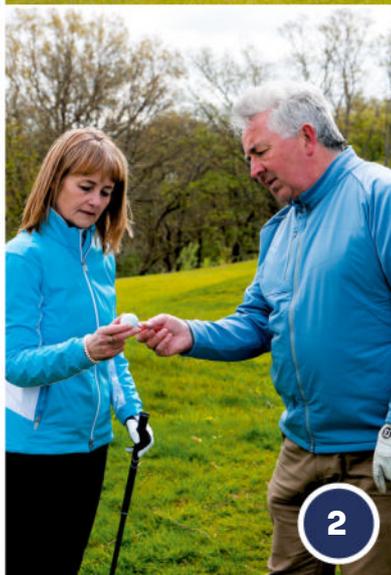
R&A



1

1 Alison tops her tee shot and the ball travels one inch but remains within the teeing area. What is the ruling?

- A. Alison must play the ball as it lies but can remove the tee.
- B. Alison must play the ball as it lies but cannot remove the tee.
- C. Alison may re-tee the ball anywhere within the teeing area.



2

2 Jezz sees that his previous shot has cracked the ball and his opponent, Alison, agrees. What is the ruling?

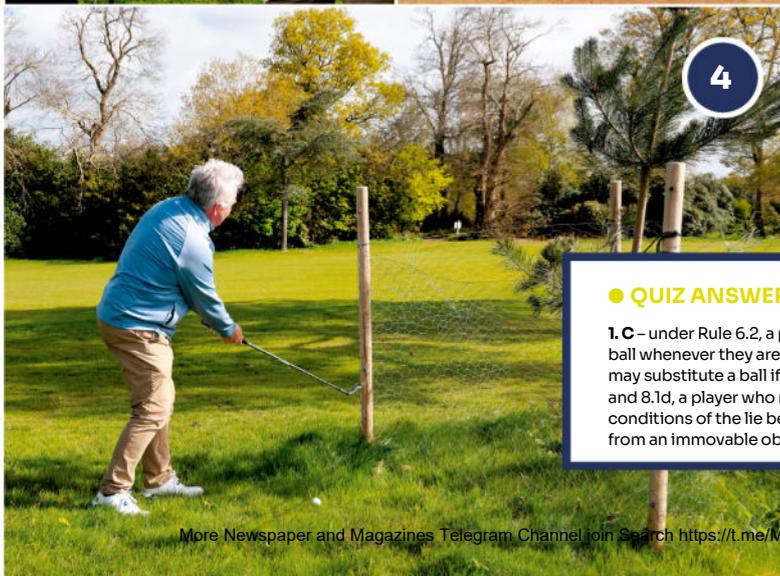
- A. Jezz may substitute his ball without penalty.
- B. Jezz may substitute his ball when it is on the putting green, without penalty.
- C. Jezz may substitute his ball when he has concluded the hole, without penalty.



3

3 Alison and Jezz hit their balls into the same bunker and they lie adjacent to one another. What is the ruling?

- A. Alison marks her ball to let Jezz play, then replaces it in the condition left by Jezz.
- B. Alison marks her ball to let Jezz play, then replaces it having restored her original lie.
- C. Both players receive the general penalty as the balls are touching.



4

4 Jezz's swing would hit a fence around a young tree. What is the ruling?

- A. Jezz can only take relief if the tree is less than 6ft tall.
- B. Jezz can take free relief within one club-length of the nearest point where there is no interference.
- C. There is no relief as the fence only interferes with Jezz's follow-through not backswing.

● QUIZ ANSWERS

1. C – under Rule 6.2, a player may proceed under the teeing area rules, including teeing the ball whenever they are playing a stroke from the teeing area. **2. A** – Under Rule 4.2, a player may substitute a ball if it is cut or cracked during the hole being played. **3. B** – Under Rules 15.3 and 8.1d, a player who marks and lifts a ball interfering with play can then restore the original conditions of the lie before replacing their ball. **4. B** – Under Rule 16.1a, a player may take relief from an immovable obstruction when there is interference for the area of intended swing.

● EQUIPMENT



Updates to the UI on the GPS system have enhanced the experience

● REVIEWED

POWAKADDY CT8 GPS FROM £949



95%

Unfolding and folding the CT8 GPS takes a matter of seconds

Take one look at the CT8 GPS's list of features on the Powakaddy website and you'll likely be overwhelmed by the amount packed into this relatively small golf trolley. I'll give you the highlights here, but the topline news is that this newly updated compact GPS trolley has been refined even further for 2024.

While we're now familiar with embedded GPS systems in trolleys, the CT8 GPS offers one of the largest touchscreen GPS displays despite its compact chassis size. The 3.5in full-colour display is the largest to ever appear on a Powakaddy trolley and it's one of the most responsive we've used, too.

The team at Powakaddy has gone to great lengths to update the graphics on the GPS system for 2024. The new Advanced Green View displays the exact shape of the green you're approaching, with surrounding bunkers and hazards also mapped out on

the device. A directional approach arrow also allows you to visualise the angle you're attacking the green from. Coupled with the Drop Pin feature, I found I really wasn't missing my normal rangefinder for yardages. The updates to the 2024 edition are impressive and come on top of all the basics you'd expect from modern GPS systems, like distances to greens and hazards.



By Dan Parker



“THE POWERFUL GPS SYSTEM IS A MORE THAN WORTHY ADDITION TO THIS COMPACT AND PREMIUM-LOOKING TROLLEY CHASSIS”

DAN PARKER, GM STAFF WRITER

Its folded dimensions are 510mm high, 425mm wide and 375mm deep

The lightweight lithium battery comes in 18- or extended 36-hole ranges



two-step system that sees it easily folded up and down in a matter of moments. Such speed and ease of folding makes the day-to-day experience with the CT8 GPS a pleasurable one.

Another new feature is Mag-Lok. This is the brand's response to Motocaddy's Easilock system and allows compatible PowaKaddy cart bags to quickly and effortlessly attach to the bottom of the trolley without the need for a lower bungee strap. It's a huge improvement on the old KeyLock system, and now puts it on par with its Motocaddy counterpart.

The CT8 GPS is proof that good things can come in small packages. A five-year battery warranty and two-year chassis warranty is a reassuring addition to any purchase and the feature-packed trolley looks superb to boot. Those seeking a space-saving option for their next purchase should seriously consider PowaKaddy's updated pocket rocket.

In my opinion, the overall experience still falls marginally short of the Performance Plan available on Motocaddy GPS devices – which gives you full-hole mapping and other features for a subscription fee. But I suspect this won't be too far away from future PowaKaddy offerings.

While boasting a powerful GPS system, the CT8 comes in one of the most compact and easy-to-use chassis designs available. It weighs under 10kg and utilises a

● UP AGAINST



Motocaddy M5 GPS
£979

Folds similarly compactly, but offers a slightly more comprehensive GPS via a subscription service.



PowaKaddy CT6 £749

Has everything that is great about the CT8, just without the GPS system embedded.



Motocaddy M3 GPS
£929

Boasts a smaller 2.8in screen, but the same size chassis as the M5 GPS.

● KEY TECHNOLOGY

1 The GPS comes pre-loaded with 40,000 courses, with updates taking place through the Bluetooth-connected app for iOS and Android.

2 A USB-C fast charging port located under the handle allows you to charge your smartphone or other GPS device while on the move.

3 New game-tracking features within the GPS let you record putts and fairways hit and review post-round stats in the app.

4 Slotting in neatly to the centre of the chassis, PowaKaddy's Plug 'n' Play battery is the most powerful, thinnest and lightest on the market.

COBRA LIMIT3D IRON

£2,499 (4 - PW)



The visible lattice technology on the rear is a beautiful added touch

Sometimes, equipment releases come out of the blue and really take you by surprise. This was definitely the case for me with the new Limit3d iron from Cobra. Essentially, what we have here is the world's first commercially available, 3D-printed steel iron that is aiming to look like a blade but act more like a game-improvement iron. Normally, these two characteristics are mutually exclusive.

With regard to the appearance, it is difficult to imagine a better-looking iron from a shelf-appeal perspective. The head shaping is exceptional and the finish is about as premium as it gets, with a rear lattice structure providing a really interesting aesthetic. Down behind the ball the profile is excellent, with a nicely rounded toe and a flawless transition from hosel to topline.

I would dispute that the Limit3d iron looks like a traditional forged blade at address, however, as a

fairly long blade length and healthy topline make it look more like a TaylorMade P770, for example, to my eye.

An average carry of 186 yards is well above my normal 7-iron figure and the work that Cobra has done on the CG is clearly effective as I did not struggle to get these irons airborne. I was able to generate a pleasing peak height figure of 111ft and perfectly manageable spin at 6,400rpm.

While I mentioned earlier that this iron didn't totally give me a forged-blade vibe in terms of the visuals, I have to concede that the feel is nothing short of remarkable and, when combined with exceptional levels of forgiveness, this iron provides a performance cocktail that I haven't enjoyed before.

I have never experienced an iron that provides so much ball speed with quite such a tender impact sensation. Furthermore, the levels of forgiveness on offer



Around 100g of tungsten has been added to the heel and toe

here are almost unparalleled, standing up to anything that I have tested in the game-improvement iron category. Even some of my more severe heel and toe mishits barely interrupted my ball speed averages.

Cobra has achieved something here that I really didn't know was doable and, let's not forget, this is only the first attempt using such design techniques. If this is a sign of things to come, then I am one very excited equipment tester.



● KEY TECHNOLOGY

1 Cobra has partnered with nTop – an industry leader in design software – on this project to create a fully 3D-printed stainless steel body.

2 Around 100g of tungsten has been placed in the heel and toe areas of the head to lower CG and further enhance forgiveness levels.

3 The 3D-printed internal lattice structure has allowed the designers to fine-tune the frequency and feel to mimic that of a forged club.

Words Joe Ferguson



It has a different finish to the 'crushed carbon' of the main driver family

● REVIEWED

CALLAWAY PARADYM AI SMOKE TI 340 MINI DRIVER

£ 4 4 9



The mini driver revolution is officially upon us. With more and more of these intriguing new clubs hitting the USGA/R&A conforming list seemingly by the week, I'm taking a look here at Callaway's version – the Paradym Ai Smoke Ti 340 mini driver – to see what it can offer.

First, many people have been asking the question, what or who is a mini driver for? Well, the answer can be different from player to player. As a PGA professional, I have noticed a growing number of my high-



The 340cc head makes it a little trickier to hit off the deck than its smaller rivals

speed contemporaries using a mini driver to great effect as a pure driver alternative on particularly tight golf courses where a 3-wood might drop too much yardage and add too much spin. For them, a mini driver, pitched somewhere between 3-wood and driver in terms of loft, length, and face depth, has produced some excellent results.

With lofts of 11.5° and 13.5° available and a shaft length of 43.75in, this Callaway version sits directly in that twilight zone between driver and 3-wood. Visually, I think the brand has done a great job, much as I did with the rest of the Ai Smoke driver range. The grey colourway looks extremely premium and the head shaping is excellent.

Opting for a 340cc head did mean I found a difference in how and where I would use it compared to the smaller TaylorMade Brnr Mini Copper (304cc). The extra head size was

very comforting off the tee. However, I did find the head dwarfed the ball a little more off the floor, which some may find a bit intimidating. From the tee, ball speed and efficiency were very impressive – in fact, not far behind my current gamer driver.

The additional loft and subsequent spin increase did take a little distance off my 'normal' driver numbers, but I was only losing around 13-15 yards of carry. The feel off the face will be a familiar one to current Ai Smoke users, with a satisfying dull thud and fairly muted audio.

Overall, a really interesting and strong-performing product. If you are very clear on what you want from it and get it set up accordingly, you will have a serious weapon on your hands.



● KEY TECHNOLOGY

1 The 340cc head uses a titanium construction and benefits from the same Ai Smart Face technology used in the main Paradym Ai Smoke family.

2 Ai Smart Face creates micro deflections across the hitting area to optimise launch and spin on both centre strikes and mishits.

3 It features adjustable 12g and 4g weights in the sole, as well as Callaway's traditional adjustable loft sleeve, to allow for tinkering.



Words Joe Ferguson

EQUIPMENT

REVIEWED

PING KETSCH G PUTTER

£ 2 7 9

The premium black PVD finish really stands out on the greens



It's quite rare for a new line of putters to not have some catchy, cool name, but in 2023, Ping launched a family that it simply referred to as 'new Ping putters'.

In May 2024, six more models were added to the line-up, including the subject of this review – the Ketsch G. It is a mallet model with a large footprint

85%

Forgiveness levels enhance stroke stability

designed to make it one of the most forgiving putters on the market, ideal for those who have perhaps lost some all-important confidence on the greens.

Aesthetically, it ticks every box for me: I absolutely love how it looks; I love the traditional grip; I love the Pebax face insert; I love the alignment markings on the crown; and I love the deep footprint, which really promotes added confidence over the ball. How can you look at all that putter head behind the ball and not think you are getting maximum forgiveness?

Indeed, it was as forgiving as I had expected. With my normal putter I've only been finding the sweetspot

maybe twice in every five putts, but the stability of the Ketsch G seemed to breathe new strike confidence into my stroke.

The hole in the sole is a useful feature and serves a dual purpose – the weight taken out that is redistributed to the perimeter not only boosts forgiveness, but also creates an excellent ball retriever. I don't think there's much use for it out on the course, though, as you can only really use it to pick the ball up for gimmes or when you aren't putting out.

Other putters, such as the Cleveland HB Soft 2 Retrieve, can pick the ball out of the hole, which is great for back sufferers, but the large head on the Ketsch G means it's too big to fit in the hole, which kind of defeats the point.

Overall, this putter brings a lot to the table. It looks great and offers high levels of forgiveness, and the first-class alignment aid will really help golfers who struggle to start putts on line.



Words Dave Usher

KEY TECHNOLOGY

1

The dual-density Pebax face insert delivers a softer feel on shorter putts and a stable, more solid feel on the important longer putts.

2

The aluminium body and stainless steel sole plate combine to optimise the centre of gravity position and enhance forgiveness.

3

The black PVD blast finish contrasts with three white lines that span a ball's width (right) to simplify and speed up alignment on the greens.





WILSON INFINITE BUCKTOWN PUTTER £150



A cost-effective putter option for golfers of all abilities, the Infinite Bucktown comes with an all-new Pistol Karakal grip, clear and vibrant alignment markings and a two-tone PVD anti-glare finish. It all adds up to a putter that both looks and feels premium, with a solid, stable sensation at impact. The body shape sits flush to the ground and there's plenty of forgiveness around the perimeter, which is confidence-inspiring. Other shapes are available in the wide range.



DUCA DEL COSMA SABINA SHOE £229



One of two women's models in the brand's tour-level spiked collection, the Sabina is aimed at golfers who want maximum stability and grip through the swing while looking good doing it. A removable kiltie on the upper further enhances the sense of style, while the levels of detailing and stitching only add to the premium nature of the aesthetics. A compact yet comfortable fit neatly hugs the foot, while the comprehensively spiked outsole offers ideal grip in all conditions.



EVNROLL NEO CLASSIC ER2 PUTTER £399



Evnroll is possibly one of the most underrated brands in golf. This new model features a polymer/aluminium insert, which offers a level of softness not previously found in the brand's putters. It's a face-balanced model with plenty of perimeter forgiveness, so will suit golfers after an Anser-style head with some added assistance. Adjustable weights let you tweak the feel, while the 90g Neo grip feels buttery-soft in your hands and offers a comfortable yet secure feel.



MINIMAL TERRA SEI STAND BAG £399



Minimal, a new brand to the UK market, has found that faulty zippers are the number one reason for golf bag returns. So, it decided to get rid of them altogether and only uses magnetic closures across all the pockets. The stylish, clean design here is stunning and the magnetic closures do add a premium feel. The lack of a full-length apparel pocket and the fact that the magnetic closers can't keep every level of precipitation out hold it back slightly against the competition.



BENROSS REV 2.0 WEDGE £79



You'd be forgiven for thinking this wedge should be twice the price, such is the premium nature of its design, with its dark satin-grey finish putting it up there with more expensive alternatives. It's a touch different behind the ball, with the rounded shape, large profile and full-face grooves making it quite busy to look down on. The CNC-milled face delivers a crisp feel and it launches balls with ease on full shots. The degree of bounce in our test model wouldn't be ideal on firmer ground.



KOI GOLF ORGANIC COTTON QUARTER-ZIP £70



This uniquely designed quarter-zip top offers golfers versatile, comfortable quality and a more sustainable option. The material is 100% organic cotton, which has been grown without the use of synthetic pesticides or other toxic chemicals. The quality speaks for itself and the unique collar design is certainly something a bit different. Buying well and less often is one way of lowering your carbon footprint, and Koi Golf has definitely nailed the brief here.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

What is hot melt?

Adam Carmichael, via email

Hot melt is a heated glue typically placed inside a hollow clubhead, so primarily drivers, fairway woods and hybrids. It's a modern alternative to lead tape for changing the weight distribution in the clubhead, as well as adjusting sound and feel characteristics. Players will want their club builders to use hot melt to move the CG position or change the acoustics without having to use cumbersome and often ugly lead tape.



The EV2 is a high-MOI Anser-style putter

Can you still get forgiveness from Anser-style putters?

Oscar Cooper, via email

For those who don't want the busy looks of a mallet putter, but do want the forgiveness that they offer, there are options out there. Models like the Cobra 3D-Printed GrandSport, Odyssey Ai-One Milled Two T and Evnroll EV2 putters all do a great job of using perimeter weighting to add forgiveness, while also sticking to the classic, minimalist style of an Anser putter shape.

DAN PARKER ON...

GEAR TRENDS THAT ARE HERE TO STAY

● Lie angle balance putters

I'm talking about the technology of lie angle balance putters in general here, rather than just the brand LAB. While LAB, which stands for lie angle balance, may be leading the charge with this design technology, it's not completely unique. A lie angle balance putter is one that does not want to naturally rotate away from square. I'm totally sold on the concept and believe that in years to come we'll look back in amazement that it wasn't the norm earlier on.

● Full-face grooves

Another no-brainer for me here. More and more wedges are now being offered with full-face grooves, and why on earth would we not want that? Sure, the visuals take a session or two to get used to, but the benefits are plain to see. First, shots hit off the heel and toe will retain more spin and as such a more standard ball flight, but in addition to that, there is a small weight saving to be made by removing some more material to create extra groove space. This concept is going nowhere fast.

● 3D-printed clubs

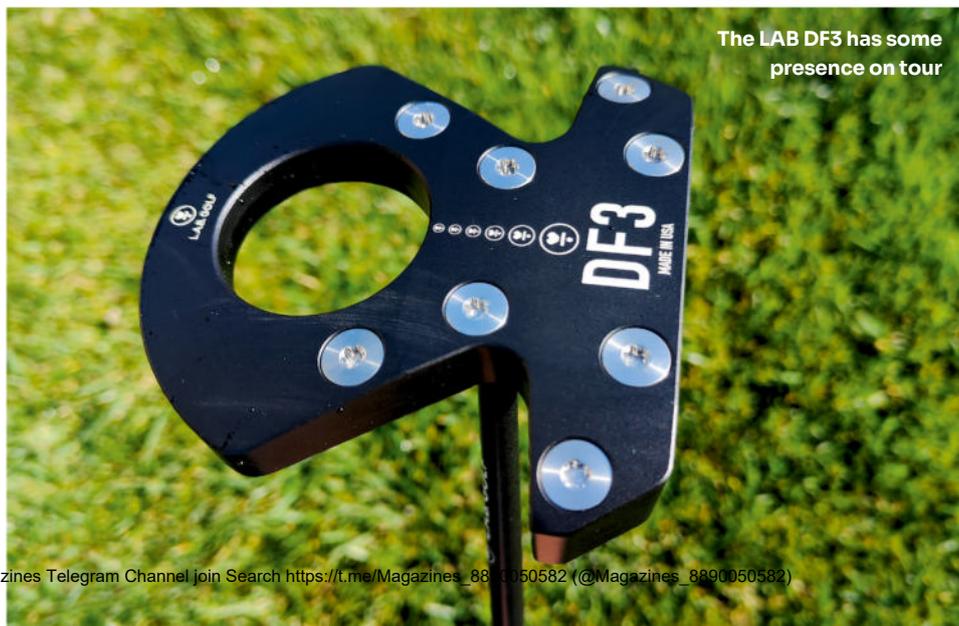
Having recently tested the incredibly impressive Cobra Limit3d iron, I'm very much a convert to the concept of 3D-printing golf clubs. As I understand it, this process has been widely used for some time in the realm of prototypes, but now the technology has come on so much that final products can be

Full-face grooves are a growing trend



created with outstanding accuracy and tolerances.

If some of Bryson DeChambeau's words are to be believed, there may come a time when hobbyists at home could turn their club ideas into reality. For the time being, the original equipment manufacturers will have time to perfect the process, so expect some exciting new developments to arrive soon.



The LAB DF3 has some presence on tour

HEAD TO HEAD



COBRA
DARKSPEED X £279

Lofts 15°-24°



WILSON
DYNAPOWER £220

Lofts 15°-21°

2024 FAIRWAY WOODS

We are smitten with the all matte-black look of this fairway wood. It does make the clubhead look a little more compact than it actually is, but that will likely appeal to most.



9

Looks

8

With a similar matte-black crown, it is only the red accents toward the heel that offer a hint of colour. A clear alignment aid helps set the ball in the centre of the face at address.

This model is aimed at a very broad church. With that in mind, it produces a neutral ball flight and plenty of launch and spin, which promote good distance and stopping power.

8

Forgiveness

9



We feel the Dynapower is a touch more forgiving than the Darkspeed X. A 12g rear weight makes it easy to launch, while off-centre strikes barely deviate off line.

The adjustable hosel allows optimisation of launch, while the combination of high ball flight and carry distance make it a useful club off the tee and when approaching greens.



9

Versatility

7

This is one of only a handful of fixed-hosel fairway woods on the market, so find the right loft in a fitting. Higher spin numbers mean a few yards less distance overall.

Cobra has a knack of making strong fairway woods and this is the pick of its recent iterations. It's visually stunning and equally at home off the tee and approaching greens.



9

Overall appeal

8

Only the lack of versatility truly lets this club down. Otherwise, it is a visually pleasing and incredibly forgiving fairway wood that will suit a lot of golfers.

You prefer a more compact look ✓

You want to use it off both tee and fairway ✓

You need an adjustable hosel ✓

Go for this if...

✓ **You require more off-centre forgiveness**

✓ **You want a higher ball flight**

✓ **You don't require post-fitting adjustability**

GROUP TEST

STAND BAGS

Like most equipment categories, the stand bag market has become flooded with options to suit all practical and stylistic needs and desires. In recognition of this, we conducted our biggest stand bag test so far, putting 15 models through their paces among the wider *Golf Monthly* team. After chatting through our experiences of each bag, we've come up with winners in key categories and crowned an overall champion.

● **Best lightweight**

Often when it comes to a new stand bag, how light and easy it is

to carry comes top of the wish list. To us, a lightweight bag should be no heavier than 2.5kg and there are plenty that come in under this weight. However, sometimes lightness comes at a cost, so you need to make sure any lightweight bag is also well built and proportioned to function properly.

Coming in at 2.2kg, the new Sun Mountain H2NO Lite Speed impressed us with the number of features and space on offer from such a lightweight build. The four-way divider was particularly impressive, with plenty of space for clubs, as was the new bubble-foam material that looks and feels as though it will do a great job of protecting your pride and joys.

If you're seeking a lightweight, top-end bag made from premium leather, Vessel has done a great job with its Sunday III, creating a bag weighing just 2.5kg out of an often heavy material. This first-class

All colours, shapes and sizes in our largest stand bag test to date



By GM
staff writer
Dan Parker



compact bag boasts all the classy hallmarks of the Vessel brand, with plenty of space and the capacity to carry a full set.

The outright winner was clear in this category, however.

TaylorMade's FlexTech Superlite, which weighs in at just 1.4kg, is almost as light as some of the smaller Sunday bags we had on test here.

Despite its lightweight build, it can carry a full set of 14 clubs comfortably. It also boasts five pockets, including a full-length apparel pocket, and has an easy-to-use strap system. As lightweight bags go, it doesn't get much better than this.

GM pick: [TaylorMade FlexTech Superlite](#)

“YOU INTERACT WITH YOUR STAND BAG BEFORE AND AFTER EVERY SHOT YOU PLAY, SO MAKE SURE IT TICKS ALL THE RIGHT BOXES FOR YOU”

The TaylorMade Flextech Superlite lives up to its name



water. Lightweight, practical and with such superb levels of waterproofing, there was only one winner here.

GM pick: [Sun Mountain H2NO Lite Speed](#)

● **Best value**

While we don't want to always lean exclusively on two brands, Big Max and MacGregor do often come out on top of the value category in our testing. Big Max bags aren't conventionally cheap, but they offer superb value for money by being well built and reasonably priced. They also come with a huge three-year warranty, which no other bag manufacturer can compete with.

From Big Max this year, we tested both the Aqua 7 G and Aqua 8 G stand bags, with the latter being ever so slightly bigger. Both are available in a huge number of colourways and use Big Max's i-dry system. They offer superb value considering their functionality and waterproof qualities. For us, the seven-way organiser on the Aqua 8 G was a little too large for a stand bag, so we'd lean towards the excellent-value Aqua 7 G out of the two.

The winner in this category is from another manufacturer that finds the right balance between price and quality – MacGregor. This year, we tested its Paramount Hybrid 14 stand bag. With an RRP of £129, we can still appreciate that this isn't the cheapest golf bag out there. However, you do get a lot for your money and it's a hybrid bag, so you can use it on a trolley too.

Yes, the materials are a bit scratchier in places than its more expensive counterparts, but that's a given considering the price. Undeniably, there's a lot for your money here. We'd recommend it as a brand if you're on a budget but still want quality.

GM pick: [MacGregor Paramount Hybrid 14](#)

● **Best looking**

In this category, we've been noting an emerging trend for vinyl stand bags that often use plainer colours and synthetic leather materials to create a classy, premium look and feel. ➔

● **Best waterproof**

Next on many people's 'must-have' lists is waterproofing. One bag worth mentioning here is the Motocaddy Hydroflex. Updated at the end of 2023, this is a hybrid stand bag that can be quickly and easily turned into a cart bag. This is a seriously spacious stand bag featuring a five-way divider, excellent waterproof materials and big pockets.

The base uses Motocaddy's Easilock system, which allows it to attach to any Motocaddy trolley without the need for a bottom bungee strap. It's the ideal bag if you switch between carrying and using a trolley. As good as this bag is, it's a niche product we'd only go for if we were using a Motocaddy trolley already.

While it didn't have any major updates for 2024, the Titleist Players 4 StaDry is still very much a leader in this category. With well-proportioned pockets and one of the best strap systems we've tested, it's a classy option that will stand the test of time from both build and looks perspectives. Titleist has released some new colourways this year, and we tested it in a very fetching purple and white option.

Speaking of eye-catching colours, the Callaway Fairway C HD, which we tested in bright orange and blue this year, also had no major updates for 2024, yet definitely remains very much a leader in the waterproof category.

We've already described how good the Sun Mountain H2NO Litespeed is in the previous section, and its faultless waterproof material and build quality make it the winner in this category. As discussed, it's incredibly light and the waterproofing is among the best we've ever tested. The nylon fabric benefits from a waterproof treatment on both sides – not just the outside, as on most bags – and the seam-sealed zippers mean that the whole bag is impervious to



Ogio, often famed for its bolder colourways and patterns, impressed us with its Shadow bag this year. Available in four subtle and classy shades, the Shadow is a stand bag that allows you to add colour and personality your own way via your towel and headcover. It also has a superb strap system, with the brand's Fit Disc technology allowing the bag to automatically adjust to ensure an even weight distribution.

Another new bag in this sub-category is the Stitch SL2 Fadeaway. It has magnetic pockets, a very durable fabric construction and a superbly comfortable hip pad, and you can even personalise it with your initials. As much as we loved how it looks and how it's crafted, the omission of any pocket large enough to fit apparel makes it slightly inconvenient if you're playing in changeable weather.

Despite the wealth of bags on offer in this part of the market, there was only one winner here – the Vessel Sunday III. While a Sunday bag by name, it isn't wholly a Sunday bag by nature. It can easily handle a set of 14 clubs and just the right amount of accessories, thanks to its five pockets. It feels like an extension



Sun Mountain (left) and Titleist make two of the best waterproof bags out there



of your body as you carry it, sitting perfectly on your back and over your shoulders, while the padding on the straps and the hip pad is so soft you barely feel them making an impression on you.

Being a Vessel bag, it is expensive, but you feel like you get every penny's worth thanks to the quality of craftsmanship and clever touches. It's a beautiful yet practical stand bag that will turn plenty of heads.

GM pick: [Vessel Sunday III](#)

Verdict

We have been thoroughly impressed by the wealth of options available in this sector of the market. Indeed, there will be a bag here to suit every golfer's priorities, whether weight, waterproofing, colour, style or functionality.

Our winner, though, is the stand bag that got the most heads turning and chins wagging during our testing – the Vessel Sunday III. The drop-dead gorgeous looks alone have this as one of the best bags of the year, but when coupled with its overall practicality and how comfortable it is to carry, it becomes a true all-rounder for those willing to spend a little extra on their next stand bag.



	BIG MAX AQUA 7 G	CALLAWAY FAIRWAY C HD	MACGREGOR PARAMOUNT HYBRID 14	MOTOCADDY HYDROFLEX	OGIO SHADOW	STITCH SL2 FADEAWAY	SUNDAY GOLF LOMA XL	SUN MOUNTAIN H2NO LITE SPEED	TAYLORMADE FLEXTech SUPERLITE	TITLEIST PLAYERS 4 STADRY	VESSEL SUNDAY III
RRP	£159	£249	£130	£219	£369	£320	£169	£359	£179	£230	£295
WEIGHT (KG)	1.7	2	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.5	1.5	2.3	1.4	1.9	2.55
POCKETS	6	5	10	5	9	4	5	6	6	7	5



Watch the full test on the *Golf Monthly* YouTube channel!



● RETRO REVIEW

“The impact feel is as good as, if not better than, any game-improvement iron I have hit”

Iron tester Joe Ferguson puts an iconic Callaway model from the 1990s through its paces

This month I'm testing the 1994 Callaway Big Bertha iron. Back then, the brand was beginning to establish serious dominance on tour and at retail with its Big Bertha woods, and with the imminent release of the Great Big Bertha driver, things were about to go stratospheric. The Big Bertha was very much a game-improvement iron but it was still heavily played on the global professional tours.

What was the tech?

The big story was, unsurprisingly, forgiveness. A vast footprint, large cavity, heavy offset and one of the thickest toplines I've seen to this day made it one of the most user-friendly irons ever. Bore-through shaft technology was another feature that allowed Callaway to save mass in the hosel area and redistribute it to the main body to create a huge usable hitting area.

How did it perform?

I pitted the 7-iron against the new Callaway Paradym Ai Smoke. The lofts are very different (28° in the Ai Smoke and a generous 33° in the Big Bertha) so I was expecting vast flight and distance differences, but the Big Bertha very much held its own! Before we talk data, the 1994 iron was very impressive in some of the more unquantifiable parameters. First, feel off the face was

exceptional, with a softness and almost a springiness I've not felt in modern game-improvement irons for some time. Despite it being, quite frankly, huge, I enjoyed how it sat over the ball and the confidence it inspired.

As expected, the Ai Smoke outgunned it for distance and ball speed, but the Big Bertha punched above its weight. A much higher launch angle, coupled with non-excessive spin, provided greater-than-expected carry and a potentially useful flight for the right player profile.

● Conclusion

For £110, you get a 3-SW set that offers performance far beyond the price. Yes, they're a little rough around the edges with some slight rusting, but this is to be expected after three decades and doesn't adversely affect performance. If you're on a budget looking to increase launch angle without dramatically increasing spin, the Big Bertha could do an exceptional job.

● EQUIPMENT



1994 CALLAWAY BIG BERTHA 7-IRON

Ball speed 126.5mph
Spin 5,846rpm
Launch 17.4°
Carry 178 yards

CALLAWAY AI SMOKE 7-IRON

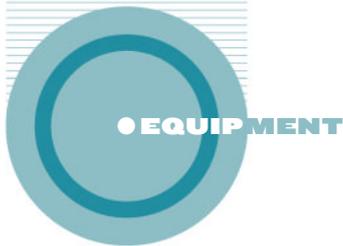
Ball speed 131.1mph
Spin 5,098rpm
Launch 14.6°
Carry 189 yards

Original launch date 1994

Price we paid £110 for a 3-SW set

This content was created in partnership with GolfClubs4Cash, Europe's largest retailer of second-hand clubs.





● BUYERS' GUIDE

SHOES

Fashion trainers have inspired the Duca del Cosma Davanti (£199)



Under Armour's Drive Pro (£150) is the spiked sibling of the Drive Pro SL



There was a time, not that long ago in the overall scheme of things, when the only golf shoe choice you had to make was whether to go for black or white. Now, there are loads of styles and colours demanding your attention.

To simplify what the current market looks like, there are three categories: spiked, spikeless and hybrid. Generally, spiked models offer the most stability, spikeless offerings are lightweight and boast greater versatility and the hybrid blends a bit of both.

There's then a wider choice to be made as a result of several new brands shaking things up in the golf shoe world. The old favourites are still there, but you can also now go for something with a bit more attitude. Here's a flavour of what's out there this year...



The FootJoy Quantum (£149) offers cloud-like levels of comfort

“WHY NOT EXPRESS YOURSELF WITH YOUR SHOE PURCHASE? I THINK IT IS THE MOST ENJOYABLE WAY TO SPEND YOUR MONEY IN GOLF”

DAN PARKER, GM STAFF WRITER

G/Fore's G/18 (£200) is its most distinctive shoe to date stylistically



● TOP BUYING TIPS

1 Buying both a spiked and a spikeless pair will allow you to rotate your shoes according to conditions, helping both to stay box-fresh for longer.

2 Sizing comes up slightly different across the main shoe brands. For example, we recommend that you size down in FootJoy and up in Adidas.

3 If you have a favourite trainer you wear off the course, it's likely to now have a golf shoe variant, offering you the ultimate in versatility.



BEST SPIKED

Adidas Tour360 24 £160
Now in its 19th year, the latest edition of this all-rounder provides exceptional grip in all conditions, more support than its predecessor and a comfortable new heel.

Nike Air Zoom Infinity Tour Next% 2 £159.99
Brooks Koepka and several notable others favour this modern style of shoe. It offers supreme levels of comfort straight from the box.

Puma Phantomcat Nitro £129.99
This well-rounded model features a unique traction system that is both low-profile and lightweight, with nitrogen-infused foam in the heel for added comfort.



BEST SPIKELESS

Under Armour Drive Pro SL £130
Under Armour has managed to incorporate a lightweight, sturdy build into this performance shoe, one that also provides exemplary grip and supreme support.

Payntr X 005 F £149.99
This sleek, modern shoe packs a pretty big punch in the spikeless category and, in terms of the basics, it ticks all the boxes from cushioned comfort to superb grip.

G/Fore Gallivan2r £160
Aesthetically pleasing silhouettes showcase everything that is great about G/Fore, as evidenced by this classy and deceptively comfortable spikeless shoe.



BEST FOR COMFORT

Ecco LT1 £169.99
Another classy golf shoe from Ecco, and one that offers the incredible levels of comfort and premium looks that the brand has now become well known for.

Skechers Go Golf Blade GF Slip-ins £160
Not the brand's best-looking shoe, but as far as arch support and heel cushioning are concerned, this practical model receives top marks.

FootJoy Pro/SLX Carbon £189.99
The latest addition to this iconic FJ franchise delivers excellent levels of comfort without sacrificing the key performance elements that every golfer requires.



BEST HYBRID

Adidas S2G SL £89.99
For the golfer who values style and comfort on and off the course, few shoes offer more versatility than the S2G SL. It also represents outstanding value for money.

Nike Air Pegasus '89 £109.95
Stunning looks and incredible versatility on and off the course are packaged up in a comfortable shoe that will appeal to both trainer enthusiasts and golfers.

True Linkswear Lux Hybrid £185
This smart silhouette takes the brand's casual Lux Knit and elevates the aesthetic and practicality with a leather saddle and fully waterproof knit upper.

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● COURSES

Words: **Jeremy Ellwood** Photography: **Geoff Ellis**

● Essentials

Chesterfield Golf Club, Matlock Road, Walton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire

Stats: par 71, 6,281 yards

GF: £25-£50wd; £40-£50 Sun after 1.30pm

● MUST PLAY

Chesterfield

Derbyshire may not enjoy the wider golfing renown of certain counties but this certainly doesn't mean there isn't much for the visiting golfer to enjoy in this central part of England. Chesterfield Golf Club on the south-west side of the

town is one such example, with its pretty parkland course a lovely place to play especially in the height of summer.

The club was founded in 1897 but moved to its present site at Walton nine years later, before growing from nine



holes to 18 in the late 1920s, with Harry Colt designing the newer nine laid out below the clubhouse.

Despite playing across sloping land, there is actually relatively little in the way of strenuous climbing, with the 4th and 5th the only two consecutive uphillers and the 16th then climbing fairly steeply as it curves round to the right.

● **Pick of the front-nine tests**

Heading out, the short par-4 opener plays longer than its yardage as you climb away but you then drop back down via two fine par 4s, the 2nd ideally suiting a fade into the slope when fairways are firm to prevent your ball scampering off into the left-hand trees.

The 7th and 8th are perhaps the pick of the front-nine holes, both new additions in the early 1950s. The former is another elegant downhiller that sweeps gently left. Then, after a little stroll down through the woods, you arrive on the tee of a 148-yard, drop-hole par 3, whose slightly raised green is protected by three bunkers. As with all such holes, clubbing and difficulty levels vary with wind speed and direction. The front nine closes with a short par 5 that slingshots round to the left and on up to a green cut into the slope.

● **An ever-present beck**

The downhill 10th is then one the best holes on the course, playing down and

away from the top-notch halfway hut via one of the back nine's many furrowed fairways, before crossing Birdholme Brook 80 yards short of the green and rising back up.

This brook or beck is a constant feature throughout the back nine, mostly flanking holes until you then traverse it again on the strong closing trio – 16 and 18 near the tee but closer to the steep-fronted green on 17, a hole with at least a hint of the 10th about it, which requires precision off the tee before the uphill approach. Anything short of the green here can easily trundle back down. The toughest test of all is the 453-yard SI-1 par-4 13th, which you'll need to pray isn't playing into any sort of headwind.





The Corales course hosted the country's first PGA Tour event in 2018

● PLANET GOLF

Dominican Republic

This tropical paradise in the Caribbean boasts a wealth of thrilling, scenic and absorbing golf

The Dominican Republic is an extremely popular, tropical holiday destination and its portfolio of excellent golf courses is the best in the Caribbean. The country occupies the majority of the island landmass that it shares with Haiti and its golf offering is largely in a cluster to the east of the capital, Santo Domingo, out and around the easternmost coastline. A few more courses line the road up to Puerto Plata in the north, where Robert Trent Jones designed the Playa Dorada course almost 50 years ago.

Although formalised golf on the island dates back to 1920, it was really Pete Dye's creation of Teeth of the Dog at

Casa de Campo in 1971 that paved the way for this to become a genuine golfing destination. The resort itself covers some 7,000 acres and there are 63 holes open to all, along with a hotel, marina, beaches, restaurants and bars. There are plenty of other sporting and holiday activities on offer, but the star of the show is Dye's spectacular course, where seven holes run right along the ocean. Alongside this, there are 27 completely different holes on the Dye Fore course, and a further 18 on the Links.

The Corales course on the eastern tip of the island is another premium offering. It hosted this year's Corales

Puntacana Championship on the PGA Tour, which was won by Billy Horschel. This Tom Fazio design is extravagant, dramatic and beautifully presented. As elsewhere, there is an eclectic mix of lush green inland holes and those that skirt the shore. The closing hole on each nine is a classic: a par 3 over a craggy inlet at 9, and a spectacular 90°, left-to-right ride along the wall of death at 18.

As you might wish, the supporting cast of enjoyable and more golf ball- and pocket-friendly courses is strong, as is the array of accommodation and wide range of other holiday pursuits. For a golf break, the Dominican Republic has it all.

The three nines at La Cana all have a very different character

● **La Cana**

Arrecife: par 36, 3,161 yards
Hacienda: par 36, 3,237 yards
Tortuga: par 36, 3,091 yards

Set in the heart of the expansive Puntacana Resort, La Cana's three loops of nine were designed by P.B. Dye. They offer that happy mix of fun holiday golf combined with more than enough strategy and cunning to test the best. Each is quite different. Arrecife finishes with two thrilling holes along the beach, Hacienda plays more inland with some raised greens, ponds and lagoons and anything right on Tortuga's brilliant par-3 5th will end up in the Caribbean.



The 7th enjoys a dramatic setting right beside the ocean

● **PGA Ocean's 4**
Par 72, 6,193 yards

Some 20 miles west of Casa de Campo, PGA Ocean's 4 sits next to the all-inclusive Bahia Principe Hotel and is an attractive and intriguing course carved through swampy jungle alongside glimmering lagoons. The unusual name comes from the four holes bordering the sea - the short 7th, the unusual par-5 8th with its split fairway, the par-3 16th with its infinity green and the strong par 4 that follows. With an island green on the par-3 3rd and plenty more memorable holes, this is tropical golf of the highest order.

● **Punta Espada**

Par 72, 6,314 yards

Any Jack Nicklaus Signature design is likely to command your attention, and Punta Espada is certainly no exception, packed with wow-factor, risk and reward, and glorious views both on and away from the course. It covers a vast acreage through high-end properties that never feel intrusive and there are several beachside holes where it can be hard to take your eyes away from the stunning views. There are thrills and spills all the way, with the renowned Nicklaus bunkering a bold and very visual feature.



It's all too easy to be distracted by the views at Punta Espada

Words Rob Smith

Mayo and Sligo

Jeremy Ellwood heads way out west in Ireland to revisit the fabled links at Carne in Mayo and sample the hotel and course at a 21st-century newcomer in Sligo

On my only previous visit to the stunning Carne Golf Links in County Mayo 18 years ago, I drove up from Doonbeg in County Clare, taking in the mighty Cliffs of Moher and then the spectacular N59 road, which twists between the Claggan Mountains and Atlantic inlets on the final approaches. This time, I was approaching from the north after several days' golf in County Donegal with my colleague, Rob Smith.

Since last time, this wonderful links had gained nine more holes, temporarily 'lost' them, then reinstated them, with this visit taking in the original back nine and those newer holes. Look on Google Maps and you'll see that not only is Carne way out on a limb, but that the course also occupies a small plot of the most dramatic duneland amid otherwise relatively flat terrain. It's almost as if someone has purposely built these dunes. Maybe they did, depending on your views about a creator God.

I digress. What about the course? Well, to help maximise capacity and flow (I think!), there are at least a couple of different routings for the Wild Atlantic Dunes links and we definitely played all the right holes but not necessarily in the right order, as Eric Morecambe would have it.

The 1st boasts an impressive amphitheatre green and then you're off and away on a thrilling ride through the towering dunes. Sometimes you won't be quite sure where to hit it; sometimes you'll end up on the wrong side of a fairway leaving an interesting approach over the corner of the dunes, as on the 2nd.

You only get right down to the water's edge once on the 4th green and par-3 5th, which plays diagonally away from the shore. The next par 3 at 7 cascades memorably down from on high, while the 8th is one of those holes that breeds uncertainty as it threads this way and that along a valley between the tallest dunes. The overall ride at Carne is all the more extraordinary because of the understated terrain that encircles this isolated plot of magical duneland.

● More spectacular dunes

Halfway back to our base for the night at Castle Dargan, and back across the border into Sligo, lies the Dunes course at Enniscrone. It's another fabulous Top 100 links where the opening hole lulls you into a false sense of security on the drive before delivering an instant wake-up call as you stand over a

demanding approach to a narrow, steep-fronted target in the dunes.

You could argue that the wow-factor wanes a touch on the lower holes towards the end of the front nine, but this purely relative lull stokes the fires of anticipation for your return to the tall dunes on the 12th, with the par-5 14th, christened Valley of the Diamonds, standing out as it plays uphill towards the Atlantic.

● Away from the coast

There was to be no Rosses Point or Strandhill this time with our final round at Castle Dargan, where we also stayed. The hotel's executive rooms occupy Castle Dargan House, with the modern wing home to deluxe rooms that look out over the estate.

Golf Monthly's regular Ireland correspondent, Kevin Markham, joined us for our round on a 21st-century parkland layout that bears the design signature of Darren Clarke. There are some fine holes, among them an elegant opener that doglegs gently left around the same water that flanks 18, before rising to the green.

On the 2nd, the ruins of the castle come into view, and you then tee off from close to them on the short downhill 3rd. There's risk-reward to enjoy on the par-5 6th over water, where the green may be temptingly in range downwind, and later on the short par-4 15th, where a long, precise drive between water on the right and a big bank on the left could reap big rewards. From here, the course closes via three strong par 4s, with 18 the longest two-shotter of all at 455 yards.



Carne Golf Links

Wild Atlantic Dunes
Par 72, 6,287 yards
GF: €160

Castle Dargan

Par 73, 6,402 yards
GF: €33.75-€55

Enniscrone

The Dunes
Par 73, 6,833 yards
GF: €195

Stay

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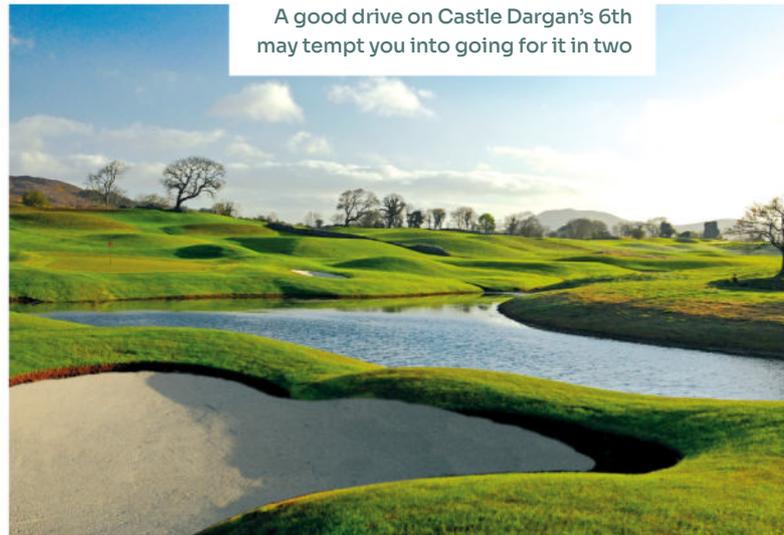


The breathtaking landscape at Carne



“IT’S ALMOST AS IF SOMEONE HAS PURPOSELY BUILT THESE DUNES. MAYBE THEY DID, DEPENDING ON YOUR VIEWS ABOUT A CREATOR GOD”

JEREMY ELLWOOD



A good drive on Castle Dargan’s 6th may tempt you into going for it in two

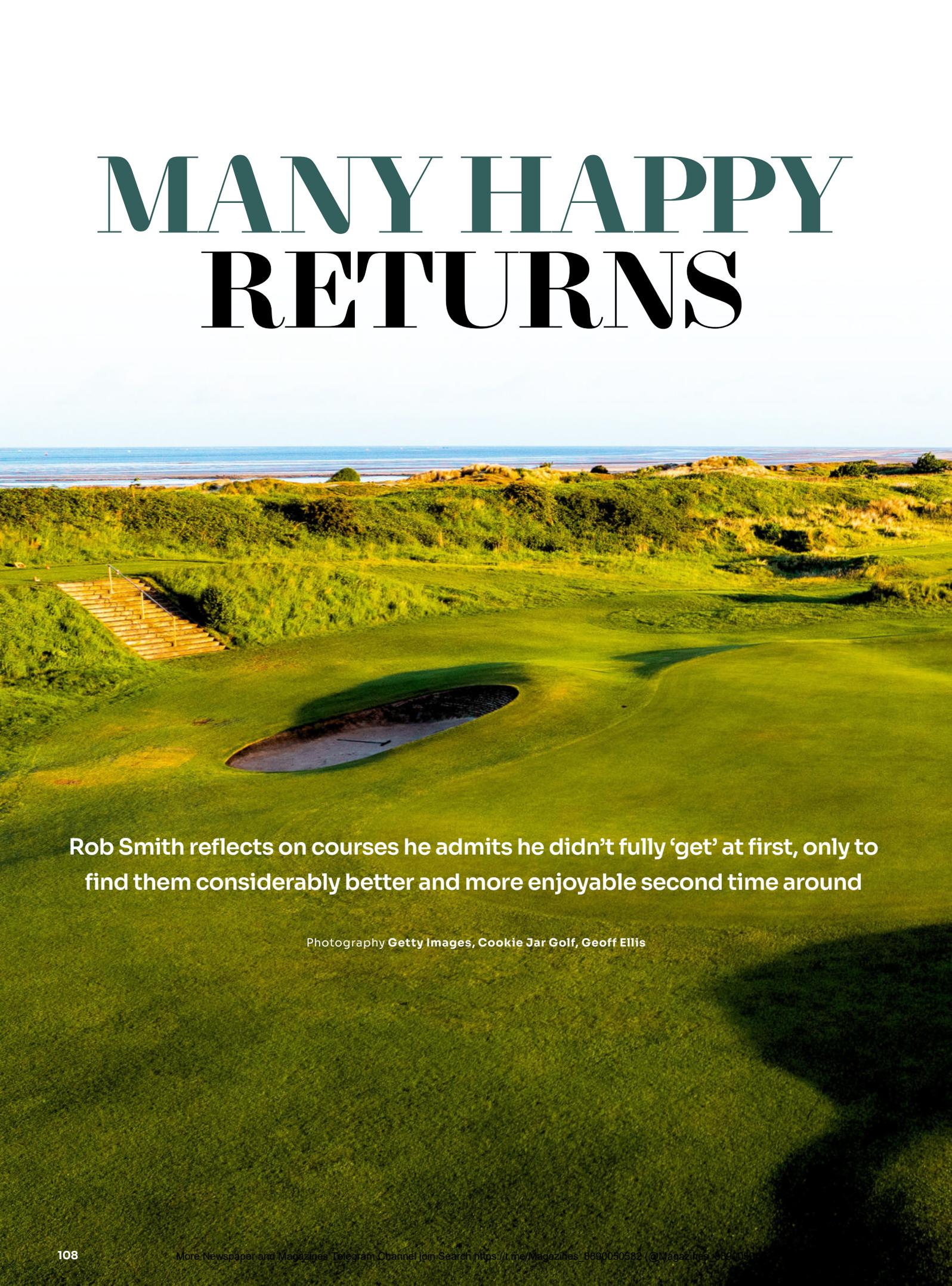


Castle Dargan’s clubhouse and hotel overlook the 1st and 18th

GM’s courses gang: Rob Smith, Kevin Markham and the author



MANY HAPPY RETURNS



Rob Smith reflects on courses he admits he didn't fully 'get' at first, only to find them considerably better and more enjoyable second time around

Photography Getty Images, Cookie Jar Golf, Geoff Ellis

B

efore one of my mid-life crises and the resulting move from a career in IT to reviewing and writing about golf courses, I used to simply turn up, play, and come away having either liked what I saw or not. Simple.

Obviously there were degrees of enthusiasm, but I never really thought too much about the reasons behind this. There were way more good experiences than bad, but if I may butcher that well-known saying about art, I didn't know much about golf courses, but I knew what I liked. Having now spent 17 years helping to compile the *Golf Monthly* Top 100 rankings, I'd like to think I've developed a far keener

sense of what works and why. The criteria we use are robust, reliable and relatable, and while we all have our preferences for some aspects of course design over others, they work together very well to develop a list that can be appreciated and trusted by all keen golfers.

I am still regularly and happily surprised by returning to a course that I had not really 'got' the first time, and seeing it in a whole new light. This may be due to my own greater understanding of design and presentation; it may be because my tastes have naturally changed over time; it may be that the club has done great work in improving the conditioning and ambience of the course; and very often it is because the course itself has been tweaked or, in some cases, drastically remodelled. ►



Rob saw West Lincs in a new light on his return visit a couple of years ago



The 12th hole at Little Aston in the Midlands

→ In offering a few examples of the enjoyment of return visits here, it is important to stress the difference between appreciating a course and enjoying it. Heathen that I am, I can appreciate the creativity and genius of Shakespeare without really being entertained by it. And I can absolutely appreciate why a particular course is high in our rankings without enthusing about it as much as others do. Conversely, there are courses I love that wouldn't ever make the Top 200.

● **WEST LANCASHIRE**

I first played this testing links on an overcast, windy and unseasonably cold spring day in 2000. The first four holes were right into a strong northerly, and I was pretty much beaten by the 5th tee. I was off 10 at the time, and see from my card – yes, I am that sad – that I managed 25 points in the morning and a dizzying 26 after lunch. My abiding memory was of an unforgiving course in a rather bleak setting that was clearly too good for me.

The summer before last I returned during the club's 150th anniversary and, even though little has changed in terms of design, it felt as though I was playing somewhere completely different. Yes, it helped that the sun was shining and the company was great, but that is largely irrelevant and my experience of the rankings meant I could see the course in a whole new light, literally and metaphorically.

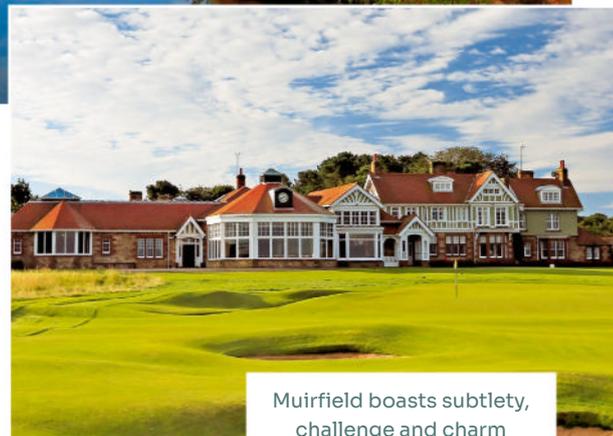
Strategically strong, peacefully and attractively located, there is a thrilling and very different stretch

from the par-3 12th round to the 15th, and it is kept in brilliant condition. In my mind and estimation, it had changed out of all recognition, without really changing at all!

● **MUIRFIELD**

Over 30 years ago, my first visit to Muirfield had me bristling with expectation. I'd already played other Open venues, but this was a bucket-list day out to a venue I had read so much about. I'd been glued to Nick Faldo winning here in 1987, and we were playing it a few weeks before he did so again. But where was the sea? Where was the drama of the Old Course or Turnberry? Where was the wow-factor? With foursomes in the morning and singles after lunch, my abiding and embarrassingly shallow memory was of the best golf lunch I had ever had. Twelve types of potato!

Fast forward to 2021 and a long overdue return to a course that was largely the same but looked and played infinitely better to my more informed eye. The experience and knowledge gained over three decades playing all of the Top 100 meant I could fully appreciate some of the most exquisite bunkering anywhere. It is a supreme test, full of subtlety, challenge and charm.



Muirfield boasts subtlety, challenge and charm

● **LITTLE ASTON**

As someone not in any way known for straight hitting, tree-lined layouts can sometimes bring on an attack of claustrophobia. My first visit to this attractive course in the leafy and affluent northern suburbs of Birmingham, again some 30 years ago, had got off to a bad start when my first wife and I were told we were not allowed to sit where we were on the terrace as women were not permitted there! Times have changed very much for the better, and I had been back once or twice but always felt it just a touch samey and one-dimensional.

I played it again last autumn, and the fog lifted as its undoubted charms finally revealed themselves to me. Subtle refinements and tree clearances have helped, as has moving the penultimate green out into the adjacent water. Trees still dominate, but never too intrusively or unfairly, and as the seasons and colours change, they simply add to the enjoyment and strategy rather than detract. There is much to be said for subtlety in golf course design, and Little Aston is a fine example.

● **DUNBAR**

My first game at Dunbar was only a decade ago, when I had over-optimistically put together a golfing trip with a good friend in a freezing January. It wasn't the 18

“EVEN THOUGH LITTLE HAD CHANGED IN TERMS OF DESIGN, IT FELT AS THOUGH I WAS PLAYING SOMEWHERE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT”

temporary greens that spoil it for me, as by then I had learnt how to look past that and see how a course is intended to be. But I did feel it was perilously narrow in places and a little spoiled by the cement plant at the far end.

On returning two years ago, I was as impressed as I had been disappointed before. It does indeed occupy a narrow strip, but I really like the variety of its unusual opening trio before things really take off from the 4th. It is more than able to test the best, especially if the wind is up, and its characterful holes and frequent flirtations with the beach make it a very enjoyable and memorable links with plenty of subtle characteristics.

● **HARPENDEN**

I was keen to include at least one less well-known course where my original expectations weren't high, and where my return made all the difference. I played Harpenden in 2010 off-duty with a friend, remember quite liking it, but then realised not long after that I couldn't remember anything about it. Not a good sign. We returned last year and, quite unusually for me, none of it jogged my memory.

However, this time the J.H. Taylor course was presented in tip-top order and it was clear that it was

loved and really cared for. This attention to detail elevated the experience and made it a delight to play. It isn't a design to set the world on fire, but it doesn't need to be and you can easily see why members and visitors thoroughly enjoy it time and time again.

● **FORMBY LADIES**

On the earliest of my original visits over 33 years ago, I remember enjoying Formby Ladies but it naturally paled against its Top-100 neighbour Formby, the excellent links inside which it sits. But recently a group from my club has enjoyed an annual trip to the dormy house, during which we also play, and lose, to the ladies.

The charms and subtleties of this short course have grown on me every time. It runs through an absolute carpet of heather and is an excellent test of shot-making. There are cracking par 3s at the 5th and 12th as well as some excellent green sites such as those at the 4th, 9th, and 11th. As my golfing ability declines with age, it gives me great comfort to know that courses such as Formby Ladies exist.

● **HARDELOT - LES PINS**

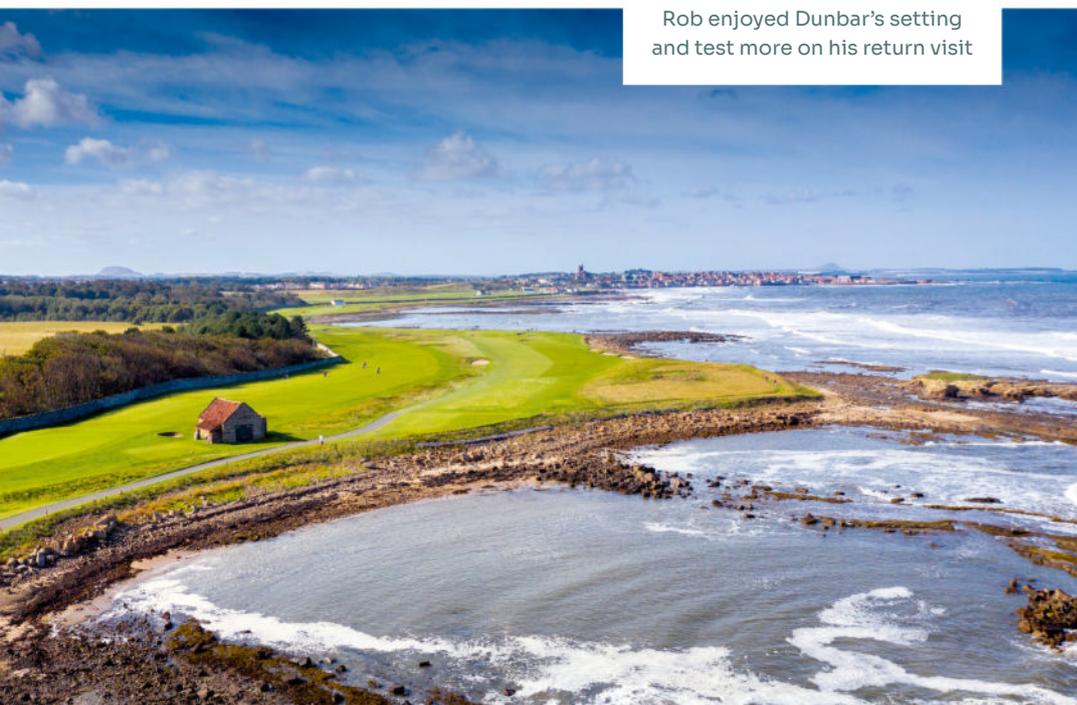
Returning to my wayward driving, any course called The Pines is only going to raise my blood pressure. I first visited 25 years ago, and while I could appreciate the test, I couldn't really enjoy it much as I played pinball through the trees. My excuse was that the course, designed by Tom Simpson in 1934, had become too overgrown in places. Clearly I was not alone in that thought, and in recent years Frank Pont and Patrice Boissonnas have restored it to its former glory via the



Harpenden is a J.H. Taylor course in Hertfordshire

removal of thousands of trees and extensive bunker renovations. It is now a tougher but fairer test that is also far more impressive visually. The bunkering is bold, dramatic and memorable, and there is excellent variety. I have moved 180° from being unimpressed to loving it!

For each course featured here, there are probably ten more equally worthy examples. We occasionally go back to a course and end up wondering what all the fuss was about first time, but there are many more where we can see their charms more fully, experience the changes and improvements made, and find positive attributes we had missed before. While there is no guarantee we will enjoy them more when we return, we will at the very least appreciate them more.



Rob enjoyed Dunbar's setting and test more on his return visit

A new standard

The stylish Garmin Approach S70 has set a new standard for golf GPS watches. Its crystal-clear AMOLED touchscreen provides incredibly detailed and vibrant hole maps and makes navigation simple, while the other cutting-edge features provide all the accurate information a golfer needs to pick the right club at the right time.



SPOTLIGHT ON

Nine-hole gems

Half the holes but just as much fun as these five very different courses prove

● Daventry and District

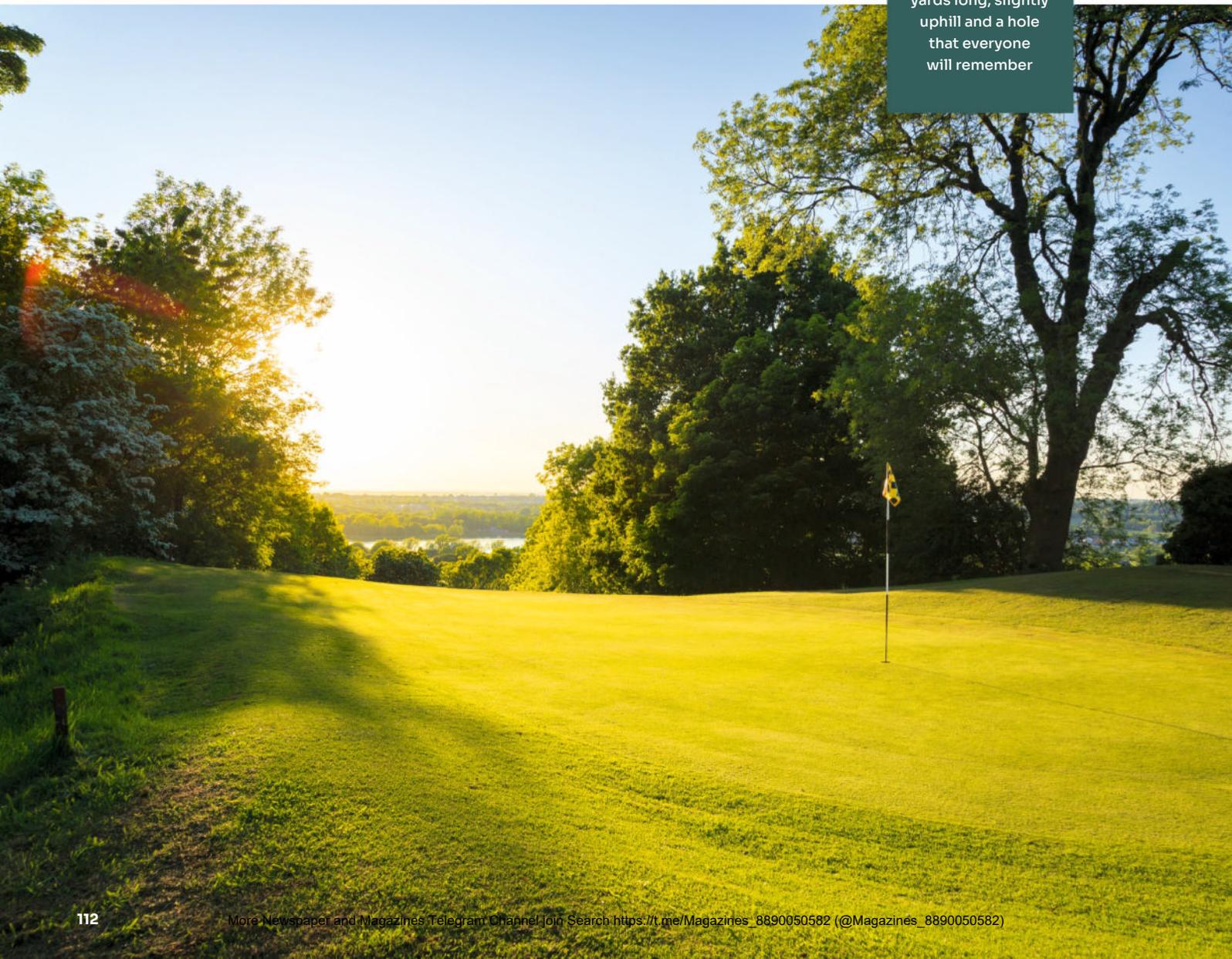
GF: 18 holes: £23wd, £28we

Situated to the east of the town on ancient Borough Hill, home to a Roman villa and even older remains, the club at Daventry and District celebrated its centenary in 2007. The undulating site raises questions

about club selection with wind often a further consideration. Two sets of tees help to mix things up, with the long par-4 5th becoming a three-shotter the second time round along with various other subtle and strategic differences. The closing hole is a welcoming par 5, played from way up high back down to the clubhouse.

The scenic par-3 2nd at Daventry and District is just 100 yards long, slightly uphill and a hole that everyone will remember

Words Rob Smith Photography Geoff Ellis,
Joe Simpson, Rob Smith, Getty Images





● **Dereham**

GF: 18 holes: £35

Dereham is in the heart of rural Norfolk and its charming course opened for play back in 1934. Since then, other than the odd tweak here and there as well as a demanding new back tee that turns the 5th into a par 5 when you play it as the 14th second time around, little has changed here, nor indeed, needed to. It is a timeless and charming design and setting, where the emphasis is on enjoyment. The standout hole is the very pretty short 3rd, which is played down to a green protected by five beckoning bunkers.

● **Brecon**

GF: 18 holes: £20

Roughly 15 miles inside the Welsh border, Brecon is a well-established and easy-walking course occupying a peaceful and mostly fairly flat area between the south-west side of the town and the River Usk. It dates back to 1902 and was designed by the brilliant James Braid. Unusually for a nine-holer, it offers a game of roughly two halves with the opening five featuring two par 3s, a pair of short par 4s and the only par 5. The closing four two-shotters are more testing and provide a strong finish with both 7 and 8 flanking the river.



● **Ipswich (Bixley)**

GF: All day: £20wd, £25we

While the Purdis Heath course at Ipswich is a highly rated entry in the *Golf Monthly* UK&I Top 200, not so many people are aware of the delightful and very pretty Bixley nine-holer that occupies the western side of the estate. There are five very attractive short holes to test your wedge and iron play, with only the 184-yard 7th demanding a longer iron, and four par 4s, with the closing hole an excellent dogleg played right to left. As a warm-up before the main course, or played in its own right just for fun, it is more than worth your attention.

● **Machrie Bay**

GF: 18 holes: £25

The beautiful isle of Arran is home to several extremely enjoyable golf courses, including Machrie Bay, one of two on its west coast with views across the water to the Kintyre Peninsula. It may be short on yardage, but the greens are tiny and it's great fun as you meander through its very scenic and natural landscape. The approach to the closing hole must be played over the main road to a green down by the beach. Run by the members for the love of the game, this nine-holer is a real delight.





Bill Elliott

Golf Monthly's
editor-at-large and
Golf Ambassador for
Prostate Cancer UK

● OPINION

Gently, too quietly, an era ended in Europe a few weeks ago. Bernhard Langer played his 513th and last tournament on a golfing circuit he had helped to create and prosper. You may have noticed.

However, this significant moment was largely crowded out by our summer of sporting excess and the final acts of British heroes in tennis and cricket. There was, of course, room in the media to acknowledge the withdrawal from European action – Bernhard will continue to play on the Champions Tour in America – but not enough to properly celebrate this extraordinary golfer and man.

He ended his European adventure by narrowly missing the cut at the BMW International Open in Munich, 50 years after he made his professional debut as a teenager. He said after he had lived a dream, a dream that had taken him from Anhausen, a small village in Bavaria where his dad Erwin was a bricklayer and his mum Wally a waitress, and where money was tighter than a Bethpage Black fairway, to Boca Raton in Florida, where he lives with his American wife Vikki. Money was scarce growing up in Bavaria. It isn't now.

He was the third member to be born of the brilliant quintet of golfers who revolutionised professional golf in Europe. Seve was the first, Faldo second, then Bernhard appeared in August 1957. By March 1958, Sandy and Woosie had turned up. Of these five, Herr Langer was the least likely to turn to golf for a living.

Yes, they played the game in Germany at that time, but only a few of them and certainly not someone from his underprivileged background. By now, his working as a caddie at a local club when he was just eight years

old is well known. He did it because he was fed up walking past the village sweetshop and rarely being able to buy some.

Nine years later he was a golf pro and soon winning his first tournament in Germany. He has won 42 European tournaments, a total of 123 events worldwide and two Masters, the very sweetest of ironies given his putting problems and Augusta's challenging greens.

He was the first World No.1 golfer to be anointed officially when the global rankings were introduced in 1986. He is, for me anyway, the greatest Ryder Cup skipper in modern times, leading Europe to a record 18 ½-9 ½ win at Oakland Hills. Once again, his attention to detail and his humanity had opened a very big door.

Along the way we developed a relationship I treasure, a friendship that properly began nearly 40 years ago when I helped him to write his life story. It was a pleasure and a privilege to do so, but he is so instinctively modest and just plain decent that sometimes I had to urge him to open up.

Some years before that, the first question I ever asked him was a banal query over a crowded breakfast at some tournament in 1979. As I waited for my eggs and bacon to be delivered, Bernhard asked the waitress if it was possible to have a banana. I was taken aback – eating any kind of fruit for breakfast was not on the menu in a very different UK at that time – but he patiently explained the benefits of digesting the potassium in a banana. I've eaten a banana during breakfast ever since and a lot fewer eggs and bacon.

Twenty-eight years later, it was his turn to ask me an unexpected question. In 2006, my wife Val and I were diagnosed within 30 minutes of each other with cancers – breast and prostate. Bernhard heard of this double blow and he called me to ask how we were doing. He then asked me the single most elegant, thoughtful and touching question anyone has ever asked me.

What was it? For now, I'll keep that to myself, my wife and Bernhard, but I can tell you this... while he is clearly a truly impressive golfer, he is an even more impressive man. Danke schoen for everything Bernhard. You truly are a star.

“Bernhard is a truly impressive golfer, but he’s an even more impressive man”

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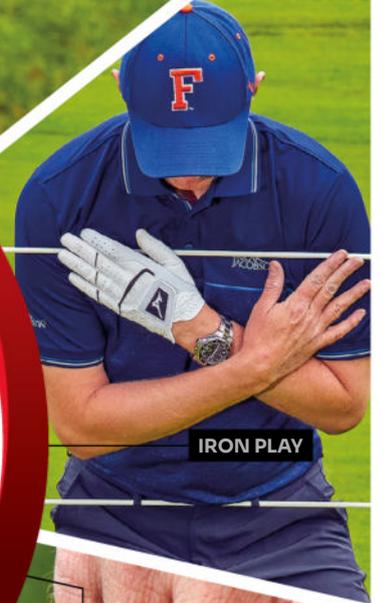
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WELCOME

Anyone who has ever played golf will tell you that the pursuit of improvement isn't always straightforward. The ebb and flow of our performances on the golf course is one of the reasons we become so hooked on the sport and, while it can be frustrating when things aren't going to plan, keeping a positive mindset and seeking out the right expert tips is a great strategy to supercharge your progress.

It's also worth evaluating how well your clubs are helping you to play your best golf, and perhaps consider a custom-fitting experience to ensure you have the best opportunity to find those crucial gains.

In association with Benross, this tee-to-green masterclass offers a collection of tips and drills covering everything from hitting more fairways and sinking more putts to finding the right gear. Give them a try and you'll start to see your confidence levels go up and your scores come down on the course.

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Instruction by Top 50 Coach
GED WALTERS



Edited by: Barry Plummer
Designed by: Jamie Latchford
Photography: Paul Severn and Tom Anderson
Shot on location at: Mellor Golf Club, Stockport



HOW TO HIT MORE FAIRWAYS

Most club golfers will aim to try and hit the golf ball straight. The problem with this is that we are standing to the side of the ball and need to swing the club on a tilted arc (depicted by the hoop here).

When we try to hit the ball straight, the brain aligns the club early and, as a result, we tilt the circle more to the left. Despite the position of the arc having changed, most golfers still point the club at target, which leaves the face open and creates a slice. To counteract this, we need to think more about swinging the golf club out to the right (from the inside).



The Delta XT is the latest driver model from Benross



The hoop depicts the golf swing's tilted arc here

Tee it up with the mark towards the clubface's centre



Swing arc and strike

If you can attack the ball more from the inside and strike it out of the middle of the face more often, both distance and accuracy will improve.

Start with your feet together and the ball in the middle



Gauge your strike by the impression left on the face



Move your trail foot away, keeping the ball on your lead heel



2 To practise this, we need to start measuring our strike. Take a Sharpie and mark a small circle on the ball. Colour the circle in and tee the ball up with the mark facing the centre of the clubface. When you hit your shot, the pen will transfer onto the face and give you a more precise indication of where you are striking the ball.

3 To take your set-up, start with your feet together and the ball roughly in the middle. Move your trail foot away, as in the lower image above, keeping the golf ball just on the inside of your lead foot. Make a smooth backswing and focus on delivering the club more from the inside at around a 45° angle.



BETTER FAIRWAY WOOD STRIKES

1 For many club golfers, fairway woods can be tricky to hit for a couple of reasons. First, the face of the club is quite small in relation to the size of the golf ball, and second, there isn't much loft on that clubface, which can cause anxiety and make them feel they really need to help the ball up.



Head size is much smaller than a driver in relation to the ball

Ball position for a fairway wood should be somewhere between where you would have it for a driver and an iron



2 You shouldn't treat a fairway wood swing like your driver swing. One of the biggest differences is set-up - many golfers either have their ball position too central or go extreme and adopt more of a driver position. Use a clubhead width with your fairway wood to find the right ball position just inside the lead foot.

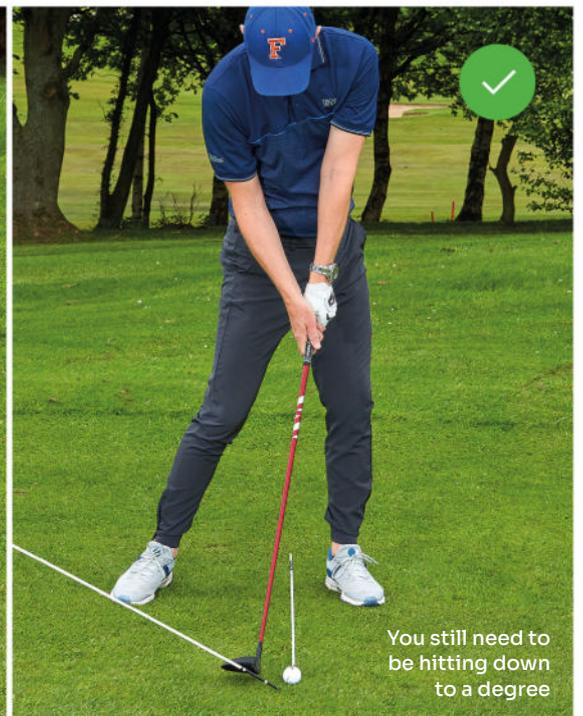


A clubhead width inside the lead heel is ideal

Ball position
Fairway wood play often goes wrong at set-up. Too far forward and you'll struggle to get to the bottom of the ball; too far back and you're likely to come in too steep.



3 You also need to consider your intent. The ball is on the ground, so contact with the turf is necessary to execute the shot. It's important not to try and get underneath it, however, as this often causes you to lean back (left), resulting in tops or thins. Instead, imagine you are hitting perhaps a 6-iron. You ideally want the fairway wood to travel in a similar way - down towards the ground, taking ball first and turf second (as indicated by the alignment stick below).



You still need to be hitting down to a degree



TRANSFORM YOUR IRON PLAY

1 The key principles we need for good iron shots are to ensure that we make contact with the ground in the right place, that our weight is forward (on the target side) and that we can control the length of our swing. What follows are some of my favourite tips and drills to help you master these fundamentals and, in turn, strike the ball better with your irons.



**Improve
your accuracy**

With your irons, you're looking to find the target and give yourself some birdie putts. Get these fundamentals right and your chances of doing this will improve.



The alignment sticks are great for providing instant visual feedback in this type of drill



2 Many club golfers underestimate the role the body plays in dictating how they move. For this drill, you don't need a club as you're going to build towards full shots. Take two alignment sticks and feed one through your belt loops at the front, then place the other across your chest, as in the top photo.

In your set-up, adopt a 60/40 split in your weight balance, favouring the target side. Maintaining a stable head position, rotate your body, allowing your trail hip and shoulders to turn (lower photo). From here, feel as though your weight moves forward and then rotate out. This will help you better understand the key movements needed in the golf swing.

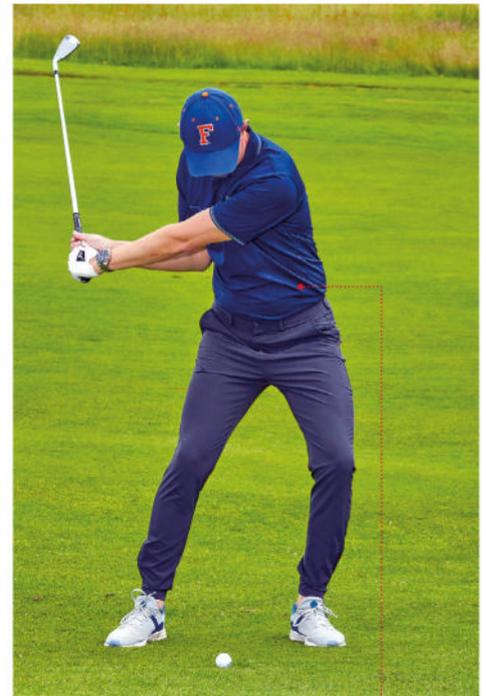
TOTAL GAME PLAN
IRON PLAY



3 Now you can start to progress this drill by introducing the golf club. Set up as outlined previously with regard to weight distribution and make the same body movement, but avoid introducing a ball at this stage. You can rehearse this movement with a club anywhere, whether in the garden or at the range, and it makes a great warm-up exercise before going out onto the course. The more you commit this movement to your muscle memory, the more consistency you will see in your iron shots.

Keep everything smooth and slow in this rehearsal phase to help really hone these movement fundamentals

4 The next stage is something I like to call 'moving through the gears'. First gear would be a slow, smooth swing, with weight moving forward and the sole of the club brushing the ground on the way through. You want to keep the lead arm extended through impact, maintaining the radius of the circle and the structure of the arms. Once you have mastered this, you can move into second gear, which increases the speed of the swing. Gradually move up to fourth gear, which would be the swing speed you're looking to achieve out on the golf course.



Gradually increase your speed until you hit fourth gear



TOTAL GAME PLAN
IRON PLAY



5 Now hit some shots, taking the club back to a point where the lead arm is parallel to the ground and then on to the same point in the follow-through, as here. This resembles a punch shot and is a great way to focus on technique. Continue to concentrate on your weight moving forward and the extension of the arms through impact.



Repetition is the answer

The beauty of practising these key moves separately and purposefully is they build muscle memory, which will then kick in more naturally out on the golf course.

Practice will help to embed all these key movements

6 Finally, it's then all about practice and hitting shots, using repetition to embed these elements into your normal swing. If you go to the range and practise with a bucket of balls by hitting parallel-to-parallel punch shots and moving through the gears, you will notice more control in your iron play, which will yield better results out on the course.

Weight shift and extension are vitally important

TOTAL GAME PLAN
CUSTOM FITTING



5



BENEFITS OF A CLUB FITTING

Are your clubs helping you play your best golf?
GM staff writer **Barry Plummer** reports back
on a fantastic fitting experience with Benross

Getting a custom club fitting is now easier than ever and there are so many benefits to going through the process. As a high-handicap golfer, I am always looking for ways to make improvements to my game, and while I do take time to have lessons and practise, I was also keen to make sure my clubs were giving me the best chance of success out on the course.

When I arrived at American Golf's Trafford store for the first time, I was impressed by the set-up – a driving range, a shop floor packed with high-quality products and a number of hi-tech fitting bays. Benross has a reputation for providing quality clubs at an affordable price, so I was eager to get started and see what its latest products, along with a thorough fitting process, could do for my game... ▶

G



TOTAL GAME PLAN CUSTOM FITTING



1 Learn about lie angle

One of the first things you are asked to do in a club fitting is to hit a few balls with your current clubs.

This gives the fitter a chance to analyse your swing using the latest shot-tracking technology and come to a conclusion as to areas that could be addressed through changes to your equipment and set-up.

After I had struck a few balls at the expansive range, Steve (my fitter) immediately identified something he thought could help me improve my ball-striking with my irons.

The lie angle of my current clubs is 2° upright, which evidently was a factor in my regular miss away to the left. Steve advised me to try the new Benross Delta XT iron with a 1° upright lie angle, which immediately produced sweeter strikes.

2 Seek the right shafts

The next thing we focused on was the shafts in my current clubs. My swing, although often unpredictable, generates quite a lot of speed. The shafts I have used for the past two years are regular flex, which means I have a tendency to shut the face too quickly through impact, sending the ball left.

By switching to a stiff-flex shaft, both in the Benross Delta XT iron and Delta XT driver, I was able to deliver the clubface

more squarely through impact and narrow my dispersion, thus providing instant improvements in both accuracy and distance.

3 Lessons in loft

When I pulled the headcover off my current driver and sent a few poorly struck tee shots into orbit, Steve immediately questioned how much loft there was on it. My driver was set at 10.5°, and while many of the issues I have with my long game come down to technique, Steve assured me I would see instantly better results off the tee with a slightly lower loft.

And so it proved. With a new Benross 9.5° Delta XT driver in my hands, I immediately saw a better trajectory and shape on my shots. Thanks to a slightly lower ball flight, my distance improved and I enjoyed what felt like an increased degree of control over the golf ball. All of this will help me feel more confident when I pull the big stick out of the bag in the future.



4 Dive into the data

After hitting plenty of balls, Steve and I went over to the computer screen for a debrief. The level of detail a fitter uses to analyse your game is truly impressive, and the insight it provides not only helps you to make better decisions about your equipment, but also allows you to develop a deeper understanding of your overall golf game.

We went through a number of shots, with Steve highlighting areas where equipment changes had led to an improvement in my performance, all of which was backed up by an easy-to-follow visual simulation. Agreeing a plan moving forward was simple, as I took on board his expert advice while also feeling in control of the decision-making process.

5 Confidence on the course

One of the great benefits of a Benross club fitting with American Golf is that you don't have to wait too long for your new toys to arrive. Most customers receive



The latest range from Benross has the game covered from tee to green

A slightly less upright lie angle immediately improved Barry's ball-striking



their orders within two weeks and that means you can quickly get acquainted with them out on the course.

From the moment my new clubs arrived, I couldn't wait to test them out. The entire set looked incredible in the bag, and I couldn't believe the high level of quality on offer in relation to the very reasonable price tag. I had plenty of compliments from my playing partners, too, whose shock about my upturn in form was audible after I striped my new 7-iron 170 yards to the middle of the green.

The gains I found in the fitting bay certainly translated to the course, and immediately I felt a boost in confidence. Why? Because I knew I had the gear I needed to get my handicap down and play better golf.



A club fitting is now a very high-tech operation



DIAL IN YOUR WEDGES

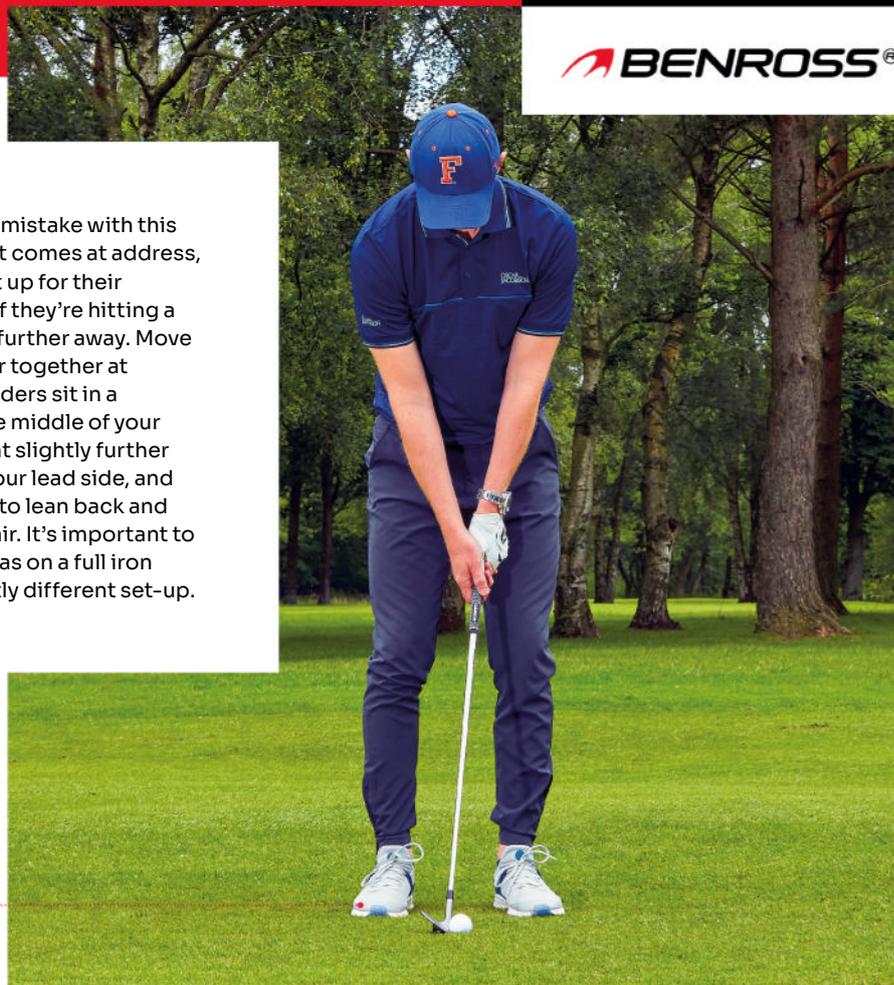
Shots from 70 to 100 yards are never easy, mainly because most of us rarely practise them. A key factor that will help you get dialled in from this range is club selection, and that means not always taking your most lofted wedge. While I might opt for a 52° wedge from this yardage, many club golfers would be better taking a pitching wedge to help them better control the flight and distance.



Control not distance
Good players rarely hit their wedges flat-out. It's all about control, and swinging at full speed makes that harder to achieve.

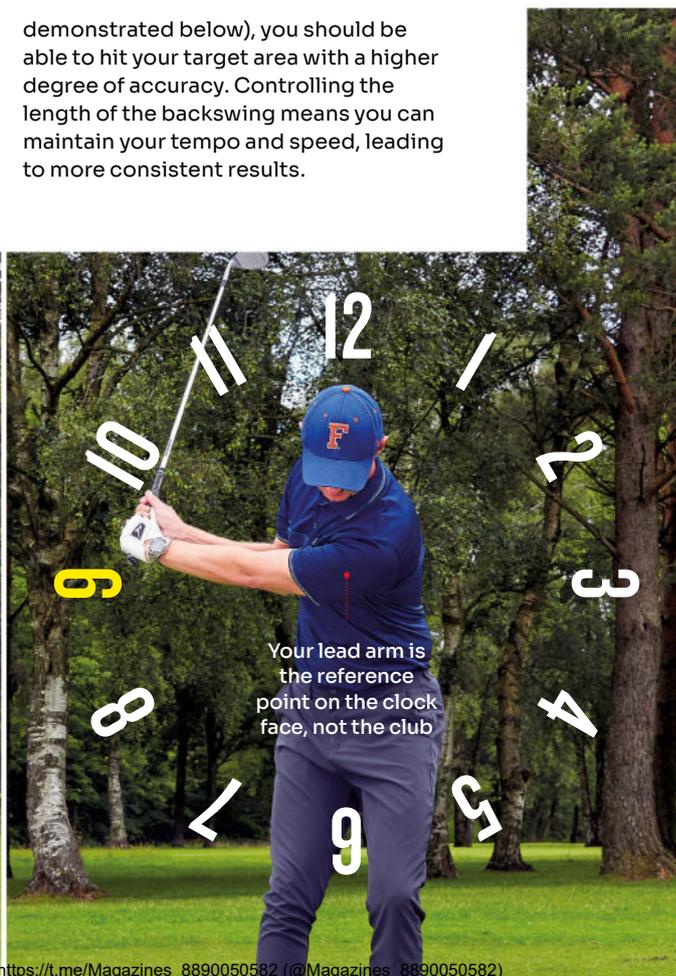
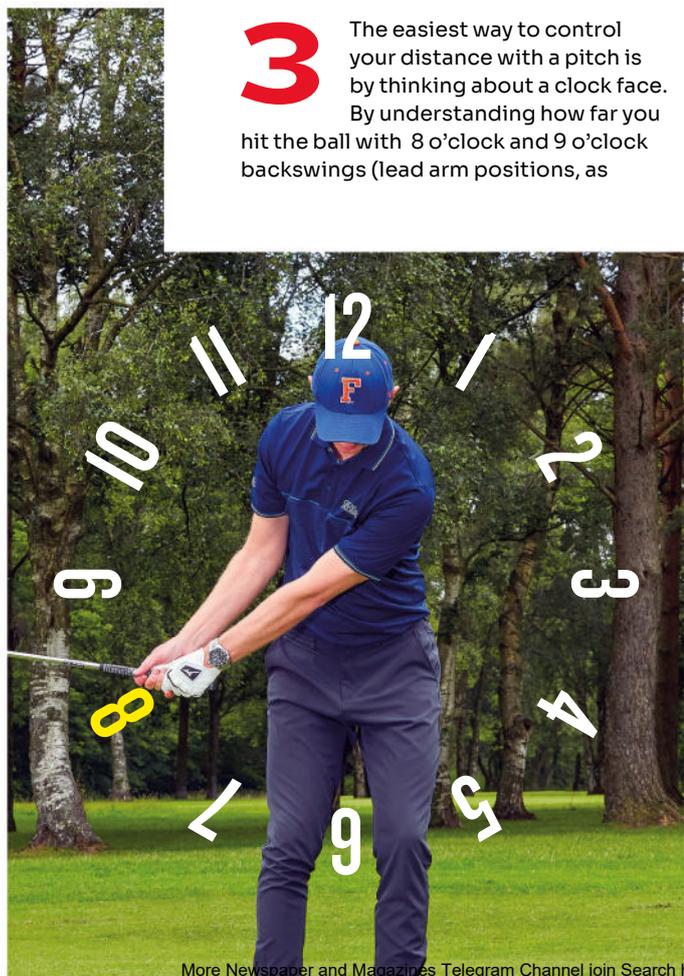
2 A common mistake with this type of shot comes at address, as many set up for their pitches as if they're hitting a long-iron from much further away. Move your feet a little closer together at address so your shoulders sit in a straight line above the middle of your feet. Place your weight slightly further forward, more onto your lead side, and avoid the temptation to lean back and help the ball into the air. It's important to still get ball then turf, as on a full iron shot, but from a slightly different set-up.

Narrow your stance down to shoulder-width



3 The easiest way to control your distance with a pitch is by thinking about a clock face. By understanding how far you hit the ball with 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock backswings (lead arm positions, as

demonstrated below), you should be able to hit your target area with a higher degree of accuracy. Controlling the length of the backswing means you can maintain your tempo and speed, leading to more consistent results.



Your lead arm is the reference point on the clock face, not the club



SAVE SHOTS FROM THE SAND

I The biggest issue many club golfers face when playing from greenside bunkers is they struggle to find any degree of consistency with where the club enters the sand. If you can develop your understanding of how the club interacts with the sand and the appropriate point of entry, your bunker play will improve drastically.





Forget the ball
Start by just hitting the line and not the ball. Only introduce a ball once you have established a consistent point of entry.



2 As you can see here, I've scraped a line in the sand and placed a golf ball at the end furthest from my feet. The purpose of the line is to help you measure and practise hitting the point where you want your club to enter the sand on a standard splash shot. At set-up, the line (and therefore ball position) should be more towards the inside of your lead foot. Wiggle your feet slightly to get a nice steady base, which will also help to lower your centre.

3 Sit down into your knees a little, adding more pressure to your lead leg, and roll the face slightly open to use more of the bounce. Lower your hands a little to help point the club back to your target. Take a few swings and see where the club hits the sand, ideally breaking the line, with the club entering just before. Once you've found a consistent point of entry, hit a few shots while imagining you're still striking through the line in the sand.

TOTAL GAME PLAN
BUNKER PLAY



3 The most common error regarding point of entry in the sand is hitting too far behind the ball. Another good way to work on this fundamental aspect of bunker play is to use the 'mound drill'. Create a small mound of sand in the bunker (as shown above) and place the golf ball on top. Take your set-up position as outlined in the line drill and, using your normal swing, simply remove the mound of sand from under the ball. Both the sound and the visual aspect to this drill will help you to better understand what it should feel like when the club interacts properly with the sand, delivering a shot in which the ball pops up nicely.

4 The final element to consider is how you deliver the club to the ball. You don't want to swing too much across the ball or too much from the inside. If you swing too much around your body, the club will enter the sand early and the heavy contact will likely see you facing at least one more shot to escape. The drill in point 5 will help...



Right amount of sand
 These tips and drills will help you to set up well for splash shots and execute them better, but the amount of sand you need to ideally take can vary from course to course.



5 Create a rectangle of four tee-pegs, with the ball in the middle between the front two (as shown below). Take your set-up with your weight forward and ball position just inside your lead heel, then try to swing through the gate and miss the tees. This will allow you to get through the shot on a more target-related line. It's another great way to practise those crucial par-saving splash shots.



You may accidentally hit the tees in your first few attempts. Just reset the set-up and repeat



HOLE MORE PUTTS

These four drills will help you to banish those damaging three-putts from your game and give you more confidence on the greens. Making those crucial short putts from around three feet can be the difference between par and bogey – they're vital for momentum. Set up a circle around a hole using tee pegs measured at around three feet, and place a ball down by each marker. You can start anywhere and simply need to make your way around the circle, holing as many as you can.

By going around the hole you will face putts that break differently, so this is a great way to practise. The added pressure of keeping score will also replicate the kind of feelings you might experience on the course, so why not set a target and try to beat it.



Choose the hole location wisely so you have a variety of breaks and borrows to deal with

2 This drill is my personal favourite as it narrows the target and gives you plenty of useful information. Set up a one-metre ruler on a straight putt, with one end touching the edge of the hole. Place a ball up at the opposite end and try to putt the ball down the ruler. This drill helps you to understand the position of your putter face at impact, as an open face will send the ball off the ruler to the right and a closed face off to the left. Practise holing as many as you can consecutively without the ball falling off either side. You will notice your putting improve on the course as a result.



To stay on the ruler, you need to keep the face square



Added pressure
To add a little extra pressure, why not challenge a friend to a game of 'killer'? Loser buys the drinks!



Miss and you must start again from one foot

3 'Killer' is a great game if you want to practise holing out under pressure, and it's very easy to set up. Place a tee around one foot from the hole, and then go back on the same line placing other tees at two, three, four and five feet.

Starting at the first tee, you must try to hole three putts from that distance. If you are successful, move back and repeat from the second tee and so on. If you miss, however, you have to go back to the start. Try it out and see how far back you can make it.

**TOTAL GAME PLAN
PUTTING**


Keep looking at your target rather than the ball as you make your stroke

4 This final drill focuses on distance control and lag putting. This important skill can save you plenty of shots, so it's worth committing some practice time to. If you were throwing a ball to someone standing by the hole, the chances of you leaving it eight feet short or sending it ten feet past would be slim. One reason for this is that you are looking at your target. Your brain has calculated the distance and speed needed to get from A to B, and this is something we can experiment with in our putting.

Find a putt on the practice green at a distance from where you might struggle to get it close out on the course, and use the same three-foot circle around the hole as in our first drill as your target area. Get into your set-up position and, instead of looking at the ball, try looking at the target. Hit a few putts, aiming to stop the ball inside the three-foot circle. Try this from various points around the practice green so you can experience putts of different breaks and speeds.

If you were throwing, your focus would be very much on the target not the ball

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