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NOVEMBER 2025 ISSUE #438

WORLD'S EYES ON AUSTRALIA

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Daddo's quirky
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ROLLING INTO AUSTRALIA

Motocaddy has officially arrived Down Under, bringing sleek, high-tech electric buggies to local fairways. With global pedigree and local support, their innovative machines promise to change the way Aussies play golf.

LAB. GOLF



Motocaddy e-buggies have been available in Australia since 2010, but it wasn't until the British-born company launched themselves with a golf day in Sydney in September that they felt they had truly arrived. But they're here now, and their high-tech kit is set to make a decent dent in the growing Australian battery-powered golf buggy market.

With operations in the U.K, United States and Germany, the launch in Australia means the company has put down roots. There are Australian staff. There's a warehouse in Botany. There is direct-to-consumer sales (known as "D2C" in the game ... the things you learn). There is after-sales service courtesy of a staffer known as "The Buggy Man" and a network of service centres across the country.

There are six electric units. Five are from the compact-folding M-Series range: M7 GPS

REMOTE, M7 REMOTE, ME REMOTE, M5 GPS DHC and M1 DHC. And there's the S1 – "globally the best-selling electric buggy of all-time", it is written. There's also the QB2, which you need to push with – the very idea – human power.

We don't bother with that fine bit of kit, however, because we're all about e-power at Bonnie Doon in Sydney's east on a bluebird Tuesday in Spring. We clip the bag onto the buggy – no need for the lower bag strap courtesy of the "pioneering EASILOCK® system found on all Motocaddy e-buggies and bags" it is also written – and we're out onto the slightly undulating course reimagined by Geoff Ogilvy. And, in the way of these things, we immediately ratchet up the acceleration to see what this baby – in this case the M1 DHC – can do.

Full speed is number nine and requires a light

jog. I set mine to around three all day. There's a slight pause before it takes off. It doesn't feel like it's jerking or "getting away" from the human operator. The speed is one click up, one down. Otherwise, it's effectively on and off. It's pretty simple.

They come with bells and also whistles, of course.

The top-of-the-range M7 GPS REMOTE buggy features fully integrated GPS on the buggy screen, with full hole mapping for 40,000 golf courses worldwide. The remote models can be controlled at a distance, ideal for sending your buggy down the fairway and enjoying the walk. There is a 3.5-inch LCD touchscreen which talks to your phone, allowing for (optional!) notifications. There is drag-and-drop pin for exact distance calculation. There is lifetime access to the



courses and performance tracking.

They have a distinct look – sleek, uncomplicated. They have mag wheels. They fold. The lithium batteries can stay in the buggy when folded and while being charged. The batteries are cable-free. They have a five-year warranty. They charge from scratch in five hours. They clip in and out.

There is a USB port into which you can charge your phone and other devices as you wander about. There is a pre-fitted umbrella holder, drinks holder, scorecard holder, phone holder. There's a sand bucket bracket – a special feature added for Australian courses.

There is a Motocaddy App which syncs to your buggy and allows tracking of progress and how far you hit the ball.

There is innovation: Downhill Control (DHC) technology maintains speed on a slope.

You can pre-set a distance for the buggy to travel on its own, up to 50 metres. With putter and remote in hand, you can walk to the green and the buggy will meet you at the next tee.

They have sold 650,000 units. A spokesperson says that number is “easily out in front of other brands”.

They sell golf bags, too, five of them: Dry-Series, Pro-Series, PROTEKTA, EliteFLEX and HydroFLEX. They sell range finders, travel bags, cooler bags. They even sell seats which connect to the buggy with a pouch for your stuff.

Not sure how many “Hot Mitts Hand Warmers” they’ll sell outside Canberra, Orange and Thredbo GC, but they’re pretty natty mittens.

Regardless, Motocaddy is here. And it is going to make a splash. 🌊

Check out: www.motocaddy.com.au

"BRYSON'S COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT REMINDS US THAT SEEKING BETTER GOLF NEVER STOPS."



Over the years, *Golf Australia* has become more than just a magazine – you've come to know us as a trusted companion for stories that matter, insights which help your game and photography that brings courses to life. Much of this legacy is thanks to our former Editor Brendan James, whose sharp eye and storytelling finesse still grace these pages whenever we can call on him.

We like to think this magazine continues to be a valuable asset for golfers everywhere – whether you're battling your local layout while chasing personal best scores, or hitting the open road with your favourite humans in search of new fairways and hidden gems.

In this particular edition, our coverage is as diverse as it is practical. We feature excellent work from Matt Cleary, Callum Hill, Andrew Daddo, and special guest journalist Malcolm Conn, all whose reporting brings unique insight into the game we love. But beyond the stories and profiles, we've packed these pages with practical advice aimed at helping you improve, whether it's sharpening your short game or simply enjoying more consistent rounds.

A highlight this month is our annual *Perfectly Fitting* guide – a must-read for anyone considering getting fitted, but unsure where to start. Alongside the guide, we bring you the expert voices of

Coolangatta GC Head Pro Jared Love and Alex Dudley-Bateman, Leadership Club Technician at Acushnet Australia (parent company of Titleist). They break down the fitting process, explain what to expect, and share years of knowledge gained from hands-on experience at the highest level of the industry. Their insight underscores one of golf's most important truths: the right equipment, when perfectly matched to your unique swing, can unlock game-changing performance.

Once you're kitted out, it's time to tackle the 21-Day Challenge elsewhere in this issue, designed to reshape your swing. Master Coach Scott Cranfield has created this program with one simple goal: help you build a better, more consistent action – and prove to yourself that there's always a better golfer inside you waiting to emerge.

To inspire you further, it's likely obvious by now we've featured enigmatic American superstar Bryson DeChambeau on our cover this month. DeChambeau recently made headline-making adjustments to his own swing, blending mechanical changes with cutting-edge technology, proving that even the world's best are constantly evolving. His relentless drive, curiosity and commitment to improvement remind us all that the pursuit of better golf never stops.

We hope this issue leaves you inspired and informed. The game moves forward, and now it's your turn to do the same. 🏌️



BRYSON DECHAMBEAU'S SWING ... AN INTRIGUING WORK IN PROGRESS.

golf
Australia

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COURSE REVIEW

OMAHA BEACH GOLF CLUB

NORTH ISLAND • NEW ZEALAND

Just an hour north of Auckland, Omaha Beach sits quietly among “baches”, bush and harbour views. Once a modest nine-hole track, it has grown into a modern links-style championship layout full of subtle strategy, coastal charm and a touch of bite.

WORDS BY **CALLUM HILL** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BENJAMIN BROOK**

HARBOUR BACKDROPS ARE
ALL PART OF THE EXPERIENCE
AT OMAHA BEACH.



THE CHANGES TO THE GREENS HAVE BEEN SUBTLE, BUT BRILLIANT.

They say the further north you travel in New Zealand, the better the people. That may be true, depending on who you ask. However, one thing that is absolutely certain across the Tasman is that travelling north unlocks a golfing mecca that rivals some of the best destinations on the planet.

If you are making the drive north to contest some of the most critically acclaimed golf courses in the world – the Te Arai or a bit further north, Kauri Cliffs, and if you know people in the right places, perhaps the ultra-exclusive Tara Iti – you will stumble across one of the nicer and more enjoyable championship layouts the country has to offer, at a fraction of the price to play compared to some others in the area.

Omaha Beach is a holiday hotspot just an hour's drive north of Auckland's big smoke. The white sand beaches and crystal-clear waters line this sought-after coastline. It is a stone's throw from Matakana, which is a Saturday morning hotspot for the Farmers Markets.

Among this small community, lined with holiday homes, or as the locals call them, "bachs", sits a modernised links-style layout that sweeps around the harbour. Omaha Beach has been developed over time to become a testing championship golf course rolling throughout the westerly side of the headland. You'll spend some time weaving among the native bushland and shrubbery on the far side

of the course, especially. This creates a unique and different test, depending on what side of the road you find yourself on.

Omaha in Māori means place of pleasure. From the golf course to the beaches and within the community, it lives up to its name.

Originally, Omaha Beach began as a nine-hole course in 1975, built by locals along the Whangateau Harbour on a relatively mundane piece of land, on the clubhouse side of the property. The layout had little character and was populated mainly by holidaymakers in the area each summer. Half a century on, the same can't be said.

This original nine is now known as the "North Nine", which consists of holes 1-3 and 13-18 and although the DNA of Omaha Beach's 1975 skeleton remains, the work that has been done to make it better has just lifted this harbourside loop to be the best value-for-money example in the area.

In 2002, the course grew to a full 18 holes, and despite financial pressures typical of its location, the club steadily improved. As GM Frazer Bond notes, strengthening the bank balance has helped it truly come into its own – and this feels like only the beginning.

"In the last three to five years, we have gone from no money in the bank, like scrounging to get through, to making a little bit, investing in the golf club, and essentially putting near half a million into the infrastructure year on year over the last three," Bond told *Golf Australia* magazine.

"That trend is going to continue as far as we can see for the next 10 years. There's probably three million dollars' worth of further development to happen in that five-year period and potentially even more to come over the next 10 years."

Kristine Kerr's Kura Design team has been commissioned to make the changes at OBGC, which are ongoing. However, the work which has been done is already looking as promised.

Kura was commissioned to create a master plan for the remodelling of the "North" nine in 2017. Some key objectives on the plan were creating a sense of place; enhancing the theme of the coastal location, creating harmony in the layout's style between the north and south sides of the golf course; improving drainage and irrigation; enhancing playability, interest and strategy, as well as shaping, through the inclusion of bunkers and waste bunkers.

"The North Nine was just very flat and had a little bit of interest with some lakes, and the layout was quite cute and very playable, but just needed some undulation," Kerr told *GA*.

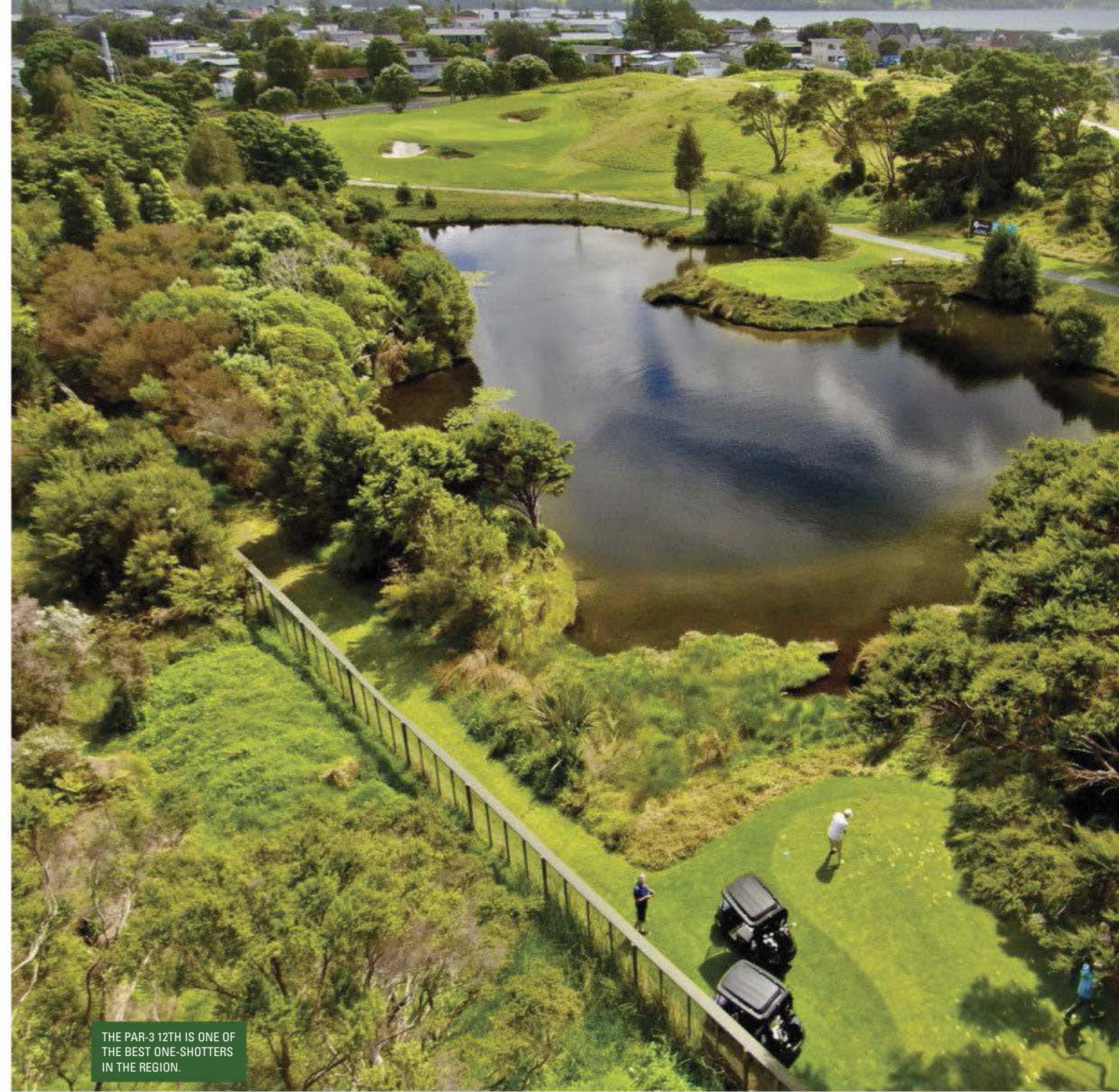
"One of the problems was with it being flat and next to the harbour, which was pretty low-lying. We increased the size of the lake, which had a two-fold purpose: to increase irrigation water storage, as well as to use the fill to raise the fairways so that they would be dry in winter.

"A couple of them were pretty unplayable during the winter. That was one of the main reasons for our work."

“
OMAHA IN MAORI MEANS PLACE OF PLEASURE.
FROM THE GOLF COURSE TO THE BEACHES AND
WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, IT LIVES UP TO ITS NAME.
”



A GOOD PORTION OF OMAHA'S
NORTH NINE FROM THE CLOUDS.



THE PAR-3 12TH IS ONE OF THE BEST ONE-SHOTTERS IN THE REGION.

One thing you notice is the change in elevation around the course. Kerr and the team have been subtle with some green changes and tee block maneuvering to make sure there are more visual changes and thinking involved in playing the layout.

Decent changes were made to the land to create those undulations. The process was simple, mainly due to the soil, as Kerr explains.

“It was a bit of a cut and fill exercise, but the soils are generally quite sandy; a bit of silty sand. This meant you could do it relatively simply with just one shift,” she said.

“We raised them up and just integrated more elevation change and modernised the greens.

“We just added a bit more strategy with new bunkers and completely re-did the holes. We introduced wetlands which were a feature of

the nine they’d done in the 2000s. We then added more strategy, introducing bunkers, wetlands and some planting.

“It just created a lot of variety in the whole design; we tried to maximise the views and the location next to the Harbour and the beautiful setting,” Kerr adds.

It is Kerr’s style not to create greens with massive slopes and undulation. If you see some of her other work around the country, such as at Pegasus Golf Club just north of Christchurch, you’ll find similarities in how the putting surfaces are presented.

This doesn’t mean two-putts are guaranteed. The brilliance of the work lies in its subtlety, particularly in the break towards the harbour and the subtle undulation which requires astute green reading at times, which is all part of Omaha Beach’s challenge.

The green on 17 stands out; the par-3 can play as long as a 4-iron and as short as a wedge. The green is huge. It is one of Kerr’s favourite holes and was completely remodelled.

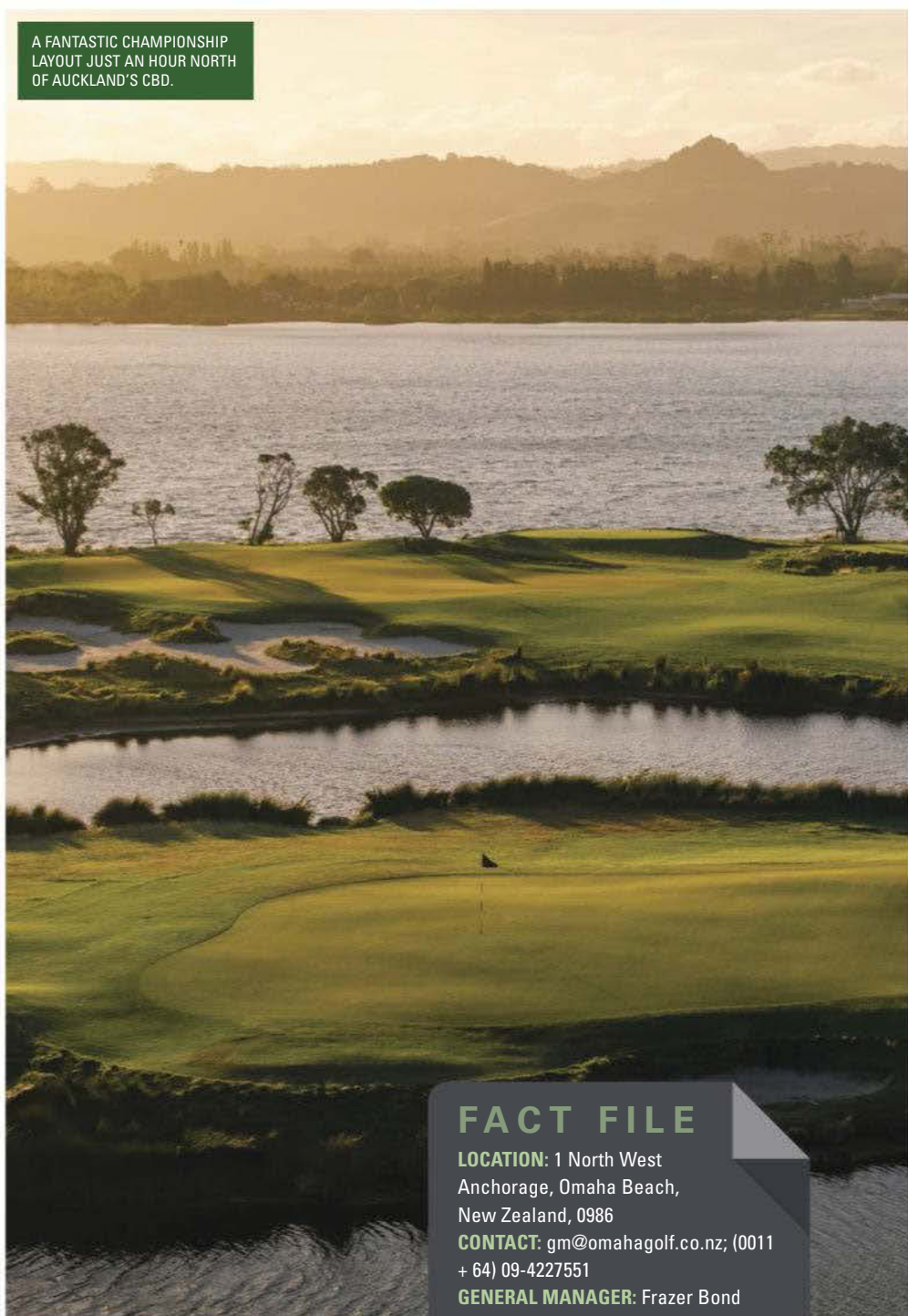
The penultimate hole is played towards the best backdrop on the course, the harbour.

“Seventeen is my favourite because I think it’s a real feel-good hole; it’s a par-3 with a big green.”

At 800 square metres, this is the biggest green on the course, and it demands respect. The design tempts golfers with the promise of getting something close – especially with a front pin – but get it wrong and you could be facing a long, testing putt ... or even two, three, or four. Humps and hollows ripple across the surface, while imposing waste bunkers, including a savage one lurking over the back, keep the margin for error razor-thin.



A FANTASTIC CHAMPIONSHIP LAYOUT JUST AN HOUR NORTH OF AUCKLAND'S CBD.



FACT FILE

LOCATION: 1 North West Anchorage, Omaha Beach, New Zealand, 0986

CONTACT: gm@omahagolf.co.nz; (0011 + 64) 09-4227551

GENERAL MANAGER: Frazer Bond

WEBSITE: www.omahagolf.co.nz

DESIGNER: Darby and Associates 2003; Kura Design 2017-present

GREEN FEES: 18-holes Monday-Thursday \$100NZD; Friday-Sunday \$130NZD

You're afforded a generous start at OBGC. An opening tee shot with plenty of space, a par-4 that tips the scales at 333 metres with an approach into a raised green. A gentle start as you loosen up. The 2nd hole is the first time you can really see the subtle changes coming to fruition. Some minor adjustments were made to the green, giving it a more pronounced shape that remains consistent with the updates throughout the entire course.

You are faced with your first real decision off the tee when you arrive at the 4th hole; an elevated tee with a firm dogleg left. Trouble awaits if you don't cut the corner well; dense bush will swallow up anything straight or right. The play for the more conservative – or more innovative – player is to take a long iron to the corner and have a mid-iron

in; the trade-off isn't worth it. If the pin is at the back, beware of the bunker behind the green.

From the 8th green to the 9th tee, you are treated to a gorgeous walk-through boardwalk through native bush, which gives you an authentic taste of the kiwi experience. If you play during the twilight hours, you may see one lurking around as a bonus.

The par-3 12th is arguably the best hole on the property, and is certainly this writer's favourite. It is the signature one-shotter. The hole will play 154 metres from the championship plates. Deep bunkers guard the left-hand side of a two-tiered green. Hitting up to a raised putting surface surrounded by rolling mounds, just a genuinely fantastic hole – one of the best in the region.

You are provided with plenty of opportunities

to score with two gettable par-5s on the back nine (13 and 16). Although both with water in play, going for the green in two takes two quality strikes. If you choose to lay up, you will find a wedge in your hand for a couple of relatively straightforward putting surfaces.

The finishing hole is a brilliant short-4, maxing out at 307 metres. The harbour lines the left. At low tide, you can easily play your ball from out there. It presents a risky decision if the tide is in – do you try to finish with a flurry, or take your par and run? 🏌️



SNAPSHOT

ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND:

Dustin Johnson cut a familiar figure as he strode across the Old Course during a practice round ahead of the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship.

With the storied clubhouse looming behind him and the wide fairways stretching ahead, Johnson looked relaxed yet purposeful – an image of a modern star walking in step with golf's most hallowed ground. ●

PHOTO: WARREN LITTLE / GETTY IMAGES



OMAHA BEACH
GOLF CLUB



The Omaha Golf Club is a must-visit course, featuring more course improvements and ever-evolving layout that offers fresh challenges. If you haven't visited Omaha golf course in a few years it's worth a revisit to see all the spectacular new holes. With

its well-maintained greens and friendly staff, it's a rewarding experience for golfers and a must-play for all new visitors. Plus, the new Ara Tūhono - Pūhoi to Warkworth motorway makes it an easy drive, just under an hour from Auckland CBD.



SNAPSHOT

ROSTOCK, GERMANY:

WINSTONgolf provided a striking stage for the Senior Open, its manicured fairways and rolling greens sitting quietly against the northern German landscape. On the third day of play, the course revealed both its beauty and its challenge – broad vistas, subtle undulations and a tranquillity which belied the competitive intensity within the ropes. ●

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WE'VE HEARD OF SHOTGUN STARTS, BUT ...

If the Mike Judge movie *Idiocracy* taught us anything, it's that civilization might eventually be run by people who think a T-shirt cannon is peak entertainment.

And while we're in this way of thinking, *Happy Gilmore* might not have been far off the truth, either, if used as a predictor of the future of golf. What looked like harmless fun at Bethpage Black quickly became a masterclass in chaotic spectacle, with the Ryder Cup crowds lapping it up as if pandemonium were part of the rules. Critics had plenty to say, of course – *who could have imagined that a huge crowd of golf fans might actually turn ... [clutches pearls] ... rowdy?* In an era where every event needs a gimmick, the T-shirt gun stands as a perfect metaphor: subtlety is out, over-the-top absurdity is in, and somewhere along the way, we all stopped caring if golf looks ridiculous. ●

PHOTO: DAVID CANNON / GETTY IMAGES





SNAPSHOT

FARMINGDALE, NEW YORK:

At Bethpage's Black Course, Ryder Cup passion was impossible to miss. This American fan, decked out in stars and stripes ... and cheese ... paraded around with the kind of energy that has become the hallmark of the raucous New York galleries. His enthusiasm captured the raw, partisan atmosphere which makes the Ryder Cup unlike any other week in golf. ●

PHOTO: JARED C. TILTON / BETTY IMAGES



LEFT TO RIGHT: MALCOLM BATTEN, CEO OF PREBUILT; DANIEL MACKRILL, MAYOR OF CAMPASPE SHIRE COUNCIL; SUSAN HULL, PRESIDENT OF RICH RIVER GOLF CLUB; SHANE GLOURY, CEO OF RICH RIVER GOLF CLUB; PETER WALSH, MP FOR MURRAY PLAINS; JOHN HARVEY, MAYOR OF MURRAY RIVER COUNCIL; CAMERON SUTTON, CEO OF MURRAY REGIONAL TOURISM; AND MARTIN KEARNEY, BUSINESS BANKING MANAGER AT NAB.

DEVELOPMENT

RICH RIVER GOLF CLUB WELCOMES PREMIUM REFLECTIONS LODGE

Rich River Golf Club is excited to announce the development of a brand-new 23-room, 4-star accommodation facility, set to open in Winter 2026. The new facility, to be known as Reflections, represents a major investment in the Club's future and a significant boost for tourism in the Echuca Moama region.

Positioned overlooking the East Course lakes and offering spectacular views across the 15th, 16th and 18th golf holes, Reflections will feature three storeys of spacious and stylish rooms.

The development will provide a modern and luxurious accommodation experience, complementing the Club's existing 64-room motel.

Designed to a 4-star standard, the new accommodation facility will cater to golfing enthusiasts, corporate groups,

couples, families and visitors seeking a high-quality stay in one of the Murray River's premier tourist destinations.

Rich River Golf Club President Susan Hull said the project is a milestone in the Club's long-term vision.

"This is one of the most exciting developments in our Club's history. Reflections will enhance the Rich River experience for our visitors and will also play a vital role in driving tourism growth for the Club, as well as for the Echuca Moama and the Murray River region. With the demand for high-quality accommodation continuing to rise, this facility will ensure Rich River remains at the forefront as a leading regional sporting, hospitality and entertainment venue."

This multi-million-dollar project is being delivered in partnership with Pre-Built, a leader in modular construction, ensuring a contemporary design with

sustainable building practices.

Stage 1 of the project involves the construction of 23 rooms, with future capacity to expand to 38 rooms as demand grows.

Construction will shortly commence at Pre-Built's Kilsyth factory, with Reflections scheduled to be completed on site at Rich River and opening in mid-2026.

Located in Moama on the Murray River, Rich River Golf Club is one of Australia's leading regional golf, hospitality and entertainment destinations. The Club boasts two championship golf courses, on-site accommodation, multiple dining and hospitality options, bowls, tennis and croquet facilities, and extensive event and conference spaces. Each year, the Club welcomes more than 120,000 rounds of golf and thousands of visitors from across Australia. 🌟



THE FITTING REVOLUTION

Discover how expert club-fitting transforms golfers' games, from amateurs to Tour players, with insights from Jared Love and Alex Dudley-Bateman on why the right clubs – and balls – can unlock your true potential.

Walk into any golf shop these days and you'll see racks upon racks of gleaming drivers, irons, hybrids and wedges; each promising more distance, forgiveness or control than the last. For decades, golfers bought clubs the way they might buy a pair of shoes: off the rack, by size and style, with maybe a quick waggle in the shop before handing over the credit card.

But in 2025, that approach looks as outdated as persimmon woods and balata balls. The modern golfer is increasingly turning to custom club-fitting, where technology, expertise and careful analysis come together to match equipment to swing. And the impact is profound.

"Properly fitted clubs can make a huge



COOLANGATTA TWEED HEADS GC HEAD PRO JARED LOVE IS OBSESSED WITH THE FITTING ASPECT OF GOLF.

difference," says Alex Dudley-Bateman, Leadership Club Technician at Acushnet Australia, parent company of Titleist. "I sometimes compare it to playing football in the wet – one player is in runners, the other is in boots. Who do you think has the advantage?"

Dudley-Bateman, fitter for the Australian PGA Tour, working directly with the Tour's players, isn't speaking in hypotheticals. He has seen golfers spend more than a thousand dollars on the latest driver, only to lose distance to a 10-year-old model simply because the new stick wasn't fitted properly. "I've beaten brand-new drivers by 45 metres with older clubs," he says. "That's how important fitting is."

And he's not alone in sounding the alarm. At Coolangatta Tweed Heads Golf



ALEX DUDLEY-BATEMAN PUTTING A FITTING CLIENT THROUGH THEIR PACES.

Club, on the Queensland–New South Wales border, Head Professional Jared Love has built his business around helping golfers find the right tools for their games. His two-bay indoor fitting studio hums with the sound of drivers cracking into screens, TrackMan numbers flashing across monitors, and golfers rediscovering what their swings can really do.

"I'm obsessed with this part of the game," Love says. "When someone suddenly starts hitting their seven-iron five metres higher, with the right descending angle so it stops on the green, they see and feel the result straight away. That's what it's about: making things better."

COACHING BAYS TO FITTING STUDIOS

The modern boom in fitting didn't happen overnight. For decades, fittings were the domain of elite amateurs and Tour professionals. The weekend golfer was more likely to take a buddy's hand-me-downs or buy the cheapest deal in the pro shop.

"When I first started, maybe 20 per cent of clubs were fitted," Dudley-Bateman recalls. "Now it's closer to 70 per cent. The education around fitting is improving, and companies are investing heavily. At Acushnet, we now employ nearly 18 full-time fitters across Australia – and that's all they do. They're not sales reps, they're not part-time. They're specialists."

At Coolangatta, Love has seen the same trend play out at the grassroots. "I put in the studio about 18 months after I arrived," he says. "That's three and a half years ago now, and it's busy. Word of mouth is huge – golfers come up from the Northern Rivers, get fitted, go back to their clubs and play well, and suddenly their mates want to come in, too."

For both Love and Dudley-Bateman, the goal isn't just to shift product. "I'm not trying to sell people equipment," Love says. "I'm trying to help them. If the new clubs are better, they buy them. If not, that's fine. We charge for the fitting either way, so people feel they're getting value regardless."

That approach has built trust and, crucially, results.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A FITTING?

So what can the average golfer expect when they book a fitting?

At Acushnet's National Fitting Centre, Dudley-Bateman would spend two hours with a golfer. "The first 15 minutes is analysis – what are their goals, what are the trends in their game, what do they want to achieve?" he explains. "Then we get them warmed up and work through the bag."

At Coolangatta Tweed Heads, Love takes a similar approach. "We always start with their own clubs on the Trackman first to compare results," he says.

"If they haven't seen TrackMan before, it usually blows them away. We'll test a seven-iron for irons, then the woods. With modern technology, especially if their clubs are more than five years old, we can usually make a real improvement."

Both fitters emphasise that no two fittings are alike. Everything depends on the golfer's swing speed, launch angle, spin rate, and even where they play most of their golf. "It's about finding the right shaft, head, lie and length," Love says. "Most people just want to hit it longer and straighter, and we've had some really good results."

MISTAKES GOLFERS MAKE

If fitting sounds like common sense, why do so many golfers still get it wrong?

For Dudley-Bateman, one culprit is the internet. "If they read something online, they think it applies to them," he says. "But everything is individual. Just because a Tour pro or influencer says a club works for them, doesn't mean it's right for you."

Another mistake, he adds, is focusing on just one part of the bag. "Someone might come in for an iron fitting, but forget how that affects the rest of their clubs. If the lofts on your new irons are different, you might need to change your wedges. If you need more height in your long irons, you might be better off with a hybrid or a wood."



JARED LOVES SEEING PLAYERS
WITNESSING SELF-IMPROVEMENT.



DUDLEY-BATEMAN SAYS EDUCATION
AROUND FITTING IS IMPROVING.

Every fitting is a full-bag fitting, because everything connects."

Love agrees. "You get to know what people need – maybe they need more forgiveness, maybe more height," he says. "Occasionally, someone won't see much difference; usually if they've just bought new clubs. But if they're swinging 15- or 20-year-old irons? That's when I get excited, because I know I can help straight away."

THE PAYOFF

What kind of improvements are we talking about?

For mid-handicap golfers, the gains can be dramatic. "Often the ball is flying too low or not spinning enough, so it won't stop on the green," Love explains. "Get the right shaft and head, and suddenly they're hitting the ball higher, with more stopping power. It makes the game more enjoyable straight away."

For higher-handicap golfers, fitting can be the quickest route to improvement. "The 20-marker wants to get to 15, the 15 wants to get to single figures," Love says. "That's what drives them. If you get the basics right – shaft flex, length, lie angle, head type – you'll improve."

Dudley-Bateman has seen similar transformations. "I had one golfer who spent \$1200 on a new driver," he recalls. "It wasn't right for him. I put an older model in his hands and he was suddenly 45 metres longer. That's the difference."

WHEN TO GET FITTED

So when should a golfer book in? The experts agree: trust your instincts.

"If you feel like you're making good swings, but not getting the results – ball going too low, too high, consistently offline – it's time," Dudley-Bateman says. "There's no harm in getting fitted. We

run public fitting days. You get the specs whether you buy or not. As the saying goes, knowledge is power."

Love adds that age of equipment matters, too. "If your clubs are more than five years old, chances are technology has moved on," he says. "And if they're 15-plus years old? You're leaving shots on the course."

BUSTING THE MYTHS

One of the challenges facing fitters is busting myths that golfers cling to. For Dudley-Bateman, wedges are a big one.

"I used to hear, 'I play at Royal Melbourne; the course is firm, so I need low bounce,'" he says.

"That's not true. You need bounce and grinds that suit your own technique. Your swing doesn't change depending on the course. If your personal swing action doesn't match the club, you'll struggle everywhere."

Love sees myths, too, especially around distance. "Everyone wants more distance, but sometimes the answer is height and spin," he says. "Getting the ball to land softly on the green is just as valuable."

DON'T FORGET THE BALL

And then there's the most overlooked piece of equipment in the bag: the ball.

"The golf ball is nearly more important than the clubs," Dudley-Bateman argues. "It's the only piece of equipment you use on every shot."

Too often, golfers dismiss certain balls as "too firm" or "too soft" without understanding how they actually perform. "On the women's Tour, the number-one ball is the Titleist Pro V1x," he notes. "Why? Because it launches higher and spins more. People need to be educated on that."

MORE THAN SELLING CLUBS

At the heart of both men's philosophies is a simple principle: fitting isn't about selling; it's about helping.

"I'm not trying to force a club down anyone's throat," Love says.

"I want them to understand why we're doing what we're doing, and see the improvement for themselves."

Dudley-Bateman echoes that. "It's about giving the golfer a fantastic experience," he says. "They walk away knowing more about their game, and often with clubs that help them enjoy it more."

And enjoyment, ultimately, is the point. Golf is hard enough without fighting your own equipment.

THE FUTURE OF FITTING

Where does fitting go from here? Both men believe education is the next frontier.

"There's still way too much to learn," Dudley-Bateman says. "But we're getting there."

Love, meanwhile, thinks the grassroots momentum will only grow.

"When a golfer sees their mate come back from a fitting and they start hitting it better, they want to do the same," he says.

"That's how this will keep spreading."

For now, one thing is clear: in an age where technology and expertise are more accessible than ever, ignoring fitting is no longer an option. Whether you're a scratch player or a 25-handicapper, the right equipment – properly matched to your swing – can unlock potential you didn't know you had.

As Love puts it: "When someone walks out of here with clubs that really work for them, and they can't wait to play again, that's the best part of the job."

– James Smith

A golfer in a dark long-sleeved shirt and light grey shorts is captured in the middle of a golf swing on a green. He is wearing white socks and white sneakers with dark accents. A white glove is tucked into his back pocket. The background shows a golf course with trees and a cloudy sky.

SO THAT'S WHAT A DRAW LOOKS LIKE, SAID HENRY.

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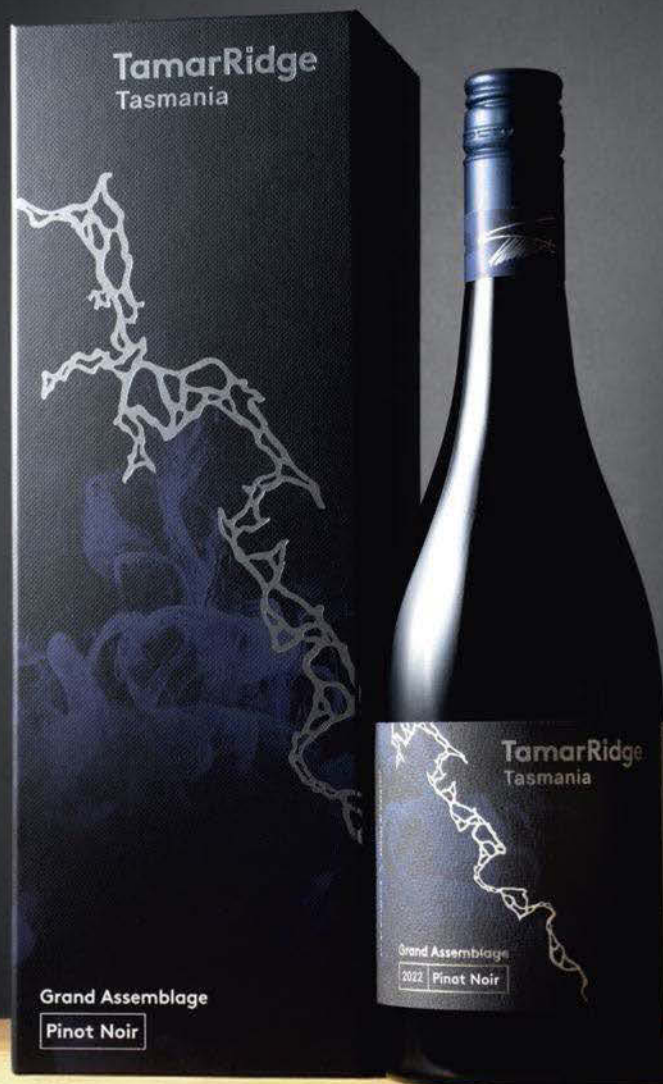
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PRESENTS

A FEW DRINKS WITH...

RICKY PONTING



Tasmania has built itself into one of the world's most compelling golf destinations. And there is more brewing south of Bass Strait.

Barnbougle's windswept dunes have consistently warranted global acclaim, and Seven Mile Beach has turned heads before it has even been born. Soon, Country Club Tasmania will step into the spotlight.

The Launceston venue is in the midst of a \$20 million transformation, designed to make it a championship hub and a place where locals and visitors can enjoy a different style of golf compared to some other Tasmanian headline-stealers.

New practice facilities, a mini-golf precinct and upgrades across the property are reshaping the venue into something unique for Tasmania.

At the heart of that vision stands Ricky Thomas Ponting. One of Tasmania's icons, and arguably this country's greatest Test captain, "Punter" has taken on the role of Country Club ambassador - a position that connects his lifelong love of the game with his roots in Launceston. Ponting's final pennant match was played there alongside his brother and father, and the Country Club has always been a base when returning to Tasmania.

As the Ashes looms, our Digital Editor Callum Hill spoke with Ponting about his ambassadorial duties, Tasmania's growing golfing reputation, and his favourite experiences on and off the golf course.

What excites you most about this new role?

I first went down there in March, actually. Before I went over to India for the IPL, I went and had a look around. Immediately, I was blown away with the vision of the place and what they had already started to do. When I was there, the holes on the Country Club side, close to the hotel and the new range, had almost been completed.

I went down last week, and things have transformed again really quickly. The place looks amazing. The golf course design and renovation are magnificent. I think it's about a \$20 million renovation they're doing on the golf course, which was already a beautiful championship golf course anyway.

What they've done with the range is outstanding, and the mini-golf putt-putt green they've got there is terrific.

I was immediately impressed when I saw it. Then we decided we'd be able to do something for me to be the ambassador for the new championship golf course, which I did just think was a really good fit for everyone - me being from Tasmania, from Launceston, and

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; HEBER DELANEY (MAIN)

golf being such a great passion of mine.

I actually played my last-ever club Pennant match at the Country Club many, many years ago. I played in the same team as my brother and my dad that day. There are lots of fond memories there. It's always a place I stay when I go back to Launceston.

There are some pretty exciting renovations which are going to happen on the hotel side of things as well.

All in all, it just felt like a really good fit; great synergy between me being the ambassador and the golf course and the Country Club, and one that I'm really excited about.

How did you go in that last Pennant match? Just out of curiosity, did you win?

Yeah, we did. I snuck across. I think it went to the 18th. I think I won. It was either one-up or 2-and-1. I believe we all won, my dad and my brother. So, it was a nice little way to sign off on Pennant golf for the Mowbray Golf Club.

Golf in Tasmania, how impressive it is that the small island boasts two already and likely about to be three top-100 courses in the world. Is that a little bit surreal?

It probably is now, but I think the moment that anyone started talking about building golf courses in Tasmania, everyone probably thought that could be achieved. Barnbougle being the forerunner in that, and then what's happening at Seven Mile Beach. I've heard that there might be a few more happening down that way as well.

I think I maybe heard about something at Five Mile Beach as well. There is potentially one at South Arm [near Hobart]. The Country Club will be up and running in probably less than 12 months from now, and then you think about King Island as well.

It's becoming a real golfing mecca, if you like; a real destination for golf, which makes me really proud. That's my home state. There are so many great opportunities for people travelling from overseas, and even interstate, to go down to Tasmania and see what it has to offer on the golfing front, let alone everything else you can do while you're there. It's really exciting for the state.

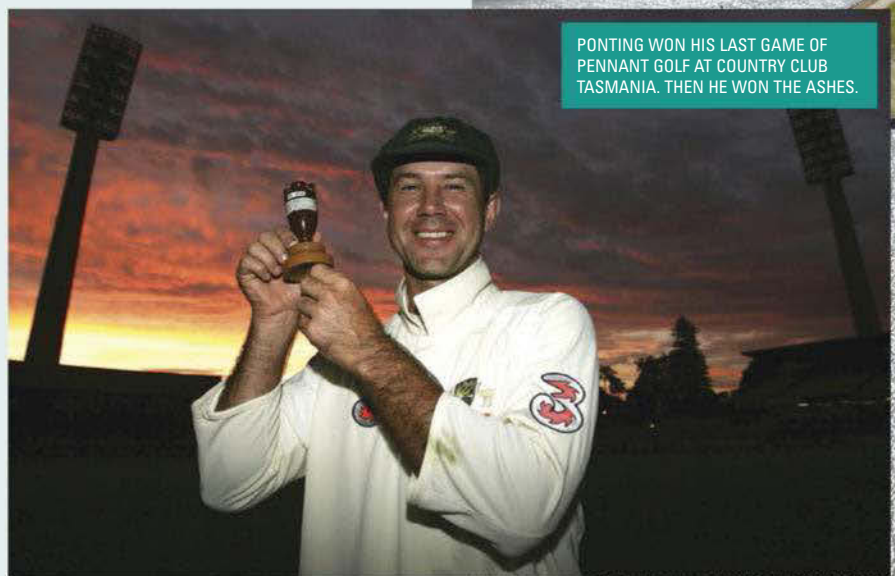
Growing up in Tasmania, what was the golf like then when you were a junior coming into the game? How was the golf then compared to now?

It's definitely a lot different now. And in 12 months' time, or a couple of years' time, it's going to be a different kettle of fish again altogether.

When I was growing up, we didn't travel a lot to play unless it was Pennant games or Pennant finals and things. You'd travel up to the north-west coast or travel down to



BRIGHT FUTURE: RICKY PONTING AND COUNTRY CLUB HEAD OF GOLF OPERATIONS, BRYCE GORHAM, WITH STATE JUNIOR REPS XAVIER NICHOLLS (BRIDPORT) AND KIRI PIPER (LAUNCESTON).



PONTING WON HIS LAST GAME OF PENNANT GOLF AT COUNTRY CLUB TASMANIA. THEN HE WON THE ASHES.

Hobart to play, and your regional Pennant final, things like that. But it was just normal club golf, I guess, back then.

But that was before, like you said, before you ended up having a couple in the top-10 in Australia, that's just an hour's drive away from Launceston. Then, hopefully, when Country Club makes its debut, it's going to be positioned in there somewhere as well.

Things have changed a lot for good and bad. I think there are probably some other clubs around the state which probably haven't fared as well. You think of somewhere like the Tasmania Golf Club, which I think is as good a layout as a lot of places in Australia; that's probably just lacked a little bit of funding and money over the last 20 years.

So, there are a lot of good things that have happened, and that's where it's really exciting for me to be associated with Country Club now.

Do you have a particular favourite course in Tassie? I suppose it's like asking if you have a favourite kid. There are so many

brilliant ones. And then maybe one which doesn't get talked about as much as the Bambougles and Wickhams of the world?

I mean, it's hard to go past what they've created at Barnbougle. And I'm really excited to see what they do with the next one up there. They've been talking for 20 years about another block of land they said is a lot better than the other two. So, if that's where they're planning on building the third one, that will be really cool and really exciting.

I've just got this really great vision of what the Country Club Championship Course is going to become. If you look, I'm not sure if you've seen any images of it now, but what they've been able to do with the bunkers, with the little creeks and lakes that they've got running through the place - they're going to make sure that no stone or no blade of grass is left untouched to make it just a magnificent place to go, play and stay, and to enjoy, and to have family there as well, with the tennis courts, the pickleball, and the range and things. It's going to be a great destination.



GRAND CHANGES ARE ON THE HORIZON FOR THIS STUNNING FACILITY.

I always really enjoy playing the Lost Farm up at Barnbougle. For someone to go with a group of mates, it was just a bit more open, but still had that real Barnbougle feel about it. Probably a little fairer to play. So, I always enjoy playing there.

A little hidden gem? There are some cool little places we played pennant golf - places like Onford and Scottsdale and even somewhere like Bridport. Green's Beach is a really good, fun little course, only once again 45 minutes out of Launceston.

My club, Mowbray, used to have an annual event at Campbell Town Golf Club, which is halfway between Launceston and Hobart, which is literally just a little wooden shack as the clubhouse, and a nice little golf course. I have great memories about my junior golf and my early days playing.

When you were playing internationally or even now coaching, where are your favourite places to play? Are you a fan of links golf, like you get in Scotland and Ireland, or do you prefer resort-style layouts like in the States?

It's a bit of both, to be honest. I think I can pick up a bit of a Kiwi accent in your voice as well. New Zealand is another place I love. I love going to play golf there. I've been lucky the last seven or eight years to go and play the New Zealand Open every year. Millbrook, The Hills, Jack's Point, places like that in Queenstown are pretty special places to go and play golf.

I don't really have a favourite style of golf. I've obviously been able to travel through the U.K, Ireland and Scotland quite a bit over the last 30 years and love some of the golf I've played there. Portrush is a spectacular place. I've played Kingsbarns and places like that as well. Then just last year, I had a two-week trip through the States, where we played some of the great courses - Pine Valley, Merion, Friar's Head, Shinnecock Hills. Those are all iconic.

When we talk about golf, I know this is a big thing at the Country Club - I'm really keen on making sure that when you play golf, it's a real experience. It's not just turn up and have a game of golf; you make it into the best experience possible. That's



CONTINUED PAGE 128 ►

GOLF'S FUTURE IS NOW

Future Golf is transforming Australian golf, connecting newcomers with courses, building communities and supporting clubs with marketing, events, and memberships. Founder Ali Terai's vision is reshaping how the game is played and experienced.



FOUNDER ALI TERAİ SAYS THE CORE IDEA OF FUTURE GOLF IS ABOUT GETTING FRIENDS TOGETHER TO PLAY.



WHETHER YOU'RE A SOCIAL PLAYER SEEKING CASUAL ROUNDS OR AN ADDICT WHO LIVES AND BREATHE GOLF, FUTURE GOLF'S MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES HAVE YOU COVERED.

FUTURE GOLF IS BUILT AROUND CONNECTION, OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSIVITY.



Future Golf has quietly been transforming the landscape of Australian golf, creating opportunities for people who might never have picked up a club, and revitalising how clubs engage with players across the country.

Its founder, Ali Terai, had a vision from the very beginning: to make golf accessible, social and inclusive, while also giving golf clubs the tools to grow. "Future Golf is opening up new markets and driving strategic objectives for golf facilities across the country," Terai says.

"We're making golf more accessible. Whether you're a social player seeking casual rounds, or an addict who lives and breathes golf, Future Golf's membership categories have you covered."

Terai's story is as compelling as the company he built. Arriving in Australia at the age of three, he grew up in a migrant household, raised by a single mother. Golf wasn't something he had ready access to, but it became a passion through unconventional experiences – EA Sports, casual encounters with local courses, and a curiosity for the game which went beyond formal memberships or traditional club entry.

As he grew more familiar with the sport, he realised something simple but profound: if accessing golf was difficult for him, there must be countless other Australians who faced the same barriers. That insight became the foundation for Future Golf, a company built around connection, opportunity and inclusivity.

David Galbally, the company's General Manager Marketing, explains that the early days of Future Golf were built on nothing more than ambition and a belief in social connection.

"The core idea was about getting friends together to play," he says. Terai approached a local course to buy tee times, then advertised the opportunity on Facebook, using a modest \$50 ad and a \$50 voucher. That small experiment, designed simply to bring people together on the course, grew exponentially. Ten years later, Future Golf is a multi-club digital membership platform with over 43,000 members, offering a variety of membership categories, event formats and experiences across the country.

Initially branded as Gen Y Golf, the company focused on group events and appealing to younger golfers. But over time, Terai recognised the potential to broaden the brand and capture a wider audience. The rebrand to Future Golf signalled a shift in ambition: the company was no longer just for young, social golfers. It became a platform for anyone looking to play, learn, or connect with the game.

At the heart of Future Golf is a simple mission: connecting people to the game. Galbally describes the early steps as remarkable, noting the effort involved in building a network of partner courses and running events which introduced new players to the sport.

"Our ambition has always been to bring in people who wouldn't normally enter traditional golf pathways," he explains. Around 65–70 per cent of Future Golf members had never had a handicap before joining, highlighting the company's success in attracting fresh faces to the game.

"Members experience a range of courses across Australia, learning the rules and formats of golf while meeting other players and forming communities around the sport."

This approach has also generated a significant flow of new participants into traditional golf clubs. Galbally notes that while Future Golf sees a steady cycle of members moving through the program, much of this is what the company calls "good churn" – members who ultimately join traditional clubs. Over 13,000 members who started with Future Golf have gone on to join typical golf course memberships, proving the company is expanding the game rather than competing with it.

The benefits for golf clubs partnering with Future Golf are substantial. The company offers a range of strategic advantages designed to drive growth, engagement and revenue, at no cost to clubs. Firstly, there is brand visibility: courses, driving ranges, mini-golf setups, and simulators benefit from being part of the extensive Future Golf network. The platform helps clubs reach golfers they might never otherwise encounter.

Marketing collaborations provide another benefit. Clubs gain access to national marketing

resources, which can be tailored to their priorities to promote their facilities and events. By leveraging Future Golf's campaigns, clubs can increase awareness and attract new visitors without shouldering the full burden of advertising themselves.

Future Golf also plays a key role in capturing emerging golfers. Many new players do not know how to navigate the traditional pathways into golf, and the platform offers a welcoming introduction. For clubs, this represents a unique opportunity to engage with new audiences, nurturing their development into regular players.

Membership generation is another advantage. Future Golf's investment in brand and advertising ensures a stream of leads for traditional club memberships. Galbally highlights the importance of this function: "We unlock access to the game and create opportunities for people to fall in love with golf. That inevitably benefits the clubs, as many of our members eventually transition into traditional memberships."

Revenue growth extends beyond membership. Partnering clubs see incremental revenue through on-course spending, from food and beverage to pro shop purchases, as well as attendance at diverse event formats co-ordinated by the Future Golf team. These events, often designed with a social focus, encourage participation from both newcomers and experienced players, creating lively, engaging atmospheres.

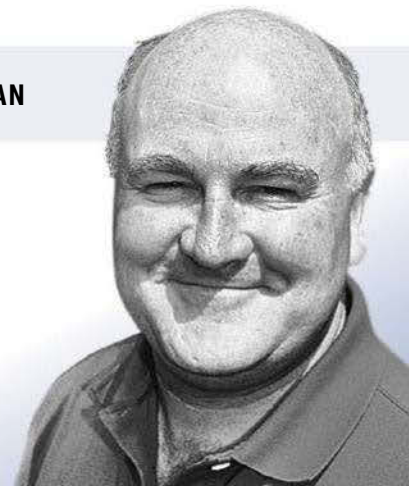
The company's impact on the golf landscape is evident in the way it has grown organically, yet strategically, over the past decade. Starting with that \$50 Facebook ad, Future Golf now drives participation on a national scale, opening up golf to thousands of players.

Galbally emphasises the company's community-first approach shapes every decision at Future Golf. "Ali's vision was always about connecting people to the game. It's not just about membership numbers; it's about creating pathways for new players, helping them learn, meet others, and eventually find their place in the broader golf community." The model has proven remarkably effective: Future Golf has helped thousands of people overcome the traditional barriers to golf, while simultaneously driving tangible benefits for partner clubs.

It is this dual impact – growing the game while supporting clubs – that sets Future Golf apart. By focusing on social engagement, accessibility and innovative marketing, the company has carved out a space which complements the traditional golf ecosystem rather than competing with it. Clubs gain visibility, new members and increased revenue, while players gain access, education and a sense of belonging. The result is a virtuous cycle, where more participation fuels more opportunity, which in turn drives further growth.

Terai and his team continue to explore new ways to engage players, expand networks and deliver value to partner clubs. With over 43,000 members, hundreds of courses involved and a clear focus on accessibility and community, the company is redefining what it means to participate in golf in Australia.

— James Smith



“WALKER CUP HOST COURSE CYPRESS POINT’S MOTTO MIGHT AS WELL BE ‘KEEP OUT.’”

In contrast with the outside-the-ropes bedlam which dominated the Ryder Cup at Bethpage Black in late September, the 2025 Walker Cup matches between Great Britain and Ireland’s best 10 amateur golfers and those from the United States was billed as an oh-so civilised occasion.

Held at the oh-so exclusive Cypress Point club, on the oh-so picturesque Monterey Peninsula, in oh-so cool Northern California, this clash between Old World and New was billed as golf at its absolute best.

In many ways it was, of course. Cypress Point is a truly unique course; the Alister Mackenzie-designed layout a throwback to a time when golf at the highest level was a nuanced game; one filled with a wide range of shot-making, laced with touch and feel and imagination. Only 6600 yards in length, Cypress was expected to provide a subtle test with which these leading amateurs were largely unfamiliar. More used to employing the crash-bang-wallop style of “bomb and gouge”, there was a chance they might be found out when something other than swinging at 100 percent was called for.

And so they were. Occasionally. While there were birdies and eagles aplenty, those moments of splendour were dotted with moments of near-farce. Anyone out

of position around the steeply sloping and lightning-fast putting surfaces was faced with the very real possibility that they soon enough were going to be made to look a little foolish. So it was that these talented players occasionally putted off greens and chipped down slopes which carried their balls many yards from their ultimate target.

It must also be said that too many of those (mostly) youngsters were in possession of a wide range of curse words which they were sometimes too eager to put into the public domain ... but that is a swearsy discussion for another day.

In truth, the play in this 50th Walker Cup followed a familiar pattern. The GB&I players more than held their own in the eight foursomes, “winning” 5-3 in what the Americans erroneously refer to as “alternate shot”. For them, not owning their own balls is clearly a strange thing. Then again, maybe not. This inability to meld is perhaps linked to the fact that Uncle Sam’s nephews tend to be distant families when it comes to creating the bonding process which successful sides manage so well.

Anyway, as the foursomes went as they so often do, so did the singles. Of the 18 points available, GB&I mustered only four. On the second day, when all 10 players on both sides took part in the singles, the

Americans failed to win only two of the head-to-head matches. The final score was 17-9. As ever, the greater strength in depth of the U.S. squad was ultimately the deciding factor in what was their 40th victory in 50 Walker Cups. Only twice, in fact, has GB&I won way from home.

All of which is all very well – and not exactly a shock to anyone who studies history, but there is more to the Walker Cup than meets the casual eye. Yes, the stature of the host courses is commendable. The likes of Seminole, The National Golf Links of America, Royal Lytham, Chicago Golf Club, St Andrews, Merion, Royal County Down and the Los Angeles Country Club have hosted Walker Cups since the turn of the century alone. There is, however, often a dark side to it all; one epitomised by this year’s edition.

Cypress Point may be a wonderful course, but the club is one of those which does nothing positive for the image of golf. Its motto might as well be “keep out”. Then there is the proud boast of match organisers, the United States Golf Association. If their publicity is to be believed, their primary purpose in golf and life is to “grow the game”.

Commercials containing an endless stream of cute, smiling kids enjoying their introductions to golf are a staple of the USGA’s television message. However, there wasn’t much evidence of minority participation at this Walker Cup. Even the briefest glance at those in attendance made it clear that this crowd was far from a broad cross-section of society.

Non-white, non-affluent faces were difficult to find, if not impossible to discern amongst galleries wearing all the right clothes. Let’s just say “blazers” proliferated, which only confirmed the strong pre-match rumours surrounding the (narrow) distribution of tickets. The great unwashed were contemptuously uninvited.

Then there were the toilet facilities open to spectators. “Disgusting” is an appropriate description of what was on offer. “Disgraceful” works, too. For that alone, the USGA should be ashamed of itself. However, amidst the avalanche of self-congratulation which permeated the proceedings, it is unlikely it will be.



THERE IS FAR MORE TO THE WALKER CUP THAN MEETS THE CASUAL EYE.



AMERICANS STEWART HAGESTAD, BEN JAMES AND JACOB MODELSKI CELEBRATE WITH FANS AFTER WINNING THE 50TH WALKER CUP.



“THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN WILL ALWAYS BE SPECIAL TO THIS PAST CHAMPION.”

Great news, wasn't it? On top of Rory McIlroy signing up for the next two Australian Opens, the statement from Augusta National that the winner of our national title will be invited to the Masters Tournament only serves to further elevate the stature of what should be one of golf's most important events.

Throw in a return to our best course, Royal Melbourne, for the first time since 1991 and it is clear that, in contrast with a year ago when the Australian Open was being roundly criticised, the championship is on the rise. Exciting times are ahead.

All of which had me overcome with a bout of nostalgia. My own relationship with the Australian Open goes back as far as 1984. As a seven-year old, I was at Royal Melbourne with my father to see the great Tom Watson claim the Stonehaven Cup as champion. My Dad told me over and over that Watson was the best player in the world and Tom certainly showed us how true that was.

Two years later, I was back to watch again, this time at Metropolitan. And it is here that I must throw my mother under the metaphorical bus. After parking in a

suburban street, we were walking to the course when she suggested that we “jump the fence” and get in for free. So we did. She has been guilty about that ever since.

Anyway, 12 months on from that escapade, my still youthful eyes were back to see Greg Norman win; 1987 being the championship where everyone walked off. I had played at Sandringham with my Dad that morning in a northerly wind and 40-degree temperatures. I remember walking over the road to Royal Melbourne and no one was playing.

That left a mark on me, although I didn't quite understand the significance of what was happening – which was really just placing the pin in a bad spot on the wrong day. Maybe my most vivid memory of it all is seeing Brett Ogle hitting a putt on the third green (the 1st on Royal Melbourne East), which was the “walk-off” hole. The ball ran three feet past the putt and Brett was yelling at his caddie to “mark it,” but he couldn't. The ball started to run backwards and actually went in.

All of which made me want to play in the Australian Open even more. It was crazy, but it looked like enormous fun, too. And in 1991 I had an even closer look at the

action inside the ropes when I caddied for an American guy called Scott Taylor. I say “caddied” but I was only really filling that role when it came to the lines on putts ... so I was helping a little bit.

My other memories of that week remain vivid. Taylor used MacGregor blades. He had a Cleveland Classic driver. He used Maxfli balls. He made the cut, shooting 72-78-78-72 – 300 exactly. And he paid me A\$120 and a US\$100 note. I didn't really care about the money, though. Taylor also gave me all of the balls he didn't use that week and a bunch of gloves (way too big for me, of course). I thought it was Christmas.

There was also a memorable golf moment. At the age of 14, I was starting to think I might one day be good enough to play in an Australian Open. And that year, Robert Allenby, still an amateur, lost out only when Wayne Reilly – who “we” had played with in the opening two rounds – birdied the last three holes to win by a shot.

My first attempt at qualifying for the Australian Open was in 1994. Allenby won at Royal Sydney and I was still watching, which will tell you how I did in the qualifying at Bonnie Doon. Still, my debut came only a year later. As an amateur, I finished T-15 at Kingston Heath alongside Brad Faxon, amongst others.

The best part of all that, however, was playing alongside Steve Elkington in the final round. Steve had won the U.S PGA Championship earlier that year and was a bona fide superstar. For me, that was the best thing ever – at least until I actually beat him by a couple of shots. Now, you might think that would convince me that I was good enough to make a living as a professional. And it did ... but it also didn't.

Yes, I felt pretty good about myself finishing 15th, but I also realised how much better Elkington was. He was at a level far above anyone I had ever played with to that point. Just the way he struck the ball and how easy everything seemed to be for him. I remember his pitching was world-class and light years better than anything I could do as a then-18-year old.

I was also struck by the fact that Steve seemed to hit every drive the same



ROYAL MELBOURNE DURING THE PRESIDENTS CUP IN 2019.



YOURS TRULY WITH THE STONEHAVEN CUP AT THE LAKES IN 2010.

distance. Compared to him, I was hitting different tee-shots every time. So I knew that, even though I had beaten him that day, he would take me at least eight times out of 10. I had a long way to go to play at his level, which only made me work harder to get there.

Since that year, which for a longish time remained my best Australian Open finish, I've played every year apart from 2000 at Kingston Heath, because I was at the PGA Tour Qualifying School in the States. For me, it has always been a massive event. It was part of my childhood. And for long enough it always seemed to be won by a big-time player – usually Norman, who was such an important part of my golfing adolescence. He was the guy who I wanted to win every week.

The Aussie Open fields in the early part of this century always contained a sprinkling of the biggest names in the game. The best commentators like Renton Laidlaw and Peter Alliss were there too; the

coverage going on all day. It was just like the Open in the U.K, really. Just a big deal. And *our major*.

It was a while before I was close to winning our Open, though, but I do have a vivid memory of 1999 at Royal Sydney. I played the opening round alongside Michael Campbell and Aaron Baddeley (still an amateur) in the first round. Michael and I had just finished 1-2 in the Johnnie Walker Classic and so were clearly on-form, to the point where I was just starting to think I could win an Open.

Anyway, Michael went out in something like four-under-par. I took one shot more. Aaron, however, was standing on the 10th tee seven-under-par. I remember "Cambo" looking at me and asking, "Who is this?" The look on his face was priceless.

Back to me winning the Open, it took me longer to get it done than I had hoped it would. I had a few close calls, most notably in 2006. I was at Royal Sydney as U.S Open champion and played well.

However, John Senden finished birdie-birdie to beat me by a shot.

I did eventually get there, in 2010 at The Lakes, a year after Adam Scott had won. Our relationship has always been close, but never close to being a Nicklaus-Palmer thing. I will admit, though that I was a little annoyed he beat me to it!

Ironically, I arrived at the Open in 2010. I was grinding it out and ended up playing really well, which was what I had to do to beat Matt Jones that week. He was so annoying and just wouldn't go away. Only when I hit the 18th green did it become clear that I was going to win. The final margin was four shots, but it was closer than it looked.

It goes without saying that my victory 15 years ago meant a lot to me. It still does. No matter what might be said about the Australian Open – and plenty of opinions, both positive and negative, have been expressed over the last few years – it will always be special to this past champion. 🏆

WOODFORD WELCOMES ROBOTIC MOWERS



Woodford Golf Club in Queensland continues to sing the CEORA mower's (left) praises.

When Woodford Golf Club trialled Husqvarna's CEORA robotic mowers, the results were immediate. Now part of the club's everyday maintenance, the near-silent machines are saving money, time and delivering fairways which members love.

Husqvarna, the global leader in robotic lawn care, officially launched its most advanced range of robotic mowers for commercial use in Australia, but one Queensland golf club is already showing how effective the technology can be. At Woodford Golf Club in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, Husqvarna's CEORA® robotic mowers are now hard at work on the fairways, saving time, cutting costs and improving the playing experience for members.

Husqvarna's new commercial lineup includes the Automower 580L EPOS, 580 EPOS, 560 EPOS and 535AWD EPOS. Each has been designed to meet the demands of professional turf managers at golf courses, sports facilities and public green spaces. These machines offer intelligent, wire-free mowing, flexible cutting patterns, remote scheduling, and the ability to cover large areas with precision.

Sarah Jenkinson, Brand Manager of Husqvarna Australia, says it's all about delivering modern turf managers the tools they

need. "The demand for smarter, autonomous turf management solutions is growing, and these models represent the next leap forward. Husqvarna has drawn on decades of innovation to launch a platform that delivers flexibility, precision and a premium cut; all essential for modern commercial turf care."

The Australian launch also coincides with a milestone: Husqvarna is celebrating 30 years since it pioneered robotic mowing. Founded back in 1689, the Swedish brand has built a reputation for innovation across everything from chainsaws to ride-ons and robotic mowers. Today, Husqvarna products are sold in more than 100 countries, backed by more than 13,800 employees worldwide and AUD\$7.7B in annual sales. That depth of expertise has now landed on Australian fairways, with Woodford Golf Club among the first to give it a go.

Dean Dagan, General Manager at Woodford, GC, remembers when the club first tested the CEORA mower about a year ago. "One of our committee members, Ken Wearing, requested

a trial," he says. "We tested it for around six to eight weeks and it performed brilliantly. Every time we sent it out, it mapped and mowed another fairway without any issues."

The defining moment came after a big wet. "One day, after 70 or 80 millimetres of rain, our super Aaron Walsh and I were in the greenkeepers' shed wondering what to do. We decided to send out the CEORA. It went through small puddles and mowed the fairway efficiently despite the wet conditions. That was the turning point – we knew it could handle the course in all conditions, and we were sold."

Since then, two CEORA units have become permanent fixtures at Woodford. One works from its base at the clubhouse, while the other runs on solar power at the 12th tee. Using Husqvarna's EPOS (Exact Positioning Operating System) technology, the team can set virtual boundaries, adjust mowing schedules and choose cutting patterns, all through the Husqvarna Connect app.



The 535AWD EPOS is designed to meet the demands of golf courses and sports facilities.



Dean Dagan with Ingrid Ekstrom, Husqvarna Vice-President, Pro and Channel Marketing at the brand's Automower range launch in Sydney.

Aaron Walsh, the club's Course Superintendent, says the flexibility has been a game changer. "The EPOS management system lets us create virtual boundaries, adjust schedules, change cutting height, and even set mowing patterns – parallel, checkerboard or triangle. The benefits the CEORA units have over conventional mowers are huge. For example, they are almost silent compared to a traditional mower."

That quiet operation means the machines can run through the night, keeping fairways in shape without disturbing nearby homes or the wildlife that roams the course. And because they run on batteries, there's no diesel, no hydraulics, and no risk of leaks. "We save ourselves about \$5000 a year on diesel," Dagan says. "Maintenance is minimal. We only need to replace the blades every two to three weeks, and with a five-year Husqvarna warranty, it's very low-fuss."

The time savings have been just as important. Walsh says mowing the fairways has always been one of the most demanding jobs, especially in the growing season. "With the size of our mowing areas, it's always been a challenge to keep up. The CEORA mowers have made things easier by taking care of the fairways, which are the largest areas to mow."

Freeing up the fairway mowing has given

the team an extra 20 hours a week to focus on other priorities. Instead of spending all their time on routine cutting, they can now tackle bunkers, drainage projects and tee maintenance. "The extra time goes into course improvements," Walsh says. "Overall, the CEORA units have been an excellent addition to the club. They have saved us time, saved us money and improved the overall appearance of the course."

And the members are noticing, too. "The cut quality is actually better than our traditional fairway mowers," Dagan explains. "We set the height – usually between 10 and 12 millimetres – through the Automower app. The technology works extremely well, and the member feedback has been fantastic. They have noticed the fairways are consistently cut at a great height, and their lies are better, which makes their golf more enjoyable."

For a regional club like Woodford, those improvements mean more than just saving dollars. They help create a better golfing experience day in and day out, while also keeping the course presentation to a high standard. For Husqvarna, it's proof that robotic mowing isn't just the future – it's happening right now.

The company's commercial Automower range is designed to handle all kinds of challenges,

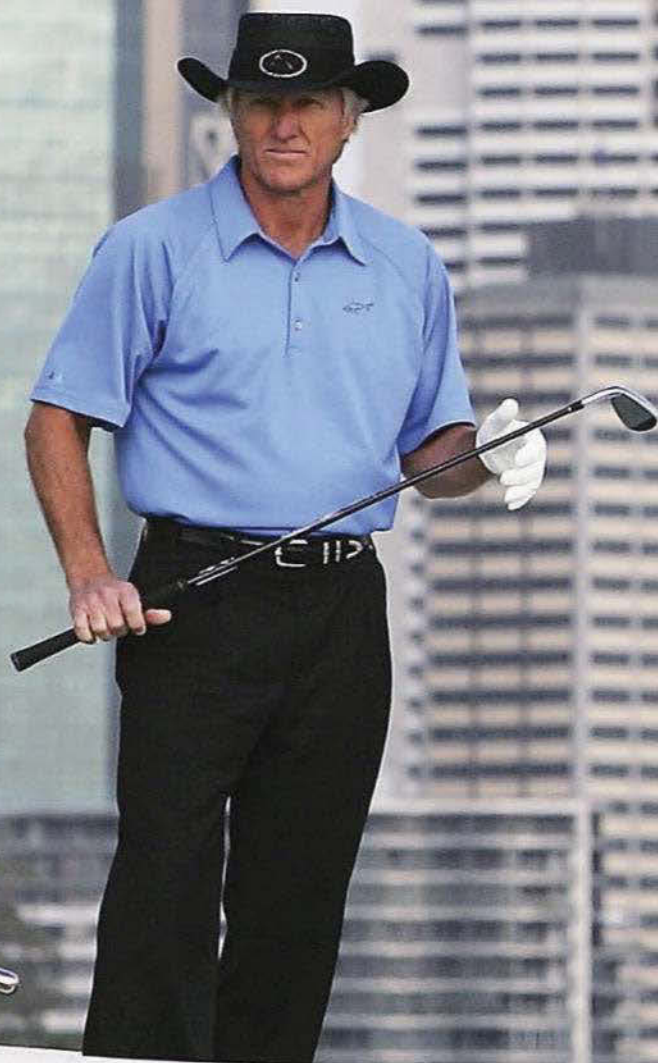
from the fine cut of a golf course fairway to the undulating edges of roughs and even the heavy wear of sports fields. Models like the Automower 580L EPOS can cut as low as 10mm, making it perfect for golf turf, while the 535 AWD EPOS can handle slopes of up to 70 per cent (35 degrees). Each has remote start options and selectable mowing patterns, ensuring maximum uptime and flexibility.

At Woodford, though, the story is less about specs and more about results. The club's course team is now spending more time on improvements which golfers can see and feel, while the mowers quietly keep the fairways in top shape, day and night.

"The member experience has been exceptional," Dagan says. "The CEORA mowers have given us time back, saved money and improved the course presentation. It has been a game changer."

With Husqvarna now celebrating 30 years of robotic mowing and officially bringing its latest commercial lineup to Australia, Woodford's success is likely to be the first of many. From golf courses to sports fields and green spaces, autonomous turf care is here, and judging by the reaction in southeast Queensland, it's here to stay.

— James Smith



GLOBAL PUSH

Australian golf's moment may finally be here. With Adam Scott and Rory McIlroy championing a worldwide game, and new PGA Tour boss Brian Rolapp embracing a global outlook, the stage is set for Australia to shine brighter than ever.

WORDS BY MALCOLM CONN



GREG NORMAN WAS A ONE-MAN PROMOTIONS TEAM FOR THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN. TODAY, GOLF ADMINISTRATORS ARE BULLISH THAT IT CAN BE WORLD-CLASS AGAIN.

It's all about the global vision. Adam Scott has it. So does Rory McIlroy. But does new U.S PGA Tour CEO Brian Rolapp?

A throw-away line during Rolapp's first major media event in the job in late August, and subsequent meetings in the USA, has given Australian golf chiefs considerable reason for optimism that the Great South Land may indeed be embraced by the America First monolith.

"Golf is a global game; we all know that,"

Rolapp told media in the Georgian hospitality venue at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

Coming from the U.S PGA Tour boss this is no banal statement of the bleeding obvious. Instead, it suggests a stance that looks beyond a universe bordered by New York and Los Angeles.

Certainly, Golf Australia chief executive James Sutherland and his PGA of Australia counterpart Gavin Kirkman are excited about the possibilities of far-flung Australia receiving greater recognition from the centre

of the golfing world.

Kirkman attended the Ryder Cup in New York and was buoyed by meetings with Rolapp's executive and DP World Tour CEO Guy Kinnings as Australian golf continues to push for a third significant event beside the Australian Open and Australian PGA Championship.

"From a PGA Tour of Australasia perspective, we see a really bright future and we see growth on where we're going to fit in as far as getting a major event down here in Australia," Kirkman

told *Golf Australia* magazine.

"It was spoken to at length about timing and when that will happen, knowing that these guys work on schedules two years ahead. The PGA Tour and the DP World Tour have waiting lists for new events to come onto their tours, so there will need to be a lot of work done on schedules."

It'll certainly be positive if both tours are thinking globally. It means Australia's governing bodies can focus on pathways and on hosting major events in Australia, according to Kirkman. "But we want continuity, we want regularity, and we want to build strong events that are sustainable and have high investment," he said.

"Our job down here in Australia is to make sure we're at the table and having the discussions all the time, to get our tour, but also to get our events like the Australian Open and the Australian PGA, recognised as major international events."

This was reinforced by Sutherland in an earlier interview at the joint Golf Australia/PGA of Australia headquarters in the Australian Golf Centre at Sandringham Golf Links.

"The game is always evolving and changing," Sutherland said. "From an Australian golf perspective, the PGA and Golf Australia, we want to be a part of any broader international tour."

"Part of the relevance there is having co-sanctioning agreements and arrangements with the DP World Tour, which is the second-most significant tour in the world."

"We've got to keep putting on great events. We've got to keep trying to attract good players, irrespective of decisions that may be made above our pay grade, out of our control."

We just need to continue to be at the table."

Certainly, for a former NFL executive, Rolapp appears to have left his USA blinkers in his old office.

One of his first significant acts was to unveil the Future Competition Committee, which will look at the PGA Tour's entire competitive model. Rolapp said several times he is adopting the "blank sheet" mentality, meaning any and all ideas are on the table.

The Future Competition Committee, headed by Tiger Woods, includes Adam Scott, which has further excited Australia's golf supremos.

"Adam's always been a global player,"

Kirkman said about one of Australia's golfing greats, who lives in Switzerland, plays beyond the U.S. Tour, and has been a great supporter of his home country's major events.

"He's had a lot of success, but if you look at his career and the way he works, it's always that the game's got to be taken all around the world, and so have the events."

Sutherland joined Kirkman in his praise of Scott for his long-term support of Australian golf, and put Northern Ireland's McIlroy in the

same category as a globalist.

The star attraction at the next two Australian Opens, McIlroy is being paid by the Victorian Government through Visit Victoria to the tune of at least \$3 million, according to multiple sources, a figure Sutherland disputes.

"Adam's been true to that [global approach] for two or three decades, and Rory, in dealing with him and his management in the last 12 months, I can honestly say the messages and the consistency in which they are totally invested in coming out and putting on a great show here has been nothing but super, super impressive," Sutherland said.

Indeed, sources close to the Victorian Government claim that McIlroy has taken a discount to play the next two Australian Opens because he wants to play at Royal Melbourne, the host of this year's event.

The same sources claim that McIlroy's standard rate is \$1 million a round for private events and \$4 million for a tournament, suggesting he is coming to Australia for less than half price.

While a U.S. PGA Tour spokesman would



IT WAS NATIONAL NEWS WHEN GOLF AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCED RORY MCILROY'S APPEARANCE IN THE NEXT TWO AUSTRALIAN OPENS.

(L-R) PGA OF AUSTRALIA CHIEF GAVIN KIRKMAN, VICTORIAN SPORTS MINISTER STEVE DIMOPOULOS AND GOLF AUSTRALIA BOSS JAMES SUTHERLAND DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS.





Luxury Golf Course Living – Phuket, Thailand

Blue Canyon Country Club Foreign Freehold Ownership

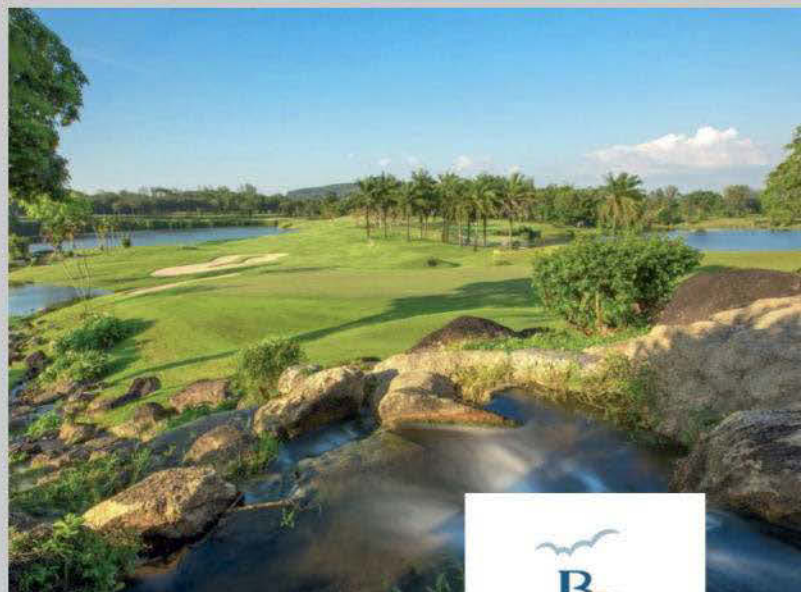
Positioned within the prestigious 36-hole Blue Canyon Country Club, this fully renovated 252sqm two-storey condo offers uninterrupted views of the Andaman Sea, Phang Nga Bay, Canyon Course, and Phuket Airport.

- 3 bedrooms | 2.5 bathrooms
- Two balconies with sweeping views
- Imported German fittings, luxury kitchen
- Sold fully furnished – move in or lease
- Foreign freehold title
- Resort amenities: clubhouse, pool, gym, driving range
- Optional life membership at Blue Canyon

Just 10 minutes from Phuket Airport.

A rare opportunity in an iconic golf setting.

Asking: AUD \$1.15 million



Contact us for more details or to arrange a private viewing:
jnixon9@hotmail.com



RORY MCILROY WAS A DRAWCARD IN 2013 BEFORE HE'D EVEN WON A MAJOR. TODAY, HE'S A SUPERSTAR.

not say what Rolapp's encouraging words may mean for Australian golf, a source close to the Tour suggested that international markets like Australia, which traditionally show strong support for golf, will be part of the discussion.

The spokesman did highlight that in 2028, the Presidents Cup will return to Australia for the fourth time, this time at Kingston Heath, "which will be another amazing spectacle." Once again Australians will get the chance to see a collection of the world's best golfers in the flesh.

Yet it highlights the double-edged sword of Australian golf to secure the game's best players and therefore the world's attention.

A variety of anonymous sources claim it is costing anywhere between \$20 million and \$30 million to bring the Presidents Cup caravan to Australia in 2028. This is only happening because the Victorian Government, through Visit Victoria, is footing the bill as part of promoting the state on the world stage.

Sutherland insists that Australian golf has never been in better shape and, on the measures he presents, the former Cricket Australia CEO has a strong case. Fuelled by the need for individual outdoor recreation

during the Covid-19 pandemic, golf participation took off and continues to rise.

"Last year, four million people picked up a golf club and got involved," Sutherland said.

The latest participation figures, released by Golf Australia last December, show club membership growing by 5.6 per cent to 459,143 members in 2023-24, marking a 19 per cent growth over the past five years. Junior membership rose by 33.4 per cent, driven by a 37.3 per cent increase among boys and a 13.8 per cent increase among girls.

And with the signing of World No.2 McIlroy, ticket sales for the Australian Open at Royal Melbourne this year are at unprecedented levels, prompting predictions of record crowds reaching 20,000 a day.

However, like the Presidents Cup, the Victorian Government, through Visit Victoria, has financed McIlroy's visit for the next two Australian Opens. Visit Victoria was contacted for comment.

The bottom line in every sense is that, without such strong government support, Australian golf would be peripheral, chipping around the edges of the global sport.

Visit Victoria takes over as the Australian Open's major backer after more than a decade

of support from the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

Is this heavy reliance on government support a sustainable model for a sport with a storied history attempting to maintain its profile in Australia's ever-more crowded recreational market place?

Australia's big three, or tier-one sports, AFL, NRL and cricket, talk about television rights in the billions, but those not on that podium are fighting for scraps.

While Sutherland would not be drawn to such a comparison, a single Big Bash Twenty20 match between domestic sides that didn't exist 15 years ago generates more in television rights than the Australian Open.

Sutherland defended the model of significant government support, pointing to other sports and events.

"It's an important revenue stream for us. Whether it's sustainable, I think is very much in our hands," he said. "We need to continue to put on great events that attract crowds, attract public interest, global interest, big broadcast numbers from around the world and have an economic impact in the communities in which we host these events."

"It's true, not just of golf, but other sports



ADAM SCOTT (RIGHT) WITH SOME ADVICE FOR 2014 AUSTRALIAN OPEN CHAMPION, JORDAN SPIETH.



ADAM SCOTT WITH PGA TOUR HEAVIES JAY MONAHAN (CENTRE) AND BRIAN ROLAPP (RIGHT).

that state governments will continue to invest in major events that have an economic impact, whether it's Taylor Swift, or it's a State of Origin rugby league match, or it's a major golf tournament.

"Golf is incredibly popular right now. And if you think about what's happened with LIV, the South Australian Government have invested significantly in that event. They've just extended their deal through to 2031.

"At the same time, the Victorian Government hosting the President's Cup in 2028 is a huge investment to attract that highly sought-after event to Australia. On one hand, you can say that's a lot of money for governments to be putting into an event or a sport, but the reality is sport sells, major events sell, and golf right now is flavour of the month.

"People are looking to host major golf events. We don't, for one moment, take for granted the benefits that flow from the investment that comes from our commercial partners and government, but it's up to us to continue to make that work."

And the money being handed to golf pales compared to the annual support the Victorian Government dishes out for the Grand Prix through the Australian Grand

Prix Corporation. Informed sources claim the event is underwritten to the tune of anywhere between \$50 million and \$150 million a year, yet is deemed to bring a net benefit to the state through promotion and tourism, including those who travel to the event from interstate and overseas.

One of the drawbacks, however, of relying on heavy state support, is the obvious state-centric focus of a national sport. There were complaints that the Open had not been played at Royal Melbourne, widely regarded as Australia's best championship course, since 1991. A long association with the NSW Government through Destination NSW largely kept the tournament in Sydney.

Now there is some mumbling behind the scenes about why couldn't Golf Australia co-operate more closely with the Australian PGA to have McIlroy also play in the Australian PGA Championship a week earlier? The \$3 million catch? The Victoria State Government is paying for his Australian sojourn and the PGA Championship is held at Royal Queensland.

Mike Clayton, a six-time winner on the PGA Tour of Australasia between 1982 and 1994, believes that the \$3 million to bring McIlroy out for the next two Australian Opens

is an excellent investment.

"He's worth it, in the same way that Tiger [Woods] was worth the \$3 million he received to play the 2009 Australian Masters," Clayton told *Golf Australia* magazine.

"The days of golf's biggest names such as Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player touring Australia as part of sponsorship arrangements with their equipment suppliers are long gone.

"And Australia simply can't compete with the crazy money now being offered in the U.S. We might get the 50th-best player in the U.S and they wouldn't sell a ticket."

That crazy money received a significant boost from the even crazier money offered by the Saudi-backed LIV Golf rebel tour during their spectacular raid, when Cam Smith was lured to golf's so-called dark side by \$140 million.

There's hardly a PGA Tour event worth under US\$8 million (\$12 million) in prize money, with the majors coming in at about \$US20 million (\$30 million).

Compare this with the Australian Open, where the prize pool is rising from \$1.7 million to \$2 million, and the Australian PGA Championship, where it's lifting from \$2 million to \$2.5 million.

“Why would you bother coming to Australia, aside from the opportunity to play one of the best handful of courses in the world?” Clayton asked. “And that’s not even considering a 48 percent tax rate, 20 percent manager’s cut and our exchange rate against the U.S. dollar.”

Which means that paying a few million for the popular McIlroy is far better use of limited resources than contemplating an unobtainable \$10 million rise in prize money with no guarantee that any of the top players would look twice at it.

Most tournaments on the Asian Tour are worth US\$2 million (\$3 million) and about 30 Australians play that circuit outside their short home season.

Given the peripheral nature of the Australasian Tour, becoming part of the neighbouring Asian Tour would seem a logical step.

However, following golf’s recent shakedown, the Asian Tour is now aligned with LIV Golf through a \$US200 million investment by Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund.

Sutherland and Kirkman believe that remaining part of golf’s establishment is paying dividends. The biggest prize is the recent announcement that the winner of the Australian Open will now gain automatic entry to the U.S. Masters.

“It’s a huge acknowledgement of the significance of the Australian Open from people in the U.S,” Sutherland said. “Obviously a private club that hosts an incredible tournament, to acknowledge our Open by saying that the winner is going to get an invite into the Masters every year. It’s a huge coup, and we take it as a sign that we’re heading in the right direction with our national championship.”

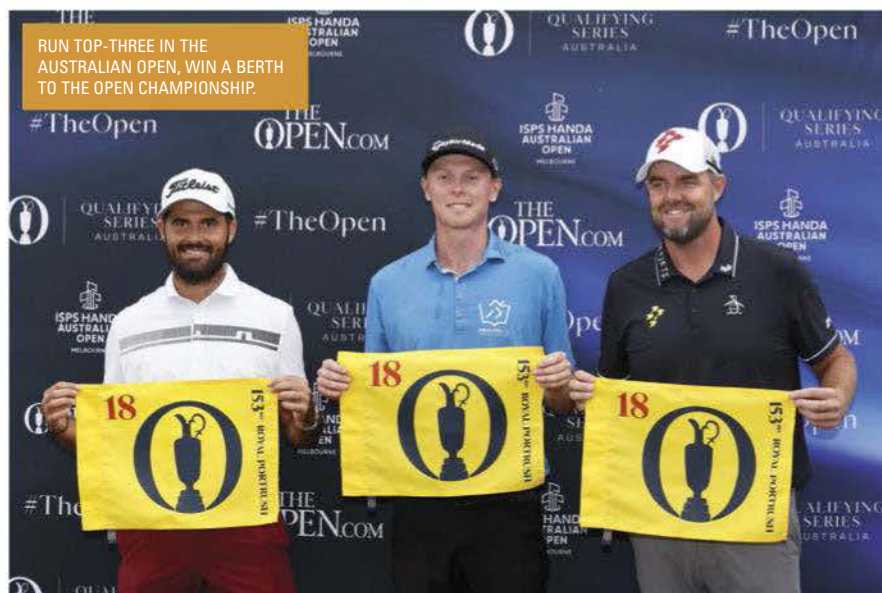
With an invitation already available for the British Open, the winner of the Australian Open now has direct access to two of the four majors, not that McIlroy would need such an invitation should he win it over the next two years.

However, it is an affiliation with the DP World Tour which is having a broader if less spectacular impact on Australian golf. A significant part is the top three in Australia’s Order of Merit automatically qualifying for a place on the DP World Tour, propelling young players such as reigning Australian PGA Championship winner Elvis Smylie to the next level.

“With the DP Tour getting closer to the PGA Tour, our strategic alliance is beneficial across so many areas,” Kirkman said. “Five years ago, we were playing 14 events for \$3.85 million in prize money.

“This year, we’re going to have 20 events, playing for \$12 million in prize money, and we’re going to broadcast all those events, plus an additional four women’s events, so you can see the advantages of having the alliance and getting additional support. The support just doesn’t come through the three DP World Tour cards.”

Kirkman claimed the support from the DP World Tour also comes through commercial



introductions and support.

“They’re a global tour, and they have tour partners, and some of their partners will want to invest outside of the U.K and Europe, and they’re investing here in Australia. We met with key stakeholders BMW and Rolex and Emirates, who work with us closely in Australia as part of our alliances. They’re very keen to expand their partnership and their investment into our region as well.

“The broadcast support that they offer both our two major events and some small events allows us to build content and ensure we have a broadcast platform [on Fox Sports and Kayo] that does have a season of golf. That’s something that’s happened since James and I have been working together.”

This is significant, given Australian golf must find millions of dollars in production costs with little or no broadcast rights in return.

Beyond the Australian Open and PGA Championship, prize money in Australia is at apprenticeship levels. The NSW Open is worth a total of \$800,000, with seven other tournaments on the Australasian tour, including the Papua New Guinea Open, carrying purses of \$200,000 to \$250,000.

As one significant golf insider asked *Golf Australia magazine*, where are all Australia’s multi-billion-dollar companies, the big miners and the big banks, when it comes to supporting one of Australia’s major sporting events?

Which raises a broader question: why, given Australian golf’s limited resources, don’t they speak with one voice despite the historical divide that has traditionally separated the professional and amateur arms of the game?

Their answer is that they largely do, with 75 staff shared across Golf Australia and the Australian PGA, significantly more than those who are specifically allocated to either organisation. The offices of Sutherland and Kirkman are 30 metres apart.

Kirkman says the collaboration includes the PGA running the operations for Australia’s Women’s PGA.

“That’s a great relationship, and that blends into the PGA and Golf Australia’s collaboration and working together as well,” he said. “So, we’re a sport that has progressed and evolved a lot in the last three to four years. It’s something we’re quite proud of as well, that we’ve got a stronger voice and a bigger engine.”

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MINJEE LEE HAS WON THREE MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIPS, BUT NOT AN AUSTRALIAN OPEN. SHE'LL BE A STAR TURN IN ADELAIDE IN MARCH.

All of this is not to say Australian golf is rough-free. Far from it. New South Wales, the biggest state with the strongest finances, refuses to be part of the One Golf federation, which began a decade ago as an initiative of Golf Australia. New South Wales remains the only standout after Western Australia joined up last year.

This means that amateur (club) golf in Australia is run by two different bodies; one covering NSW and another looking after the remainder of Australia.

Last October, Golf NSW chairman Michael Medway unloaded on Golf Australia, claiming his organisation had concerns about the culture of the national body and its financial stability, given the heavy reliance on government support.

A detailed spray in *Australian Golf Digest* across many areas of the sport saw Medway highlight his view of NSW exceptionalism and why they were performing better than the national body.

However, in the most recent participation report released last December by Golf Australia, the figures weren't quite so exceptional: NSW membership growth was 3.7 percent, second-last among the six states, ahead of only Victoria at 2.9 percent.

In the MyGolf introductory program for primary school-aged children, NSW has only a third of the participants registered with Queensland and Victoria, about 4000 compared to 12,000 each. It was similar with the Get into Golf program, aimed at connecting interested participants of all ages with their local golf program and helping to bring new people into the sport, particularly women.

While there was a significant increase in juniors across the country, the NSW increase in percentage terms was behind Tasmania and South Australia. New South Wales was also third amongst the percentage increase of total competition rounds and average competition rounds per person.

Medway highlighted at some length how important the regions are in NSW, yet that state has the largest percentage of metropolitan membership compared to regional membership by some margin.

Sources behind the scenes say the NSW stance is simply based around money; that Golf NSW has millions more than Golf Australia and wants to hang onto it. When contacted by *Golf Australia* magazine, Medway did not want to elaborate or explain his comments, but stood by them. Sutherland refused to comment.

"I'm on the record with my views," Medway said. "I don't think much has changed. I don't want to reopen that."

Instead, Medway was keen to talk about more NSW exceptionalism.

"We're in the process of finalising our strategic plan, which is highly bold, highly innovative, and will look to take NSW into an even stronger position," he said.

The politics of golf is invisible and irrelevant to most golf followers. Instead, there is a buzz around the Australian Open, thanks to McIlroy and a sense of relief in some quarters that the mixed format of men and women will be abandoned after a three-year trial.

It is understandable that Sutherland wanted to raise the profile of women's golf. Just 18 percent of golf club members in Australia are women and Sutherland had seen the exponential growth in women playing cricket by raising their profile with the women's Big Bash Twenty20 competition.

However, the decision to combine both major Opens from 2022-24 was heavily criticised by male and female players, including Cameron Smith, who claimed the courses had been watered to slow them down for the women.



THE POPULARITY OF LIV ADELAIDE PROVES AGAIN THE PULLING POWER OF STAR PLAYERS; IN THIS CASE, JON RAHM.

"I don't like the way it's going," Smith told Fox Sports at the time. "I think the biggest issue is the format and how it's structured."

Adam Scott added his voice in *Golf Australia magazine* last year, saying: "There is a place for different formats, but your national Open is not the place for that."

Hannah Green wanted the Women's Open moved back to early in the year, which was more suitable for the women's schedule. It will now be played in Adelaide during March.

There hasn't been such interest in an Australian Open since McIlroy ran down Scott, then a freshly minted U.S Masters Champion, to win the 2013 title at Royal Sydney. In 2014 at The Australian, McIlroy defended, Scott contended but it was 20-year-old Jordan Spieth who made off with the Stonehaven Cup with a final round, course-record 63.

However, it's off the course where the future of Australian golf will be decided. Will the U.S PGA Tour discover the world?

Malcolm Conn is a senior sports journalist who has written for *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He won a Walkley Award in 1999 for exposing the Mark Waugh, Shane Warne bookie scandal.

NORMAN: OUR PRODUCTION LINE WILL ALWAYS BE STRONG

Australia may be the Lilliput of golf alongside the U.S PGA and DP World Tours, but the nation's best players are giants.

One of them, Greg Norman, among only three Australian men to win two or more majors alongside Peter "Five Times" Thomson and David Graham (also two), believes that Australia will continue to produce champion golfers.

"Australia holds its own given our population," Norman told *Golf Australia magazine*. "I am never worried about us producing extremely good golfing talent."

So, what does Norman think about the future of Australian golf on and off the field, given the minnow status of the Australasian Tour?

"This question has never gone away for the 45 years I have been in the game, on and off the golf course," Norman said. "Australia punches above its weight given the population size and golf market reach. Our future will always be strong in regard to quality player production."

Among the illustrious group of Australian major winners, six are still playing. Three men, three women.

Australian fans will be able to see at least two of them, Adam Scott and Cameron Smith, in the flesh this summer, while it is uncertain, at time of writing, whether Jason Day will return for the Australian PGA Championship and Australian Open during late November and early December.

It is assumed though not confirmed that major champions Minjee Lee, Hannah Green and Grace Kim will all return for the Women's Australian Open and Australian WPGA Championship in March.

Golf Australia CEO James Sutherland is rightly proud of the banner they fly on the world stage and, in many cases, the loyalty they show returning for their short home season.

"In the last 15 years, no country other than America and South Korea have produced more major winners than Australia," Sutherland told *Golf Australia magazine*. "The results

are there in terms of our modern-day golfers, who continue to make an impact on the world stage. We're highly respected for that."

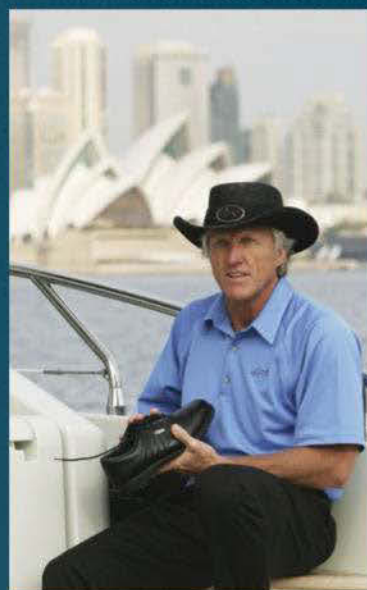
He pointed out Australia's women were making an even bigger impression than the men.

"There's been five women's majors this year, and Australians have won two of them," Sutherland said. "It's pretty phenomenal, when you think about that. And we shouldn't forget Minjee Lee, who won one of those majors this year. That was her third major. There were only three Australians [men or women] who have ever won three or more majors; she's become the fourth."

The only male is Thomson, with five Open Championships, while Karrie Webb won a phenomenal seven majors and Jan Stephenson three.

PGA of Australia chief executive Gavin Kirkman believes Australia's production line of high quality golfers is a reflection on the local system.

"We want to make sure our men and women coming through our high-performance programme can stay and play in Australia before they make their way over to [USA] collegiate golf or onto other tours," Kirkman told *Golf Australia magazine*. "The women are playing so well on the LPGA Tour and across on the Ladies European Tour."





2016 - Jordan Zunic
2017 - Travis Smyth
2018 - Daniel Maber
2019 - Brett Rankin
2020 - Aaron Pilon
2021 - Daniel Maber
2022 - Not Contested

THE NT PGA CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY, CARVED IN THE SHAPE OF A CROCODILE'S HEAD, IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE TROPHIES IN GOLF. (PHOTO: PGA OF AUSTRALIA)

TROPHY HUNTER

Golf trophies aren't just dust collectors, they're symbols of glory, bragging rights and community. In this first instalment of a special two-part feature, we dig into why we covet them so desperately. Part two lands in next month's issue.

WORDS BY ANDREW DADDIO

Some people, usually the trophy-winning type, yearn for trophies. Others, often the non-winning type, show apparently little interest. Regardless, if someone's been lucky enough or good enough to snag a bit of swag, there is a fair chance they'll have it on display. Because they can. And they probably should.

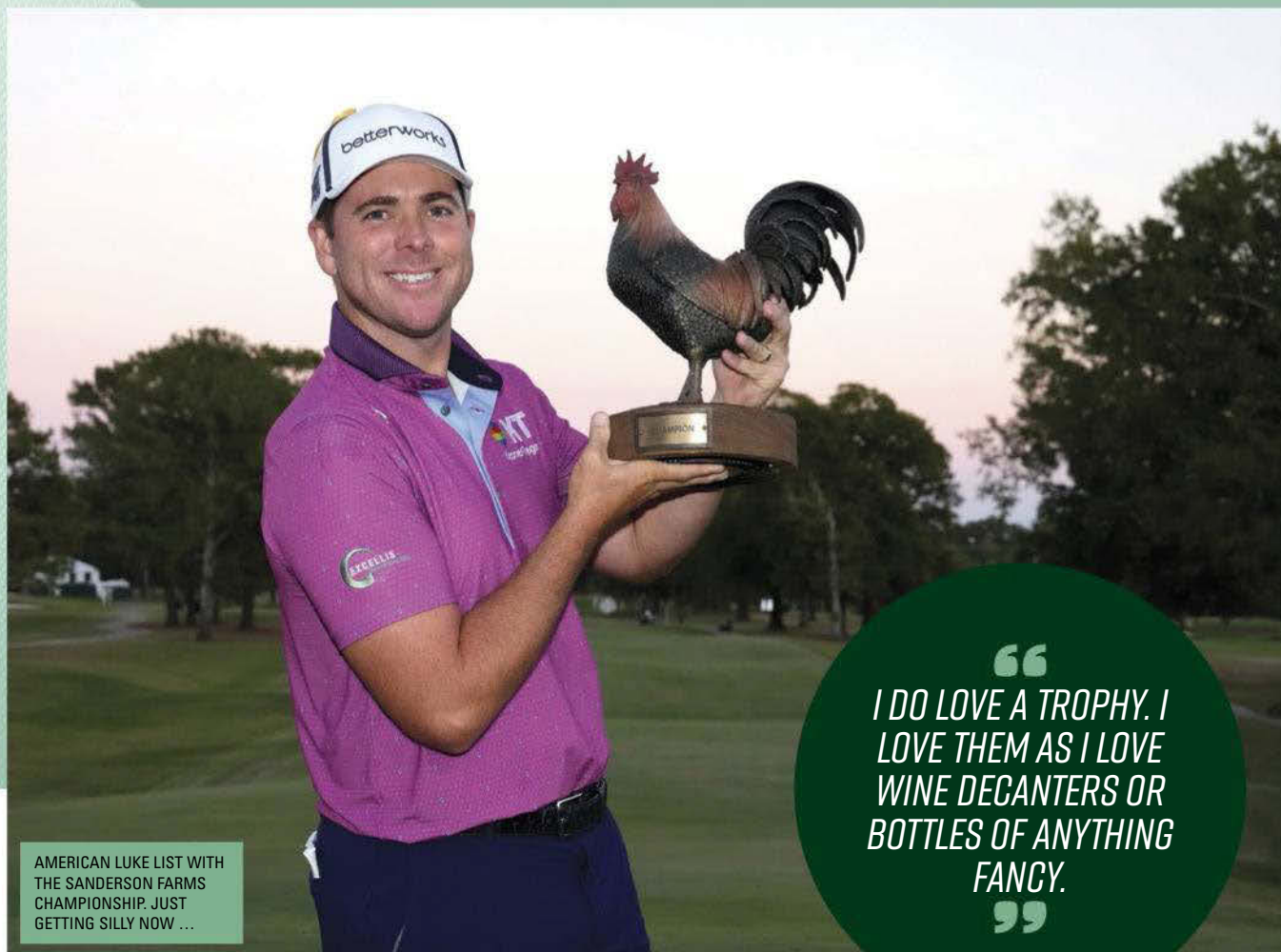
I know I would. If I had more silverware, I'd make a cabinet and house it on satin cloth and velvet, illuminated with downlights. There would be mirrors in the back so onlookers could witness their own expressions of awe and envy. And I'd lock the cabinet so if someone wanted to hold my trophies, they'd have to ask me for a key, and it would be like winning all over again.

Now, we are, of course talking "winning" trophies, not "participation" trophies. They are not really trophies; they're more like





TIGER WOODS WITH THE
HERO WORLD CHALLENGE'S
TIGER TROPHY.



AMERICAN LUKE LIST WITH THE SANDERSON FARMS CHAMPIONSHIP. JUST GETTING SILLY NOW ...

“
I DO LOVE A TROPHY. I
LOVE THEM AS I LOVE
WINE DECANTERS OR
BOTTLES OF ANYTHING
FANCY.
”

trinkets, objects, evidence of turning up.

However, I do love a trophy. I love them as I love wine decanters or bottles of anything fancy. I love trophies so much, I like watching *other* people win them. I love what trophies stand for. From the Latin *trophaeum*, came the French *trophée* to the English trophy, back in 1550 or so. They are a monument to victory. A spoil, a prize, an award. A symbol of success used to impress others. That last bit feels important, especially when you think about all those trophy displayers you know, right?

Definitions of trophy vary only vaguely from language to language. The Americans consider wealth as the king of trophies. And trophy wives ... we're not going there. What is clear, is that holding and displaying a trophy is a sign of achievement. A clear statement that you were the best on that occasion. You won. You are a winner. Yay, you.

So yes, I love trophies. It is true; I make them for family smackdowns. A small part of the reason I like to make them is so I may win them. My parents, my siblings, their partners, all the nephews and nieces and, I dare say, the pets, feel this is a flawed part of my personality. They think I yearn so much to win and to win *something*, that I need to make up family competitions in order to win them.

To that I say: "Boo-hoo. Look at the bigger picture." I create trophies with one simple mantra in mind: "If you build it, they will

come." *Field Of Dreams*, 1989, right? No, that was actually "build it, and *he* will come" meaning the slugger, Shoeless Joe Jackson. "They" will come is the story of all the animals boarding Noah's Ark. You may not find that exact phrase in the Bible, but you get the idea.

Now, sure, we're not talking Stonehaven Cup, Wanamaker Trophy or Claret Jug. We are not talking mighty Bledisloe Cup into which, it is estimated, 42 cans of beer can fit. Rather, we're talking *home-made* trophy. We are talking purpose-built *memorial* to a significant coming together of like-minded people for the pursuit of happiness and possible success.

You are in now, right? In like old mate Errol.

It is not as if a trophy is some piece of shit, dust-collector made by a monster who only has winning on his mind. And, yet, that is largely the hand the trophy builder is dealt. I, however, look at trophies as a tangible symbol of a time when we come together in the pursuit of one competitive goal. More than that, trophies are about community.

And they don't have to even look like a trophy.

There is a jacket we play for at my local club; it's green, in the way of these things. You can guess which major tournament it hangs off. Apparently, it was once part of a suit picked up at St Vincent de Paul's by one of the two masterminds of the much-coveted tournament. Like lots of great contests, it

started simply enough.

I believe it was a golf tipping competition that turned into a bit of a knees-up at a golf club so the like-minded could gather and enjoy the final round of The Masters in one place. Together. As a community. One member decided to move suburbs and therefore golf clubs, so he brought the idea to his new club and suggested they open early so members could enjoy the final nine holes together before heading out to play.

The club *ummm'd* and they *errr'd*. *What new-fangled idea is this? Is there a trick?*

The right people pushed the agenda, however and, sure enough, there was a smallish gathering who watched the final round as a golfing community while enjoying coffee and bacon-and-egg rolls. Out the window, chipping distance, was the first tee, from where they would kick off their own Masters competition.

The jacket was a bit of an afterthought, apparently; the awarding of it a bit of a joke. Until the first winner (former *Golf Australia* magazine associate editor, Steve Keipert) returned the following year with the jacket embroidered with his name, the year (2012) and a Masters emblem. Lo and behold, there *was* something to play for. A trophy. *A trophy you could wear.*

And we do the same thing every Masters Monday. The list of names gets longer, the



JAPAN'S RIKUYA HOSHINO CELEBRATES WITH THE QATAR MASTERS TROPHY. YES, THAT'S A GIANT OYSTER.

chance of winning shorter, and the desire to get your hands through those sleeves and feel the jacket embrace you is ever stronger. It is a magic jacket. There is magic in the jacket. Not only for the winning of it, but because, somehow, it fits everyone, every time, just well enough. It's the Magic Pudding of jackets.

Funnily enough, the two blokes who dreamt the whole thing up – Matt Cleary and Greg Black – are yet to enjoy the spoils. For Matt, certainly, this is about winning. “I covet that jacket more than anything in golf,” he says wryly. “And, next year, I am going to practise for a month. And I am going to find a way. And I am going to bloody win it.”

And he might. Or he might not. Matt might have the game of his life and fall short over the last few holes. He may rue the day as he has every year since Bubba Watson hooked that wedge out of the trees on 10 to beat Louis Oosthuizen in a play-off.

Here's the truth: if there were no jacket with the names of former champions on it, if it were just the *knowledge* of winning the day and of the 150 bucks or whatever, no one would care

for longer than it took to down the second schooner. Certainly no one would remember beyond that.

Today, the Masters Monday green jacket is now so hotly contested, the numbers have been limited to a select 32 golfers. Eight four-balls, each player invited, just like the real Masters.

For us, this is the *real* Masters. And a perfect example of how a trophy brings us together.

Mark “Dobbo” Dobson is a mentor and advisor to elite sporting talent. He helps them understand what works for them, and when it works, and why. His mentorship runs across sports and business. Olympic champions Grant Hackett and Matt Targett are two of his “freaks”.

I ask him: what is it about a trophy that brings us together? Why do we covet it so? Is it the trophy itself? Is it the winning? Is it more of one, less of the other? Dobbo points out that there are different kinds of wins.

“Some people have a personality that’s

driven toward a competitive environment, while other people don’t perform as well in those conditions,” he says. “So, for them, you can’t push the winning agenda. It is like people whose minds literally go blank during exams. You have to find another way.”

I suggest that it feels like he was finding a way to let the non-trophy hunters off the hook. He shakes his head (I don’t think in pity) and says: “For these people, their goal, their agenda, is not to be a hero and win just one event. The goal is for them to own a decade and be a champion. I make a distinction between a hero and a champion. A hero wins one big thing; a champion wins a lot over a long time.”

And here I was thinking the champion *was* the hero.

Maybe, however, we’re getting slightly ahead of ourselves. Let’s mosey back to competition for competition’s sake, and the inherent need to pit ourselves against each other in search of finding our better selves. It is nothing new, of course. Even when we’re not playing for anything, we’re playing for

“
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”

something. It is why kids make up games to play against each other.

My mates Mick and Darce McKerihan were masters of the made-up game. One was “Slammin’ Sams” in which the emerging cricketers would stand five metres apart and throw a tennis ball at each other as hard as they could. Winning and bruising and losing; a game of hilariously savage memories and fluid rules.

When Slammin’ Sams went to hell and someone ended up in tears, they’d turn to “Sky Ball”: tennis balls launched as high into the air as they could with a tennis racquet. A catch was worth a point, a missed catch minus a point. There is a hot rumour this often ended in bruises as well.

In the same vein, most of the really good Daddo dust-ups as children were a result of bruised losers and bad winners. It didn’t matter if it was French Cricket (“it bloody *did* hit your legs”), normal cricket (“you’re bloody out because it’s always one-hand-one-bounce”), tennis (“it was out!”) or table tennis (“that’s not a legal serve!”). The tears were real.



WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT THIS IS, BUT INBEE PARK WON IN AT THE KIA CLASSIC.



THE MASTERS' GREEN JACKET ... A TROPHY YOU CAN WEAR.

Yet the winning feelings combined with bragging rights seemed to wane faster than the pain of losing. As I recall, it was generally the conquered who wanted a rematch, the conqueror more likely to enjoy the moment. Kids’ stuff, yes, but we have learned it from somewhere.

My grandfather played golf into his 90s and often skited about “winning the money” from his other geriatric pals. The first time I heard it, I was fascinated. “The money” sounded like a fortune.

“How much money, Pop?” I would ask. “Eh? How much?”

“Oh, big day today – 30 cents!” he’d reply. Sometimes, it was less. Even back then, you couldn’t buy much with 30c, not that it mattered. Pop was keen to point out it wasn’t the amount, it was the contest. It was being part of something and prevailing. That stuck with me as much as his rules around etiquette, like staying up with the group in front, like never, ever, *ever* leaving your buggy at the front of the green, lest it hold up anyone. I haven’t left my clubs near the front of the green since.

Anyway, for Pop and I, and likely most of us, one of the things we love about golf is that it’s a contest. We tell ourselves it’s a contest against ourselves and the course, and that’s true, but we’re also engaged in a contest against our mates, our group, the rest of the field.

To Dobbo’s point, even if we are not of an outwardly competitive nature, or competition cruels us, we can still compete against ourselves.

“Change the metrics of the competition,” he advises. “Don’t make the victory about the trophy. Find a way to win by striving for something, not necessarily beating everyone, but improving yourself.” Champion or hero. Your call.

Aren’t we lucky that we play a game in which the handicap system sets us up for a contest against literally everyone in the field every single time we play a comp round? We can compete, silently, pretending we’re not interested in the bigger match ...

I used to bet \$5 against another golfer just for the sake of having something to play for. He drives a Porsche now. So, the first challenge



“
WHAT IS IT ABOUT A
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”

RORY MCILROY WITH
THE DUBAI DESERT
CLASSIC TROPHY WHICH
HE WINS EVERY YEAR.

should be to beat ourselves. Can we somehow manage to be square with our handicap? That is the daily grind, the unstated yet understood challenge each time we tee it up.

For as every golfer with a genuine handicap knows, there's a certain pride which comes with getting to say you've had 36 points. Pride can turn to swagger as the score climbs above 36. That warmth lurches all the way to smugness, even elitism at 40. Anything north of that and it's "what the hell happened?"

I can find no official evidence of this, but I'm guessing anyone who's had one of these 40-something outlier rounds is pretty quick to check the club leaderboard to see how they've gone against the rest of the field and if they had won the comp.

It is more important to some than others. I know a bloke called Chris who recently played early and well for his 39 points and enjoyed and entire day checking the leaderboard on MiScore, only to lose to 40 points in the

penultimate group. "Ruined my cleansing ale after lunch, it did," he said.

On the website Golf.com, Lee Rainwater, Director of Handicap Education and Outreach for the USGA, says it is expected that: "you're going to shoot two, four, five strokes higher than your Handicap Index." You might shoot even higher if you have a poor day. Golfers vary in consistency. Some match their index more often than others.

Generally, though, Rainwater says, you can expect to play to your handicap one in every four to five rounds. "By our calculations, that gives you a 20- to 25-percent chance of living up to your abilities on the course," according to Rainwater.

In other words, hitting your handicap is a very good round. A small win, if you like. It takes a lot of luck and other things to take that good score to very good, and exceptional rounds are what's required to win the chocolates ... or a trophy. 🍫



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WORDS BY MATT CLEARY



THE GRANGE GC IS THE HOST OF
LIV ADELAIDE IN FEBRUARY.



WHEN IN ROME, RIGHT?

As the late and great Anthony Bourdain can tell us still via the archival magic of the YouTube, ceviche is a popular meal found throughout Latin America and the national dish of Peru. However, I am here to tell a man, nobody does it better than the chefs in a pub in the Clare Valley of South Australia.

Ceviche is thick cuts of fresh fish, marinated – or as Peruvians would say, “cooked” – in lime and other citrus juices, and topped with chilli, coriander and whatever combination of red and green stuff you might toss thereupon. Mint? Perfect. Spring onion? Knock yourself out. Ice cream? Yeah ... not so much.

Or so you would think, because, hold the phone, sports fans, for while on honeymoon in Peru, food types Warrick Duthy and Nicola Palmer fell in love with ceviche. Long story short, the couple returned to Australia and bought and renovated the Watervale Hotel, a cracking old pub just outside Clare in the Clare Valley, north of Adelaide.

They surrounded the place with gardens for fresh vegetables, secured a contact in the north for the finest kangaroo, camel and goat, and turned the pub into one of Australia's



CLARE VALLEY MAKES THE BEST REISLING IN AUSTRALIA.

greatest-ever gastro-pubs. And their signature dish is ceviche with a twist – sorbet.

“We never saw it with sorbet in Peru; that was Nicola’s idea,” explains Warrick. “She loves the balance of the cool of the sorbet and heat of the chili. The sorbet also keeps the fish cool in summer. We made it into an ever-present signature dish because we are in Watervale – with the citrus and mint sorbet it is the perfect match to a Watervale Riesling.”

Golf? A golf hook? Patience, friend. For were you to find yourself in Adelaide for

a sporting event – let’s say, oh, pick one at random, LIV Adelaide – and you thought that complementing a day or three of sports action with a day or three playing golf and drinking wine and eating for Australia, the Clare Valley is 90 minutes north of the city though bright yellow fields of canola, and a stop for vanilla slice in the town of Tarlee.

The Clare Valley is three valleys, one of them founded by Polish people who settled the land in 1850-something because they wished to practise their version of Christianity away

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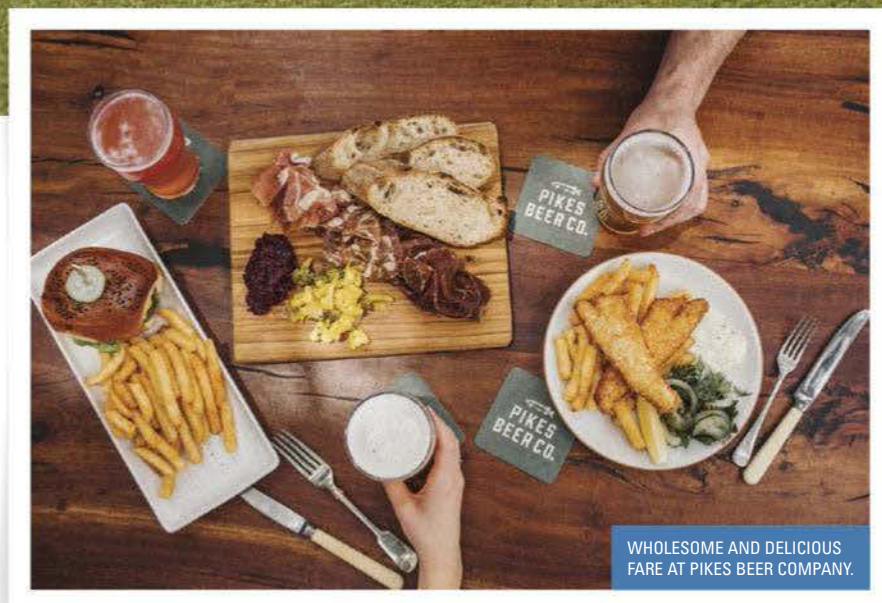
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THE WELCOME AT PIKES' CELLAR DOOR.



WHOLESOME AND DELICIOUS FARE AT PIKES BEER COMPANY.

from harassment. For a valley, it's actually quite high at 610m at its peak, and thus hot summer days are complemented by cool nights; conditions which produces the finest Riesling in the land.

What happens, according to my guide Tim Grigg of Clare Valley Wine Tours, is that the grape – what they call “the fruit” – ripens in such a way as to produce ... well, I don't really follow the process. Something about “acidity”, “minerality”, something-something. Regardless, it's a nothing-short-of-perfect accompaniment for one of the world's great ceviche.



GREG NORMAN'S COPPER CLUB IN PORT HUGHES HAS A GREEN WITH FOUR FLAGS AND A BUNKER.

We begin the tour at Pikes Wines, where we enjoy “The Merv” – a reserve Riesling named after a founding grandparent. I try several others, all delicious. Wish I had the words, but, again, does it matter? That there’s a “powerful core of mineral acidity” and “citrus notes, classic Polish Hill River purity” which “you can drink now or let age elegantly” is all good to know, though superfluous.

A hook for Pikes Wines and other cellar doors hereabouts is that their produce is sold only on site; you can’t buy this kit in Dan Murphy’s. They sell that as a plus. You can get Pikes’ iconic long-necked bottle, the one with

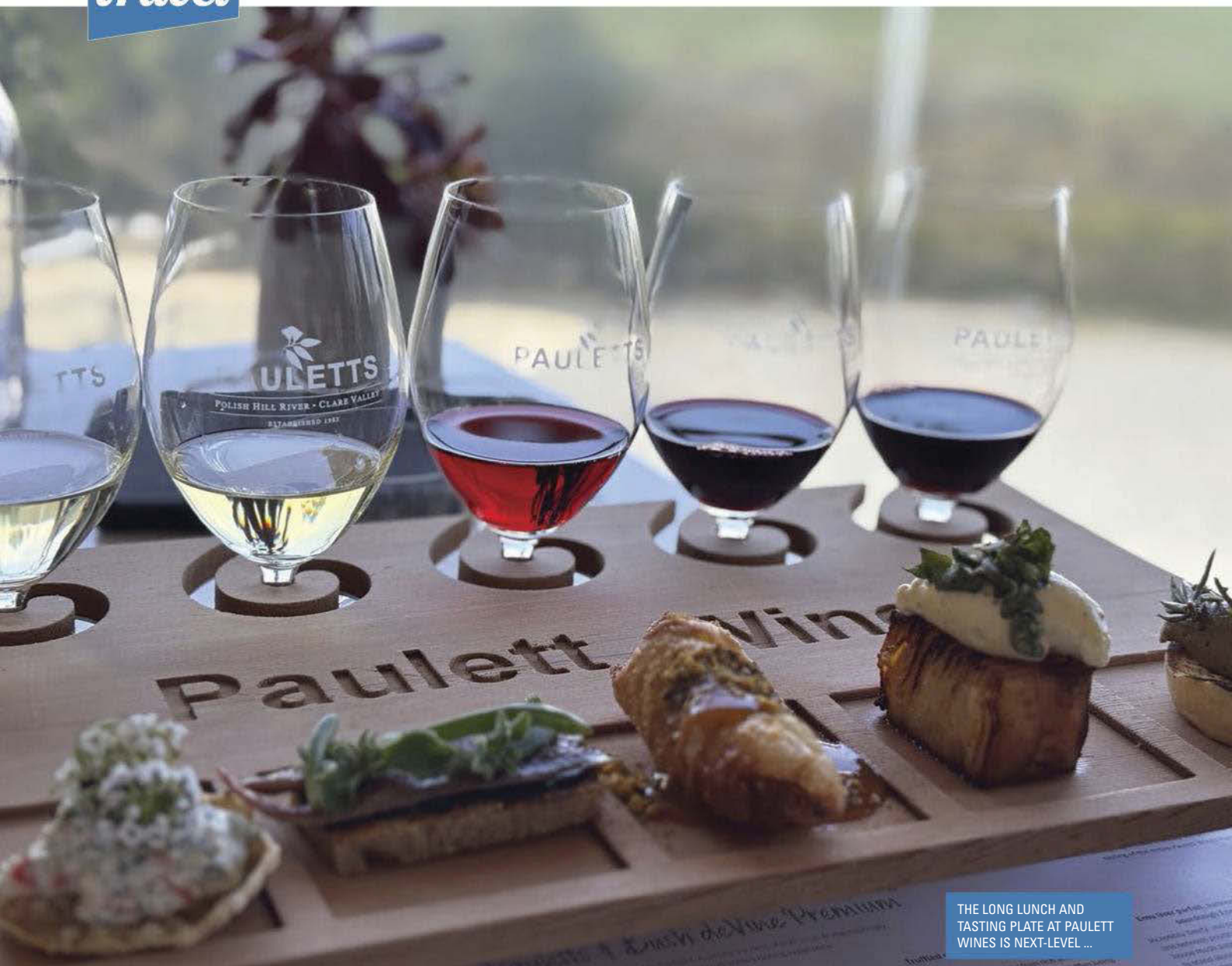
the fish on the front, but the Tiano “Damside” chardonnay is only sold on site, and for a souvenir, certainly beats the Bubba Gump hat I bought in Las Vegas.

We are joined by a man in a beard who runs the brewery next door. Do you enjoy beer and would you like to visit? He asks. I reply with words to the effect of, have enquiries about membership of the Perth Bears NRL club been reaching a Perth Bears, er, social club? The answer is of course, yes, my good man. And over we hop to the finely named Pikes Beer Company to enjoy their signature Pilsener, a hoppy IPA and a Raspberry Berliner Weisse

which would go down well on a Sunday afternoon as a band played in the sun in the adjacent beer garden.

For lunch at Pauletts’ Bush Devine Winery Restaurant we enjoy six wines which match six delicious mouthfuls of oysters, sashimi, scallops and wagyu beef surprise. Dear God, it’s good, and you could sit there all afternoon and take on Paulett’s menu suggestion of “Long Lunch”.

Instead, we’re off to Sevenhill Cellars with its oak barrels and history. It was founded by Jesuits in 1851 to produce sacramental wine. Our man Tim suggests the Grenache. I agree



THE LONG LUNCH AND TASTING PLATE AT PAULETT WINES IS NEXT-LEVEL ...

it's delicious, and buy a bottle for \$50 which will later be found soaked into much of my clothes given my lack of respect for its safety in checked-in luggage. Bloody good Grenache, however.

At Mitchell Wines we enjoy the fruits of three generations of Mitchells, before we're home for a bath and a snooze, prior to dinner at Watervale Hotel for said ceviche, and wines that match so many marvellous little dishes prepared by chefs from across the world. There is a terrine with cranberry. There's goat, camel and kangaroo on the menu, all of it from the North. The vegetables come straight from the garden.

There's a dish that's effectively bread and butter, but is a big, fresh cob of dodger with a fat, yellow dob of hand-whipped butter. There is goat ragu. The kangaroo is matched with Sangiovese. And the vino just keeps on coming; little nips, effectively, to complement the food. It's like Moulin Rouge dancing on your tongue.

When I finish with cinnamon surprise and a sticky vino, I am officially done and done. Cooked. Marinated in Reisling with citrus

notes. It is incredible food which has won many hats and other awards, including one in a British magazine which reckons it's the best pub food in the world.

Golf? When do we play golf? The very next day at Clare Valley GC – a fine, progressive and volunteer-run bush course that's a perfect complement for an afternoon of carousing. You wouldn't travel 90 minutes to play Clare GC; it's not a destination golf course like your Barnbougles, your Wickhams, your Seven and Five Mile Beaches. But it is, fact, a fun go-round, with no bunkers, which won't beat you up, and has a hole the Army could use for parachute practice.

The par-3 7th at Clare Valley is a 123-metre long-drop from an escarpment tee-box, and down what might be a 50m descent. The club pro will tell you it plays 100m. Everyone will play two or three balls just for fun, according to President Matt Butler, and what else should the blessed game offer but that.

After a fine and fun 18 holes with Mr President and local gun Alex Nichols, I'd have stayed in the friendly clubhouse longer, and then headed back to Paulett for that



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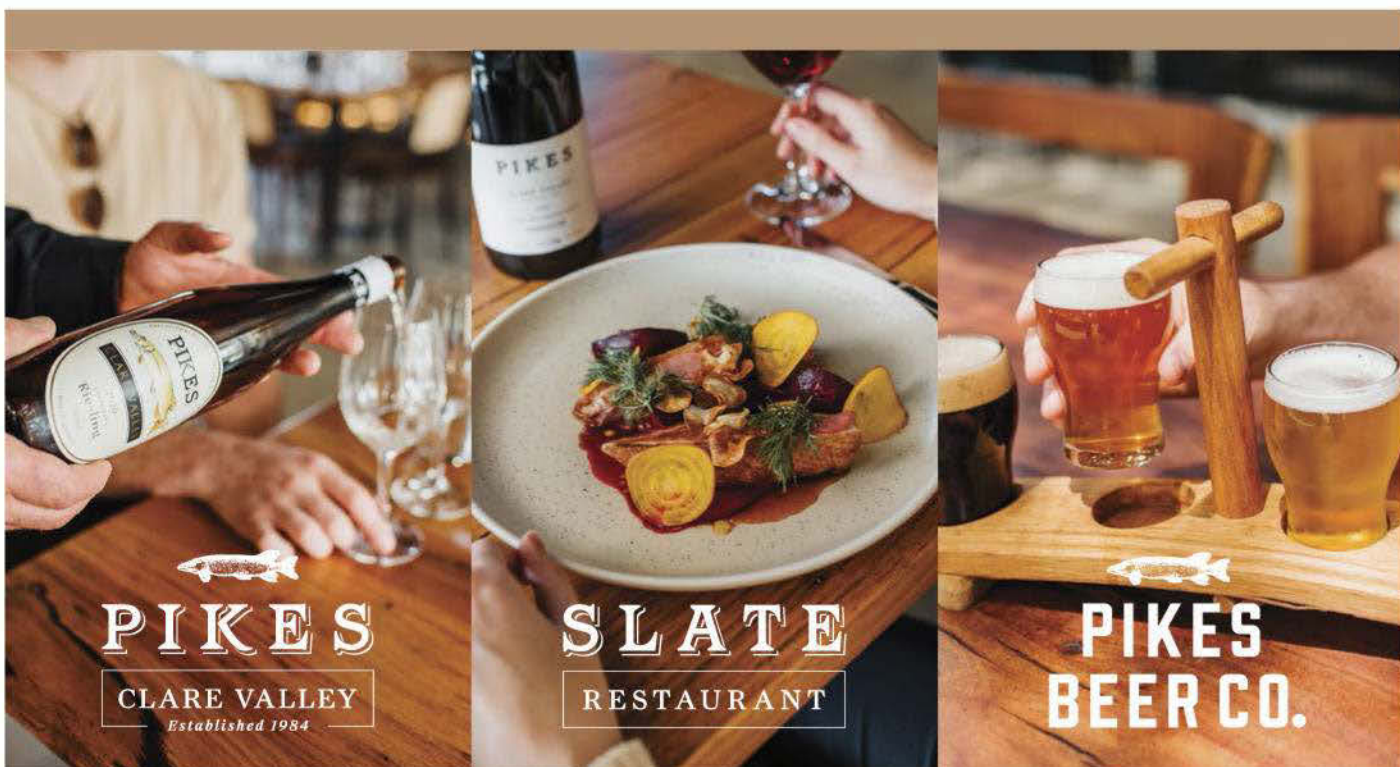
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claregolfclub.com.au



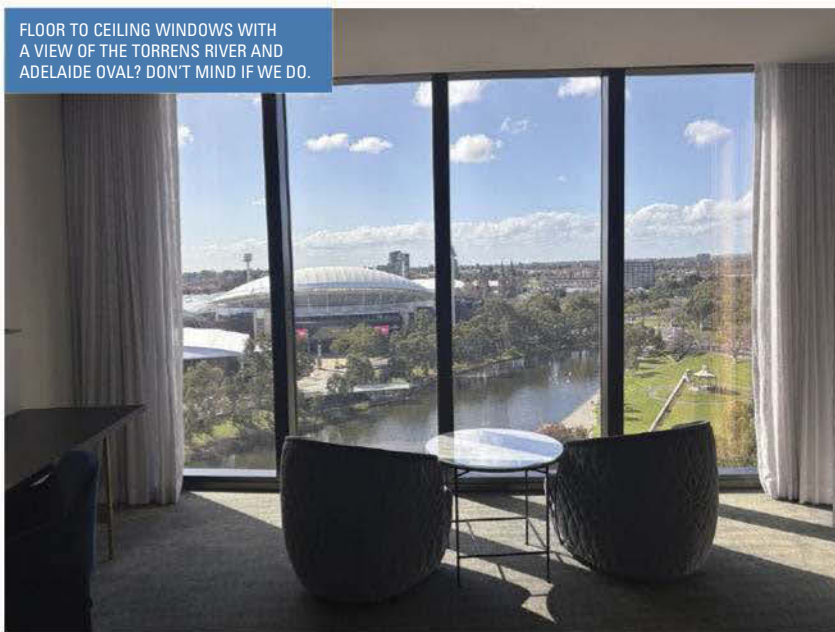
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THE BOND STORE BREWERY AND DISTILLERY IN WALLAROO.

FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOWS WITH A VIEW OF THE TORRENS RIVER AND ADELAIDE OVAL? DON'T MIND IF WE DO.



"Long Lunch", the brewery for a cleanser and Watervale for more ceviche and Sangiovese.

Alas, selflessly, for you, dear reader, we're off through the flatlands of Bumbunga and bound for the coastal township of Wallaroo, where we enjoy a taste of the delicious beers and gins of the Bond Store. A storage space for barrels of rum and whiskey in 1865, today it's a funky little bar, microbrewery and distillery with options for tasting upstairs and down, and where they make several styles of beer that come out on a small cricket bat-shaped bit of wood.

At Coopers Ale House, we dine with views of the marina and North Beach, and tuck into a rib-eye steak of singular goodness. For breakfast it's The Smelter next door to the Bond Store for a big coffee and scrambled eggs, before a 20-minute scoot to the Copper Club – The Dunes, in the beach town of Port Hughes. And there we greatly enjoy a Greg Norman design which is nine holes of fun and wind and sand and Shark.

Copper Club is like a resort course without a resort. It has roughly the same infrastructure and volunteer ethos as any Australian bush track – Clare, for instance – but with a Greg Norman-designed golf course for its members and guests. It's a public track with a top-class nine-hole route.

The mighty greens all have two flags. There are multiple tee-boxes to present each hole with a different feel. The whole place feels

"big" and open. It is bordered by homes on the north side, though they're not "of" the property. On all other sides is farmland and space for the next nine holes, if anyone can find some money to pay Sharky to make it.

Yet it's plenty good enough as it is. Not even sure it needs another nine. It is a unique and quite cool and fun layout, with a real "Shark" feel: mighty greens; giant, amoeba-sized bunkers. How much time the great man spent on the site is negligible. Don't think he piloted a Bobcat to shift any dirt, but his mark is certainly upon it from an architecture perspective. There is a lot of Shark in it.

And, like our Shark, it has its quirks. One of the greens – perhaps better described as a

green complex – supports four flags. Holes two, four, 11 and 13 share the same tight-cut surface. Right in the middle, a good-sized bunker. Sharky, you quirky devil.

The fairways, on the day I played in the first days of spring, were fine and hard and fast. They didn't look "pretty", per se, being several colours ranging from green to fawn, but the actual surface was pure enough. I certainly found an extra 20-metres' run with several hybrid approaches scooting through greens.

There are good, strong par-4s which require mid-irons in, depending which of the several tee-boxes you would attack from. The wind off the water can be a factor, though the routing is to all points of the compass.



APRES-GOLF FARE AT THE BOND STORE, WALLAROO.



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www.ardrossangolf.com.au



THE AROMA OF SUCCULENT MEATS WAFTS FROM THE BOND STORE SMOKEHOUSE, WALLAROO.

Not to labour the point, but it does feel like a “big” golf course, incongruous for a nine-holer and incongruous for one in Port Hughes, two hours out of Adelaide on western coast of the Yorke Peninsula. The 8th/17th hole, for instance, par four, goes up to a green with two big, steep bunkers left. The day I played, into the wind, it was probably four clubs up the hill. My approach measured 140m, played 170m – difference between 7-iron and 3-hybrid.

I don’t take a lot of divots. The surface is firm. You wouldn’t say spongy. You would say cracking surface. Which is probably a good trick by grounds staff, who include volunteers and retirees, who do their best in the four seasons, one of them as hot as Dubai.

Bottom line, for a small community, it’s an outstanding golf course. Being nearly two hours out of Adelaide, you could call it the bush. Port Hughes and Wallaroo are fishing, boating and beach-enjoying communities, with a rural and dockyard feel, in parts. Many of the homes look like holiday ones.

However, if you lived here, and The Copper Club was your home track, and you played every Wednesday and Saturday with the usual 46 suspects in the winter competitions, you would be wondering what the poor people are doing. The members of modest Ashlar GC, who now play upon Norman’s first design in Sydney, Stonecutters Ridge, could empathise.

And so we’re away upon a two-hour drive to the crackerjack town of Adelaide and into a room with a view of the Adelaide Oval and Torrens River, before we’re out to Gaucho’s Argentinian Restaurant for a mighty steak made the Argentinian way, that being seared magnificently on the outside, soft and pink in the middle, washed down with a Malbec from Mendoza. A man could get used to it, and like Homer Simpson in France, become a gourmand.

To finish our trip, as one might enjoy a cinnamon dish with a sticky dessert wine that’s a heady mix of complexity and decadence, with citrus blossom, fresh grass

and marmalade mixing with ripe tropical fruits, we’re off for a round in the competition at The Grange, where the heroes of LIV will descend in February, and which sparked this entire food and golf tour for the ages.

The Grange is tight-cut and fun, and as adjacent to the Sandbelt as there is outside the Sandbelt.

Adelaide has four top courses – Royal Adelaide, Glenelg, Kooyonga and The Grange, which has 36 holes, east and west, and upon which our man Norman had an albatross and won the West Lakes Classic in 1976.

I play the West Course with three locals, and greatly enjoy the par-3 12th hole – you may know it as the Party Hole – a 165m beauty with a green that seems more raised than it does when it’s surrounded by posh tents and party people. I make a par, sign off for 35 points, and decide that I will return for some mates and/or wifey – that marinated citrus fish dish and high altitude Riesling will not be enjoyed by itself. 🍷



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GREAT SOUTHERN LOOP

ROYAL CANBERRA

72 NOVEMBER 2025 | GOLF AUSTRALIA

Australia is blessed with golfing riches: world-class courses, seaside beer gardens, and long weekends made for loops. From Shell Cove to Canberra to the Highlands, this 858km journey proves how lucky we are.

WORDS BY MATT CLEARY

How lucky are we. That's right, grammar pedants: no question mark. In this context, we are not asking "how lucky *are we*?" We are saying: "How lucky *are we*." It is rhetorical, an expression, a statement of the obvious. It is not a question. For there is no question about it.

If anyone was asking, however, the answer would be: very lucky. To live in this Great Southern Land is to be kissed passionately on the mouth by fate. We have democracy, peace, the beach, pavlova. There's Roy and HG, the W.S Cox Plate, the beer garden, the black

box flight recorder, all-leaping kangaroos called Big Reds, and the ghost of the great thoroughbred racehorse Kingston Town. Australia? We have it going on.

And we have, of course, the great game of golf that we play in our highly agreeable weather. Our golf courses are so good and plentiful that, were they in other countries, they'd be sold exclusively to American executives with pockets full of muscular loot. Here, we call that Narooma. Or The Coast. Or Port Fairy on the Great Ocean Road. Or [enter the well-conditioned, much-loved, top-value,

accessible, crackerjack track within an hour's drive of you here].

All of which is inspiration for the Great Southern Loop chronicled here. Because, on our doorstep, pretty much everywhere, is world-class golf with fine, functional, adjacent accommodation. And if there's ever been a better argument for the four-day working week, it's a long weekend of golf on a loop – three nights, four rounds, eat and drink for Australia.

Our 858km adventure begins heading south out of Sydney Town, past The Shire, past the



Royal National Park, down the Bulli Pass, past Wollongong, Dapto and Albion Park, and into Shell Cove and the fine and fun public track known as **The Links Shell Cove**.

Opened in 2004 as Shellharbour Links, it was launched by the Italian man who knocked over Tiger Woods 4-and-2 in the 1997 Ryder Cup at Valderrama and who ran second in a play-off to John Daly in the 1995 Open Championship, Constantino Rocca.

It was privately owned until 2008 and has had its share of machinations as to who pays the bills for maintenance of its kikuyu fairways and bentgrass greens. But under the stewardship of the local council – smart enough to build perhaps the south coast's best beer garden overlooking the 10th tee and 18th green – the Links appears in rude health.

It's a really good, fun track. Open and interesting, it's equal part holes strong enough to test good players in the wind, fun enough for the 18-marker to bop their way to a bogey round.

We begin on a par-5 – 494metres from the tips – which starts with a wide fairway and becomes progressively narrower as you approach the green, with a big pond left and a hazard over the back. It's a fun hole with good dollops of risk and reward. The second is a long and strong, slightly uphill 162metre par-3 with the same pond left. The third is another par-3, this time 169m over another pond with a false-fronted green that propels everything back towards the drink.

It gets friendlier. I like the seventh: an uphill par-4, dual fairways separated by a creek, green perpendicular to your approach shot. I was impressed with and tested by the par-4s at 10, 12, 13 and 16: strong, fun holes traversing interesting routes and asking golfers to pick Tiger lines or less heroic if strategic bailouts.

The penultimate hole is perhaps the Links' signature: an index-3 par-5; it's 494m, bulbous in parts, a long and strong dog-leg right that feeds up to a small green. It's three good golf shots to hit in regulation. The last is a par-5 back to the clubhouse and the promise of a

cleanser in said excellent beer garden.

After reasoning that it would be rude otherwise, we enjoy a schooner before heading off, southbound again for 90 minutes and do not play **Gerringong, Shoalhaven Heads, Nowra** and **Mollymook Hilltop**, though you could certainly sub any of these worthies in on a loop such as this.

Instead, we're into the excellent beach holiday burgh of Mollymook, and the renowned Bannisters Restaurant, Rick Stein's seafood adventure house where we enjoy oysters, scallops, mussels and steamed whole Ulladulla snapper with soy, ginger, sesame oil, crispy garlic and shallots, because it would have been rude not to. All of this is washed down with two bottles of chilled pinot gris that our pilot – he who shot the poorest score at Shell Cove, an excellent way of designating drivers on tour – is miffed to not imbibe.

There follows a leisurely 90-minute cruise down the Princes Highway – bypassing, sadly, **Catalina Country Club** – before we're into the beachside burgh of Narooma, home to whales and fur seals and Justin Hemmes' latest adventure in posh pubs in the bush. We check-in to one of the fine AirBnBs that have sprung up around Narooma's surprising ascension into cool, and dine at Hemmes' reimagined pub, Lynch's Narooma. And it is very good.

Up early the next day we head out to the jewel of the Eurobodalla, **Narooma GC**, with its famous outward holes with dramatic vistas, heroic carries over stunning chasms, its inwards holes in the forested hinterlands, it's 18th hole with views of whales leaping in the sea. It's some sort of golf course, and a staple of our Top-100 rankings.

As one of our judges, Ashley Clinch, says: "Narooma's holes closest to the cliffs are what it is known for, with Hogan's Hole, the par-3 3rd, at the top of the list. But the holes in the hinterland are extremely well done. Narooma is a beautiful layout that provides all players with fun challenges. In my opinion, it gets



MOSS VALE



LINKS SHELL COVE





NAROOMA

near-top marks for condition ... the crew here must work 24-7."

After lunch at the evocatively named The Oyster Farmers Daughter Oyster Bar, our crew is back up the Princes Highway before turning left past Batemans Bay and stopping in at an old favourite of many South Coast trippers, the Steampacket Hotel, where we enjoy a couple of cleansing ales and some post-golf bet-reckoning.

And we could sit there all afternoon, but onwards we roll; bravely, selflessly, up the winding Clyde Mountain, through the historic-with-cracking-old-bakeries towns of Braidwood and Bungendore, and into hotel digs in the bar- and restaurant-full region of Braddon, Canberra's crack at a Surry Hills or New Farm in Brisbane. We drink at Bentspoke, eat at Corella, wonder how long all of this has been going on.

Royal Canberra has been going on since 1913, when locals created a nine-holer at Acton before King George V granted it "Royal" status by virtue of he being the king. *I dub thee Royal*. The course was flooded – well, submerged forever – in 1964 when they dammed the Molonglo River and created Lake Burley Griffin. So they upped stumps to the Westbourne Woods Arboretum. And 60 years later, it's 36th in our bi-annual Top-100 course rankings.

Now, while we could easily have found excellent golf at **Federal, Gold Creek, Queanbeyan, Murrumbidgee, Gungahlin Lakes** and a couple other local ones including **Fairbairn** near the airport, there can be only one on a 858km long weekend loop, and that one, this time around, is the pristine and artisan-cut Royal Canberra, by the banks



NAROOMA

of Lake Burley Griffin and the Governor General's place in Yarralumla.

Gee, it's good.

Royal Canberra today is 27 holes with three 18-hole loops – Westbourne (1-18), Yarralumla (10-27) and Brindabella (19-10). Commander John Harris designed the original 18 before the crack firm of Ogilvy, Clayton and Mead reimagined it with an ethos not to the taste of those who wander arboretums. RC had its issues with inconsistent fairway grass, but they have since relaid fairways with Santa Ana couch and it's looking mint once again.

Elsewhere, the nine holes "out the back", with views of the Brindabella ranges, were constructed by Thomson, Wolveridge and Perrett in 1997, and aim up very well today.

It's a slightly different feel from the rest of the place on this more open, less-wooded nine, but it's as pure a putting surface as there is in, well, Australia. And, while it is a private golf course, if you're on a tour, get in touch with the GM and tell them we sent you.

After a fine lunch on some outdoor trestle tables at the Canberra Yacht Club – where, again, we might have stayed many hours – we're selflessly up the road past Lake George, the oddly named town of Collector, and Goulburn's famous Big Merino, before cruising into the Southern Highlands town of Moss Vale, and the historic Dormie House.

Moss Vale GC is 123 years old and Dormie House is 91 years old and is the recent beneficiary of \$2.1 million of club members'

WELCOME TO ROYAL CANBERRA GOLF CLUB

Royal Canberra Golf Club, long regarded as one of Australia's premier golfing destinations, has recently completed its transition to Santa Ana couch fairways on the Westbourne Course — a move that has further elevated the playing experience on what was already a stellar course.

The new fairways deliver a more consistent surface year-round, with improved resilience in Canberra's unique climate. Golfers now enjoy tighter lies and superior playability, complemented by the course's renowned conditioning and world-class layout.

Adding to this excellence, Royal Canberra is home to the **OCM-designed Westbourne Course**, offering a modern architectural contrast that complements the historic championship layout. Together, the two courses provide golfers with variety, strategy, and an unrivalled standard of presentation.

Whilst Royal Canberra is proudly a members' course, with a current waitlist for membership, there remains a limited opportunity for green fee players. For small tour groups, this offers the rare chance to experience golf at its premier level — a beautifully presented, championship-standard club steeped in history and prestige.

Royal Canberra offering not only a first-class course but also a truly memorable playing experience.

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course in Australia"**
— *Gary Player*



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funds which have gone into renovating its 30 rooms. As an asset for a golf club going forward, it's hard to beat. The restaurant is great. There's a warm and homely feel. They'll set the place up for you and your pals, leave the Shotz room open all night, with a fridge, while the putting competitions outside near the golf-ball-shaped firepit are all-time good fun.

And the golf? Like a hit in Little England. Surry, perhaps. Or Kent. Deciduous trees, pointy pines, poplars, weeping willows, oaks with light-yellow plumage, and, in the spring, many and various blossoms. And through all this splash of colour weaves the 5431m, par-71 track which has hosted WPGA of Australasia Tour events and today hosts a popular PGA Legends Tour Pro-Am.

Again, the golf at **Mount Broughton, Bowral, Mittagong** and **Gibraltar** could have subbed in here, or we even may have travelled another 30 minutes east past Fitzroy Falls and had a hit at **Kangaroo Valley**. The Southern Highlands is not known as a "destination" region as the Gold Coast, Hunter Valley or Mornington Peninsula are. But it should be.

MV's greens? Fast. You don't want to be above the pin or you'll have to breathe on putts to sneak up on the hole. There's a heroic drop from the back tee of the par-5 fourth. There's slightly dog-legging par-4s that complement each other from 7-10 and 11. I like the short, downhill par-4 13th and the longer, stronger, uphill par-4 14th. The 15th is a long and strong par-4, the 16th a 190m par-3, while 17 (par-5) and 18 (par-4) will test your game and nerve if you happen to have lunch riding upon the result.

You should be so lucky. 🍷

TRAVEL NOTES

LOCATION: Shell Cove, Narooma, Southern Highlands (all NSW), Canberra (ACT).

HOW TO GET THERE: Shell Cove is a 90-minute drive south of Sydney Airport on the Princes Highway. Narooma is another three hours from there. Canberra is a three-hour drive up the Kings Highway via the Clyde Mountain and Braidwood. Moss Vale is an easy 90-minute drive up the Federal (23) and Hume (31) Highways.

GREEN FEES: The Links Shell Cove – \$45 (18 holes, midweek), \$55 (weekends). Narooma GC – \$67 (18 holes, includes competition fee). Royal Canberra - contact club General Manager, price on application; Moss Vale GC – \$55 (18 holes, midweek), \$65 (weekends).

WEBSITES - GOLF: linksshellcove.com.au; naroomagolf.com.au; royalcanberra.com.au; mossvalegolfclub.com.au.

WEBSITES - EAT & DRINK: Bannisters bannisters.com.au; Lynch's Narooma merivale.com/venues/lynchs-narooma; The Oyster Farmers Daughter Oyster Bar theoysterfarmersdaughter.com.au; The Steampacket Hotel Nellingen steampackethotelnellingen.com.au; Bentspoke Brewery Braddon bentspokebrewing.com.au; Corella corellabar.com.au; Canberra Yacht Club canberrayc.com; Dormie House dormiehouse.com.au.





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Perched atop the breathtaking cliffs of the NSW South Coast, Narooma Golf Club is a golfer's paradise and a premier destination for events and celebrations. With accolades that speak volumes about its excellence, the club is ranked as the #1 Public Access Course in NSW/ACT and #9 among Australia's 50 Favourite Courses, as voted by the public. Renowned for its superior conditioning and thoughtful design tweaks, Narooma Golf Club offers an unparalleled golfing experience.

A Golfer's Dream

Nestled between the stunning Pacific Ocean and lush inland forests, Narooma Golf Club provides a unique blend of coastal beauty and challenging gameplay. The course's front nine holes offer a links-style layout with wide, undulating fairways that hug the ocean cliffs, while the back nine meanders through a serene forest setting, complete with a tranquil lake that adds a strategic challenge. Among its many highlights is the iconic 3rd hole, known as "Hogan's Hole," where players must navigate a dramatic shot over the ocean to reach a cliff-top green.



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THE PREMIER GOLFING DESTINATION IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

travel

Brilliant BARNBOUGLE

LOST FARM AND BOUGLE RUN.
(PHOTO: BRENDAN JAMES)

Tasmania has quietly become Australia's golfing frontier. From the world-class links of Barnbougle Dunes to Seven Mile Beach, this island state offers top-tier courses, stunning scenery, fine dining, and local wine, making every trip an unforgettable experience.

WORDS BY MATT CLEARY

Tasmania, as you may have noticed, is the land of “build it and they will come”. And on the back of the ethos, almost while we weren’t looking, Tasmania could have, in the next few years, potentially, subjectively, in the way of these things, five of Australia’s top-10 golf courses. Tasmania has it going on.

Mat Goggin’s Seven Mile Beach in

Hobart is set to wow the world. Think: New Zealand’s beauties at Te Arai Links and Tara Iti. Rankings are subjective – but “7MB” is expected to be instant top-five with a bullet. Goggin’s other one at nearby Five Mile Beach is unlikely to be Bungendore-by-the-sea.

Consider the island state’s island, King Island. A rural region with three village hubs and fairly scant infrastructure which is

home to the wonderful and fun Ocean Dunes and the extraordinary, even jaw-dropping Cape Wickham.

And there, on the north-east tip of the state, 70 minutes from Launceston, on the dunes on the coast of a potato and Angus beef cattle property, is the inspiration for them all, *Barnbougle*, which is actually three courses, but known by just one, as we might know *Pele*





THE FISHING AND BEACH TOWN OF BRIDPORT (BACKGROUND) HAS NEVER BEEN THE SAME SINCE BARNBOUGLE TURNED UP. (PHOTO: BRENDAN JAMES)

and Rory and DKLillee.

Barnbougle, or more accurately, the original 18-hole links called Barnbougle Dunes, is the beauty that begat Tasmania's – Australia's – "build it and they will come" movement. When a team featuring 24-year-old Greg Ramsay convinced non-golfer and "spud farmer" Richard Sattler that the non-arable dunes land that bordered his property could be a course on par with the famous links of Ireland and Scotland, what people thought possible changed forever.

Our architecture man, Mike Clayton, who co-designed Barnbougle Dunes with Tom Doak and co-designed, with his CDP partner Mike DeVries, the first of Goggin's courses at Seven Mile Beach, once tweeted that building great golf courses in areas considered remote was "unimaginable 25 years ago."

"It makes Richard Sattler one of the most significant figures in Australian golf. People forget everyone told him he was mad to build in Bridport," according to Clayton.

But build Sattler did, and come they have, from everywhere. Barnbougle Dunes' immediate insertion high into world Top-100 course rankings meant that those time-rich dandies who notch top golf courses as bird-watchers add new "lifers" to their "life list", discovered that Tasmania wasn't a country

and booked flights to Launceston. And the fishing town of Bridport was never the same. Barnbougle today is the region's largest employer.

Greg Norman was among the sceptics. Even after it was built he wasn't that great a fan. *It takes 70 minutes from Launceston? There is no*

airstrip or helicopter pad? Things can get bitchy at the business end of the architecture and design game, particularly after it was revealed in court that Ramsay had once mooted that Norman's design company get the gig.

Clayton and Doak were given the task,



AUSTRALIA HAS VERY FEW CLASSIC LINKS COURSES. BARNBOUGLE HAS TWO OF THE WORLD'S BEST. (PHOTO: BRENDAN JAMES)

“
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AND THEY WILL COME'
MOVEMENT.
”

however – though they never thought they would not, according to Clayton.

“What was wild was Greg Ramsay assured us we had the job, and Tom had flown out from the US to see the site. There was never any question, in our mind, we were doing it,” Clayton says.

“Then [Norman's then partner] Bob Harrison told me he'd been down there – and it came out later in the court case that Greg was potentially going to be involved. But Richard always seemed committed to us.

“In fairness to Greg, almost no-one thought it'd work. Not anyone I spoke to. But they had no idea how good the course was going to be. I always thought it'd work and so did Tom. But it took [course developer] Mike Keiser to convince Richard. Mike took Richard to Bandon [in Oregon] and showed him how to do it: more than one course and accommodation.”

Thus, today, Barnbougles has three golf courses and fine accommodation. There is the Dunes, there is Lost Farm – 18 holes and two very fun, ever-playable “spares” – and there is Bougle Run, a funky 14-holer with 12 par-3s and two par-4s. Because why not?

They've also built an airstrip and certain-sized planes may land and whisk golfers off to King Island to play Cape Wickham and eat crayfish in Currie in a restaurant that's a hut on the rocks that doesn't have staff. True story.

Barnbougles's three courses ... we won't describe every hole. Google images is your friend. There's so much theatre in the whole shebang. So much fun. The ball rolls and rolls, and rolls. Many professionals, with their cynical, hard eyes focused only on the potential for a hole to make them money, don't like that, necessarily. Don't like the par-3 14th on the Dunes with its Himalayas-style green, for instance. But who cares? They don't own golf. Punters love it. It's a cracking, super-fun hole.

There are show-stoppers all over the Dunes. The short par-4 fourth on the Dunes with a fairway bunker the size of a sperm whale. The par-3 seventh known as “Tom's Little Devil” could be wedge or four-iron, depending on the wind. I like the short par-4 13th – up and over a ridge, slight dog-leg right; you can bomb driver for glory or hit hybrid to a hundred out.

Over on Lost Farm, I like the run of three through seven which is: fun, short par-4; “easy”, picturesque par-3; long, strong, index-



SUGGESTED ITINERARY

On the West Tamar Highway by the banks of the River Tamar, on one of several tributary paths heading northwards to Bridport, is one of many Tasmanian businesses making hay from the phenomena of golfers traveling to the great and famous golf land known as Barnbougles.

Tamar Ridge, makers of very tasty cold climate pinot noir, have a cellar door that, according to the internet, is a 70-minute drive to Barnbougles Dunes. Another industry that's made hay on said traveling golfer phenom, is transportation. There is a steady convoy of vans, piloted and self-driven, heading in and out of Launceston Airport. Barnbougles has their own trusted supplier.

And for a per-head tariff of perhaps \$50, you and your posse could take a van to Tamar Ridge, enjoy a long lunch for the ages, taste some of the great reserve pinot noir, and return to the north on, what one could only assume, a very merry trip home, perhaps with a stop for a cleanser at the Rosevears Hotel.

Long lunch for the ages? On a mighty board the friendly staff will proffer

your crew with Tasmanian Cheeses, quince paste, fruits, meats, pickled figs (delicious), and lavosh. And they will top up your glasses with their pinot noir range including the delicious reserve one, and cold climate sparkling wines.

Meanwhile, if it is your wont, a master of wine can explain why the soil and climate of Tasmania is perfect for reserve pinot noir and sparkling wine.

Not saying this should be your itinerary, but this should be your itinerary.

DAY ONE: Arrive Launceston. Travel to Barnbougles. Play Barnbougles Dunes. Enjoy delicious meal in either Barnbougles Dunes or Lost Farm restaurants.

DAY TWO: Enjoy mighty breakfast with view of Bass Strait. Play Barnbougles Lost Farm. Travel to Tamar Ridge. Enjoy lunch while tasting cool-climate reserve pinot noir and sparkling wine. Return to Barnbougles on merry bus via cleansing ale at historic Rosevears Hotel.

DAY THREE: Enjoy mighty breakfast with view of Bass Strait. Play Barnbougles Dunes or Lost Farm or Bougle Run. Travel to airport. Plan next trip.





LOST FARM. GLAD THEY FOUND IT.
(PHOTO: BRENDAN JAMES)

one par-4 around a mighty hillock; quality par-3 to undulating green; strong par-4 over or around a mid-fairway hump the shape of Uluru (because, again, why not?) which then bends right and up to a back-to-front-sloping green.

Eight and nine are crackers, too, and the back nine is Luna Park: upwards, downwards, sideways; fairways like polo fields; complex greens; bunkers more strategic than Rommel. Maybe not Rommel. But pretty strategic bunkering. Regardless, there is, honestly, 38 cracking, fun holes on the two “major” courses, Dunes and Lost Farm. And Bougle Run is like a sticky dessert wine after a pair of “big” cab-savs.

But you be the judge. Google Bougle, if you will. Check out the photos. The courses photograph quite beautifully, even sensually in “golden hour” light. Our former Editor Brendan James does things with his drone that you could describe as borderline art. Scratch “borderline”. You could frame these babies, hang them in the pool room, and gaze wistfully.

Yet it’s the whole experience that sets Barnbougles apart from other Australian “destination” courses. For a golf trip with a

“
THERE’S SO MUCH THEATRE IN THE WHOLE SHEBANG. SO
MUCH FUN. THE BALL ROLLS AND ROLLS, AND ROLLS.
”

crew, it is best-practice in this country, in my opinion, on a number of levels.

For one, it’s world class and affordable at about \$150 per round, depending on the season. The same course in Oregon, Florida or the Monterey Peninsula, even Scotland and Ireland since Americans have flooded the market with their dollars, could be – true story – one thousand Australian dollars.

And if it’s a public course and the public – read: Australians for whom top-class golf is not just a hobby for elites – is your major market, it makes sense not to alienate them with tariffs framed at those carrying muscular US and Euro currencies. Mr Sattler and his family know where they come from. They know their people. And they are no mugs.

The Sports Bar at Lost Farm is a magnificent 19th hole. So is the clubhouse at the Dunes. Both are understated,

comfortable, fit-for-purpose. Both are – and this can be a thing lost on some courses – *welcoming*. Barnbougles is a public-facility without members and competitions. The ethos of private, member-only, “country club” affectation would never wash in these parts – culturally or commercially.

The accommodation is fine and functional, and again, great value. Both restaurants do magnificent rib-eye steak, scallops, oysters. There is local cold-climate pinot noir. There is a view from the restaurant over Anderson Bay and Bass Strait, and the downhill par-3 15th hole at Lost Farm that would rank among the world’s greatest pre-golf breakfast views.

But we’ve waxed lyrically enough. Bottom line is this: if you haven’t been, you should go. And if you have been, I know I don’t need to tell you, you should go again. They didn’t build it for nothing. 🍷



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travel

FABULOUS GOLF IN *Cyprus*

AERIAL VIEW OF APHRODITE
HILLS GOLF COURSE. (PHOTO:
APHRODITE HILLS RESORT)

At Europe's most south-easterly point is the mountainous island of Cyprus, boasting an attractive mix of history, culture and gastronomy, plus some fabulous golf courses.

WORDS BY ANDREW MARSHALL

There is something extra special about playing golf on islands. Due to their compact size, islands are self-contained, easy to get around and the

courses are inevitably situated close or next to the coast with sea views. A good case in point is Cyprus – the largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia,

where a varied quartet of quality courses are located within a 30-minute drive of the attractive harbour town of Paphos, situated on the south-west coast.



But there's much more to Cyprus and Paphos than playing golf. In addition to the usual beach culture, water sports, bars and nightlife, how about magnificent archaeological sites, exploring scenic wine routes, the spectacular Troodos Mountains and a rich local gastronomy? With over 300 days of unspoilt sunshine per year and a maximum low temperature of around 16 degrees centigrade in January, Cyprus is regarded as having one of the healthiest climates in the world, making it an excellent all-year-round destination. So, without further ado, let's get started with the four golf courses ...

MINTHIS GOLF CLUB

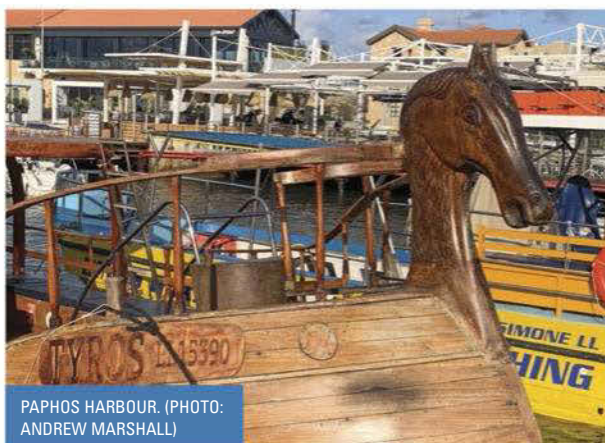
"The signature hole is the excellent 150-yard par-3 15th, with its island green, which will certainly get you thinking about club selection especially when the wind is blowing," says Golf Club Manager Adam Davison. "Another great hole is the newly designed par-5 10th, played from an elevated tee, where a well-struck tee shot is required over the ravine to find the generous fairway, leaving a blind second shot played through the valley to a cunningly angled green."

These are just two of the memorable holes at Minthis Golf Club, a beautiful and demanding golf course that winds its way past a 12th-Century monastery, interspersed with vineyards, orchards and olive groves with breathtaking views of the Troodos Mountains and beyond. Designed by legendary golf architect Donald Steel in 1994, with major upgrades by respected course designers Mackenzie and Erbert between 2017-2020, the course is an excellent example of their design philosophy which golf courses should fit in harmoniously with their surroundings.

The Minthis Golf Resort is situated on one of the most celebrated wine routes on the island, and it was only natural that the resort produce its own wine. Located by the monastery, the vines are harvested, produced and bottled with the help of the award-winning winery Tsangarides in Paphos. Around 3000 bottles are produced each year, which are available for purchase from the resort. Visit the contemporary clubhouse for a 19th hole tippie, and enjoy a glass of wine or perhaps a cold beer while discussing your round. www.minthisresort.com

SECRET VALLEY GOLF RESORT

"It's a tight front nine with a few risk reward holes, so you don't always need to use driver," advises Course Marshall Robby Robinson, on the tee of the 266-metre par-4 first hole at the Secret Valley Golf Resort, located 18km east of Paphos. The course is aptly named with a real sense of seclusion, where for most of the time you are not aware of other golfers out on the course. Similar to a links out-and-back layout, the holes of the front nine weave down one side of a rocky river gorge lined with lush,



PAPHOS HARBOUR. (PHOTO: ANDREW MARSHALL)





MINTHIS' 11TH TEE
AND CYPRESS AVENUE.
(PHOTO: MINTHIS RESORT)

Mediterranean flora towards the sea, before the back nine runs back up the other side of the valley en route to the clubhouse.

Originally opened in 1996 and redesigned in collaboration with multiple Major champion Tony Jacklin, the course utilises the steep hillside terrain for spectacular tee locations and vistas. Secret Valley is arguably the most challenging of the four courses in the Paphos area, and it's a real thinker's layout, requiring a strategic approach to many of the holes. Also home to a Troon Golf Academy, the practice facilities here are top notch, boasting a 300-metre driving range (with grass tees and covered bays), three practice greens (one each for putting, chipping and pitching), two practice bunkers, plus a floodlit 3-hole loop for evening play. www.secretvalleygolfresort.com

ELÉA GOLF CLUB

"Known as Sir Nick Faldo's 'Mediterranean Masterpiece,' Eléa Golf Club is a stunning championship course set against the breathtaking backdrop of Cyprus' natural beauty," says Golf Manager Andre Friedrich. Located only a five-minute drive from Paphos and close to five-star hotels and resorts, the course meanders over an elevated hillside where the deep blue of the Mediterranean contrasts with the earthy hues of the terrain. The fairways are lined with a variety of native flora, ancient carob and olive trees, and an array of wild herbs and flowers, with weathered outcrops of limestone which contrast against the dark green paspalum and semi-rough grass.

Playable by golfers of all abilities, the course embodies Faldo's design philosophy,

emphasising thoughtful shot making and precision over sheer power, but there are still plenty of challenging holes. On the long par-5 2nd you need to negotiate a dry stream bed before encountering one of Faldo's course design trademarks - plenty of bunkers positioned like minefields before and around the green. The par-5 9th before the Halfway House is a great risk-reward hole where you must decide whether to lay up, or go for the green situated perilously close to a lake. Eléa Golf Club, with its own distinctive style and character, adds to the diversity of the golf courses in the Paphos area. www.eleestate.com

APHRODITE HILLS

"As the only PGA National in Cyprus, Aphrodite Hills offers a world-class



APHRODITE HILLS GOLF COURSE.
(PHOTO: APHRODITE HILLS RESORT)

WHERE TO STAY

ATHENA ROYAL BEACH HOTEL:

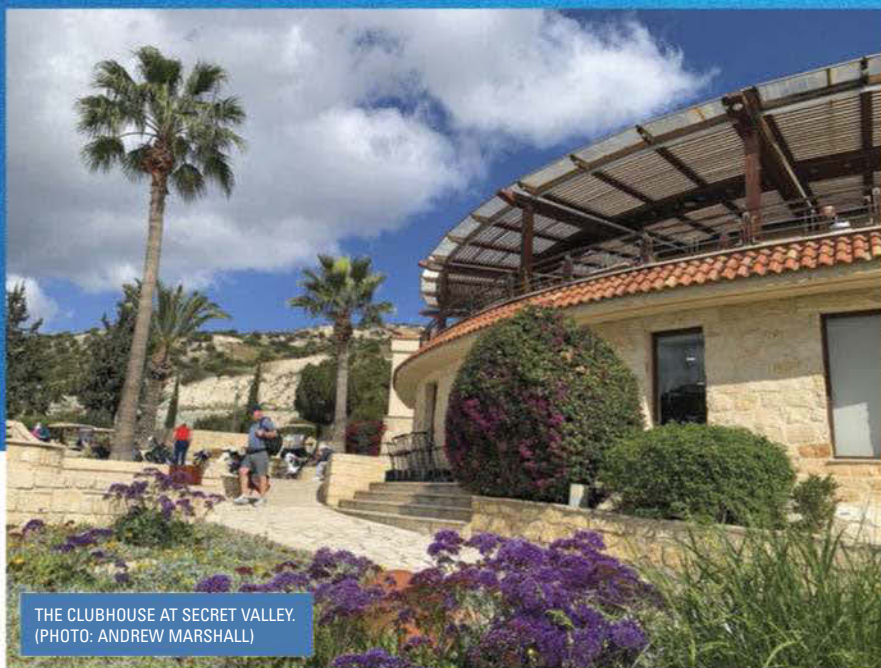
Nicely situated 1.5km from Paphos town centre, this stylish contemporary beach front hotel is exclusively designed for discerning couples and adults looking for a peaceful environment in lush garden surroundings by the coast. There is a choice of accommodation options from 1-bedroom suites to upgraded Elite class rooms, and five restaurants with the highlight being the delightful seafront Aphrodite a la carte restaurant. The Athena Royal Beach Hotel boasts a wide range of leisure facilities including outdoor pools, tennis courts, outdoor bowling green and the Elixir Spa with indoor swimming pool and sauna. From the hotel, you can walk along the beach promenade, which

stretches all the way to the harbour area and Paphos Castle.

www.athenaroyal-cbh.com

MINTHIS RESORT: Offers the option to base yourself at one golf course while travelling to play the others in the Paphos area. The high-quality one or two-bedroom fully equipped suites are ideal for families, couples or golfing groups, and each suite has a private terrace, veranda or courtyard offering stunning mountain or golf course views. Other facilities at the resort include fine restaurant dining, an outdoor infinity pool, and a wellness spa featuring studios with wet and dry therapies, indoor pool, yoga deck, hydrotherapy, sauna, private reflection courtyards and a gym.

www.minthisresort.com



THE CLUBHOUSE AT SECRET VALLEY.
(PHOTO: ANDREW MARSHALL)

championship experience in one of the most spectacular settings in Europe. From its dramatic coastal views to its immaculate design, the course challenges golfers of all levels while delivering unforgettable moments on every hole," says Miguel Girbes, Director of Sports at the Aphrodite Hills Resort. This award-winning Cabell B. Robinson design runs over two plateaus of high ground and cliff tops right next door to Secret Valley, and features manicured fairways of lush Bermuda grass, large tiered greens and challenging bunkers. As evidence of its quality, Aphrodite Hills hosted back-to-back European Tour events won by Callum Shinkwin in 2020 and Robert Macintyre in 2021.

A golf buggy is included in the green fee at Aphrodite Hills, and it won't take you long

to realise why, as after the second green, you take a 1km drive into and up the other side of a vast gorge that separates the two sections of the course. There is another substantial buggy drive between holes 6 and 7, which is the start of two standout holes. The par-3 7th, played over a dramatic ravine, is one of the most sensational holes you will find not just in Cyprus, but anywhere, and will live long in the memory after playing it. This is followed by the excellent 8th; a shortish par-4 played from an elevated tee towards a green situated on the edge of the plateau with a backdrop of the azure Mediterranean Sea.

www.aphroditehills.com

ATTRactions AND PLACES OF INTEREST

With its air of holiday charm mixed with ancient history, one of the main drawcards is Paphos (also known as Pafos). The newer part of town (known as Kato Paphos) focuses around an attractive harbour whose picturesque open-air seafood restaurants line a quayside of colourful fishing boats and pleasure craft presided over by Paphos Castle, originally built as a Byzantine fort to protect the harbour.

Situated a few kilometres inland is the old part of town known as Ktima, where you'll find winding cobbled streets with traditional tavernas and fine examples of medieval, Ottoman and Neoclassical architecture demonstrating the island's rich colonial history. Well worth a visit is the Paphos District Archaeological Museum (43 Grivas Dighenis Street), which houses an attractive



collection of antiquities from the Paphos region dating from the Neolithic Age to 1700 AD. Another place of interest is “Hani of Ibrahim” – a tastefully restored 1860s building now hosting studios, artist’s workshops and artisan stores, a good example being “The Place” which sells award-winning wines, extra virgin olive oil, carob syrup and honey.

In 2017, Paphos (along with Aarhus in Denmark) was awarded the accolade “European Capital of Culture”, due in no small part to the Archaeological Park of Kato Paphos – a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980. The extensive park (still under excavation) includes sites and monuments from the 4th AD to the Middle Ages, while most remains date to the Roman period. A major focal point of the finds are the intricately detailed mosaic floors of four Roman villas (the Houses of Dionysos, Theseus, Aion and Orpheus) which depict various scenes from Greek Mythology – some of the best-preserved mosaics in the world.

The Archaeological Park of Kato Paphos includes other important monuments such

ELEA GOLF CLUB. (PHOTO: ANDREW MARSHALL)



as the Saranta Kolones (ruined medieval fortress), Hellenistic Roman Theatre and the astonishing necropolis - the Tombs of the Kings. The underground tombs and chambers, dating back to the 4th Century BC, are carved out of solid rock or dug into the ground, with some examples featuring Doric pillars and frescoed walls. Situated 25km east of Paphos is A Petra tou Romiou or Aphrodite’s Rock (birthplace of Aphrodite), where according

to legend, Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, rose from the waves at this picturesque coastal spot featuring rugged sea stacks and sculpted rocks.

GASTRONOMY

From hearty meat dishes and speciality cheeses to ancient wines and extra virgin olive oils, Cypriot cuisine is an exotic blend of Greek and Middle Eastern cultures. Here’s a selection of must-try dishes, drinks and traditional produce ...

Meze: These are a variety of small dishes made for sharing and a typical line-up could be meat and rice-stuffed vine

leaves (dolmades), grilled halloumi and juicy green olives. Other foods to feature could be wine-stewed octopus, pork marinated in red wine and coriander (afelia), spicy meatballs (kleftedes) and smoked sausage (loukanika).

Stifado: This delicious dish is comfort food at its best. Think slowly braised beef, caramelised onions, and plenty of herbs in a ruby red wine served with lemon potatoes and crusty farmhouse bread.



PETRA TOU ROMIOU OR APHRODITE'S ROCK, THE BIRTHPLACE OF APHRODITE. (PHOTO: VISIT PAPHOS)



TUNA AND SQUID DISHES AT THEO'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANT, PAPHOS HARBOUR. (PHOTO: ANDREW MARSHALL)

Olive Oil: Olive oil production on Cyprus dates back to ancient times and today remains an important aspect of Cyprus' cultural heritage, with locals still producing their own oil using traditional methods passed down through generations.

Carob Syrup: Carob syrup making is another traditional practice in Cyprus, where the ripe carob pods are boiled, mashed and then simmered to produce a thick, sweet syrup which is used in a variety of dishes and desserts. Carob syrup has antioxidant properties and helps lower cholesterol levels and balance blood sugar levels. The annual Pegeia Carob Festival is held in the square of the famous church of Agios Georgios Pegeia in Paphos every September.

Halloumi: Granted PDO status in 2021, halloumi is a sheep and goat's milk cheese known for its mild, distinctive flavour, and has the unique ability to withstand high temperatures, softening to a chewy texture on the grill without falling apart. For an insight into halloumi making, visit Sofia's Traditional House in the village of Letymvou (near Paphos). Email: sofiashouse1@gmail.com

Seafood: Being a Mediterranean island, you will find a wide range of seafood dishes on restaurant menus - from octopus, prawns, squid and cuttlefish, to whitebait, sea bass,

sea bream and many more. Like most Cypriot food, fish is traditionally roasted or grilled.

Wines: Cyprus wines and wine production is amongst the world's oldest and dates back to around 2000 BC. There are over 100 varieties of grapes cultivated in Cyprus, mainly around Limassol, the Paphos district and on the foothills of Mount Olympus. Amber in colour and honeyed in taste, Commandaria is a sweet dessert wine only produced in Cyprus. It is one of the oldest wines in the world. Legend has it that it was the tippie of choice of Richard the Lionheart. To learn more about the island's 5000-year history of wine, there are six wine routes to explore.

Zivania: This popular Cypriot brandy is made from grape pomace - solid pieces of grapes that remain after the juice has been pressed. Although high in alcohol content at 45 per cent, zivania is appreciated for its subtle notes of raisins and citrus.

Loukoumi: Also known as Turkish delight, these small, jelly-like cubes dusted with sugar are often served to guests during holidays and celebrations and typically paired with traditional Cypriot coffee. To learn how loukoumi and other traditional sweets are made, visit the family business Arsinoe Yeroskipos Delights, operating in Paphos since 1895.

WHERE TO EAT

THEO'S (Seafood Restaurant) – Apostolou Pavlou, Limanaki, Kato Paphos, Paphos.

PAGKRATIOS (Traditional tavern with live music) Ippokratous 11, 8010, Old Market, Paphos. www.pagkratios.com

GOLF CLUB RENTAL

Instead of taking your own golf clubs to Cyprus, consider using a golf club hire service such as **Clubstohire.com** with the following advantages: avoid the ever-increasing carriage costs charged by airlines to bring your own clubs, and avoid the hassle of transporting clubs to the airport and your own clubs being lost or damaged in transit. Typical prices for one-seven days' club rental are from €40 per-set per-week.

Note: One round of golf must be played at the Aphrodite Hills Golf Resort to avail of club hire at this location. For more information visit: www.clubstohire.com





learn

TIPS FROM THE GAME'S TOP PLAYERS & COACHES

HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS CATHERINE ZETA-JONES DURING THE ALL-STAR CELEBRITY MATCH AT THE BETHPAGE BLACK COURSE IN FARMINGDALE, NEW YORK IN LATE SEPTEMBER. (PHOTO: MIKE EGERTON/PA IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES)



SCAN HERE TO SEE
THIS TIP IN ACTION

RICKY PONTING'S CRICKET AND GOLF SWINGS HAVE MANY SIMILARITIES IN THEIR ACTION.



LIKE A GOLF SWING, WEIGHT FOR A THROW BEGINS ON THE BACK FOOT.



SHOHOI OTANI (TOP) AND DENNIS LILLEE TRANSFER WEIGHT THROUGH THEIR ACTION.



STEPH CURRY (ABOVE) AND SHANE WARNE ACCELERATE THROUGH THE BALL.

KEEP IT SIMPLE WITH FOUR SWING FUNDAMENTALS

BY

TOM LINSKEY

Founder, Director and Head Coach, Australian Golf Schools



During my career, I've had the opportunity to play golf with so many of Australia's great sports people – and they're all crazy about the game.

Formula One drivers, tennis players, cricketers, footballers; so many of them play golf every chance they get. Put it this way: the largest item of luggage carried on a cricket tour by the Australian team is their golf clubs.

What I've found in talking to these athletes is that the basic fundamentals of a golf swing apply to so many other sports as well.

I have broken it down to four immutable, fundamental laws.

The number-one law in all ball games is: *watch the ball*. Tennis players watch the ball on to the racquet. Cricketers watch the ball onto the bat. Whether they're kicking for goal, the line, or the posts, footballers focus totally on the ball.

The second law is that your weight goes *with the motion*.

If I'm throwing a ball, I start on my back foot, step forward, and throw. The power of the throw comes through the full body motion, not just the arm.

If I'm playing tennis, the weight goes onto the back foot before I step *into* the shot and hit it.

If I'm playing cricket, the same principle applies. If I want to hit a six, I'm stepping forward and swinging through as I go. The bowling action is a bit like a throw. You can't generate any velocity from just standing there and throwing your arm over. The power comes from fluidity and weight transfer.

In the golf swing, we rotate onto the back foot and then come through onto the front foot in balance.

The third law of all ball games is that, at the moment of contact, the hands, the club, the foot, the racquet – whatever is hitting the ball – must be *accelerating*.

Even if it's a six-inch putt, the putter should accelerate *through the ball*. If you stop at the ball, like a stabbing motion, quite often you miss. Whether I'm chipping, driving the ball, or flopping one out of the sand, I'm accelerating through the ball.

As we discussed in a previous lesson, the fastest point in the golf swing should be about 18 inches *after the ball*. The good players don't even think about hitting the ball. They swing from the top of the back swing to their follow-through, and they happen to swing through where the ball is. The ball happens to be in the way of their clubhead. They accelerate towards the target, and that's where the ball goes.

The fourth law is the most important: there are no more laws! All you have to do is watch the ball, get your weight going with the motion and accelerate through the ball to the target. Simple as that – don't make it any more complicated: watch ball, transfer weight, accelerate through and beyond the ball. 🏌️

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THE FIRST LAW OF ALL BALL SPORTS: WATCH THE BALL, AS PRACTISED BY CHAMPIONS (L-R) ASH BARTY, NICK DAICOS AND LIONEL MESSI

NO CHOKE: PRESSURE'S A PRIVILEGE, CHOOSE FAITH OVER FEAR

BY

CHRIS HYNES

Mindset coach, head teaching professional at Sanctuary Lakes and author of *Beyond The Fairways To Fulfilment*



Pressure in golf comes in many forms. It might show up as pre-round anxiety – using your current energy on an undesirable future outcome.

It might be first-tee jitters, when your hands shake as you try to tee the ball up, your body tightens like a python constricting around you, and you feel the judgment of every eye upon you.

It might be the back nine, especially the final few holes where the stakes feel highest. It could be standing over a short putt on the 18th green and watching it slide by to lose by a single.

If you've ever played competitive golf for anything worth winning, you've felt the manifestations of pressure. The key to coping with it is understanding it. And harnessing it.

So, why does it happen? There are many contributing factors, but the root cause is often that we attach the outcome of a shot, or even an entire round, to our personal value. When performance becomes a reflection of identity, pressure builds.

The truth, however, is that neither victory nor defeat define our worth. Few truly understand this, and that's why pressure so

often consumes us.

Anxiety is simply the by-product of leaving the present moment and projecting into a future outcome we cannot directly control. It often manifests physically as a racing heart, sweaty palms, tight muscles, or a dry mouth. From a psychological standpoint, this is your mind attempting to create certainty where there is none. According to Anthony Robbins' Six Core Needs model, certainty is a fundamental human need – but, in this context, it's being pursued in an ineffective way.

The answer lies in returning to the present moment. Tell yourself: "Right here, in this moment, I am safe." Then use simple anchors to regulate your body. Box breathing is an excellent tool: breathe in through the nose for four seconds, hold for four, exhale through the mouth for four, and hold again for four. Try pressing your toes into the ground, adding a small calf raise to connect with balance and shift attention away from negative outcomes.

For golfers specifically, nothing is more

powerful than a sound, pre-shot routine.

A consistent routine anchors you in the present, keeps your arousal level optimal, and allows you to enjoy both the moment and the challenge. After all, we practice and compete for the privilege of experiencing pressure. If you view it as a privilege rather than a burden, everything changes.

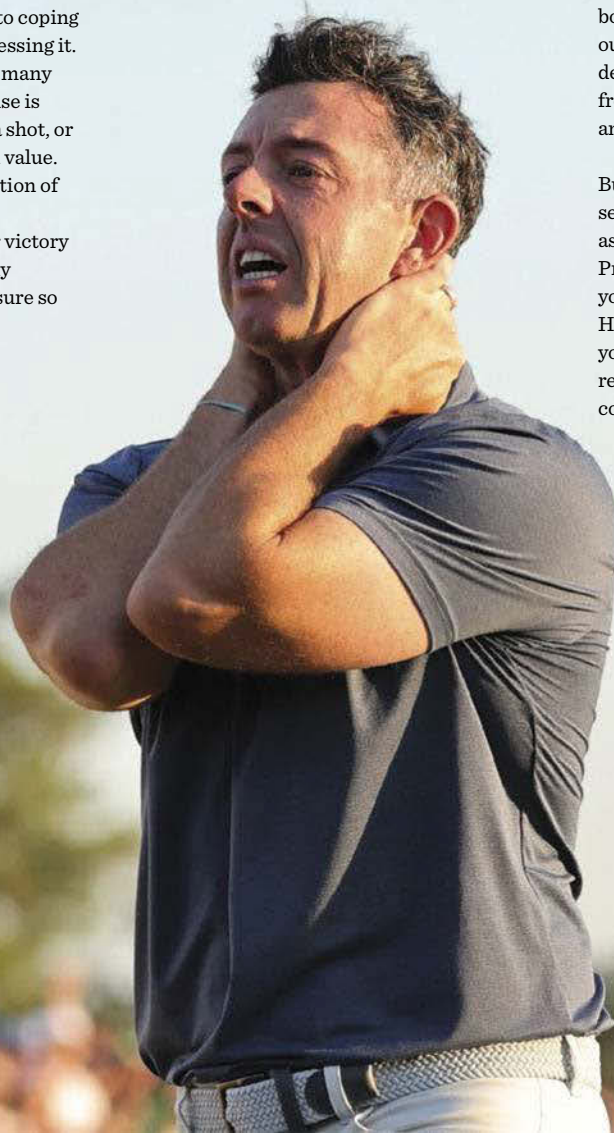
Perspective is key. The greatest athletes across all sports are those who free themselves from attaching their worth to outcomes. They love the challenge, embrace the nerves, and even welcome the opportunity to feel the intensity of competition.

So, the next time you find yourself overwhelmed by pressure, first reassure yourself that you are safe. Regulate your body back to its optimal state through calm breathing. Then commit fully to your pre-shot routine, focusing not on what could go wrong but on the desired outcome. Trust that your preparation has given you the capacity to hit the shot.

Above all, remember that faith and fear are both beliefs. Fear believes in an undesirable outcome; faith believes in the outcome you desire. One creates paralysis, the other creates freedom. Choose faith over fear, then smile, and swing.

Pressure will never disappear from golf. But when you learn to harness it, you stop seeing it as the enemy and start recognising it as a sign that you're in a meaningful moment. Pressure means you care. Pressure means you've earned the opportunity to compete. Handle it well, and you won't just improve your performance on course, you'll grow in resilience, confidence, and perspective off the course, too. 🏌️

WHEN YOUR PERFORMANCE BECOMES A REFLECTION OF YOUR IDENTITY, PRESSURE BUILDS.



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GOLF FIT

BACKSWING SWAY

Generally, a sound technique is also the most anatomically correct. Golfers who report pain from swinging a golf club are almost always finding positions that do not make for solid golf shots, and the 'sway' is a good example. We can define the sway as a backswing slide, laterally, away from the target. In technical terms it's a far cry from the more centred and rotational motion we would look for in the backswing; and besides causing a range of striking issues, it puts unwanted and dangerous strain through the trail hip and lower back. Here is an exercise that will help.

Always consult a qualified physician before starting any new fitness regimen, and stop at once if the exercise is causing you pain.

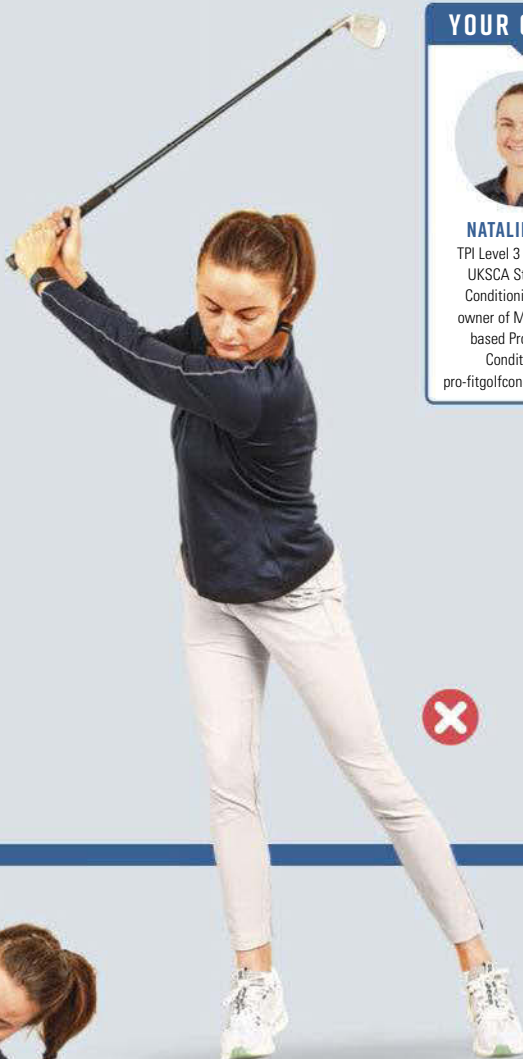
Very much a lateral drift, the sway sees the body remain very side-on to the target throughout the backswing. As we swing to the top, the square pelvis is increasingly at odds with any rotation through the chest and shoulders. This puts the trail hip and lower back in a vulnerable position. The sway can be the result of simply trying to get behind the ball; but it can also be caused by stiff or blocked hip joints, which stop the pelvis rotating in a safer and more efficient movement. Try this to loosen them off:

YOUR COACH



NATALIE LOWE

TPI Level 3 trainer and UKSCA Strength & Conditioning coach, owner of Manchester-based Pro-Fit Golf Conditioning
pro-fitgolfconditioning.com



1

Lie on your lead side, propping yourself on your lead forearm as shown. Bend your legs, stacking hips and shoulders on top of each other... but slide your trail knee forward a touch so half of it overhangs the lower knee. This will give your pelvis a feeling of tilting slightly forward. Place your trail hand on your hip. Take a deep breath... then let it go.

From there, lift your trail knee up as far as it will go. If your hip is very blocked, this might not be very far! Challenge this range of movement gently, bringing that trail knee down and up at a controlled and steady pace. You'll be tempted to pull the hip back to raise the knee further. Avoid this! It's just a trick to get around the key issue, which is tightness in the hip joint. Keep the hip in place, the pelvis tilted slightly forward, as the knee rises.

2



WORKLOAD

Try 10-12 reps, two or three times a week. Though we are focusing on trail hip/backswing mobility here, it makes sense to repeat the exercise and reps for your lead hip too. It'll help with both your throughswing and your general movement.

BUILD A BETTER SWING!

*You know you have a better swing in you.
Now, thanks to an innovative 21-day
Challenge created by PGA Master Coach
Scott Cranfield, you can find it.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB ATKINS

How would you describe a great golf swing? When I ask golfers this, the same adjectives pop up time and again – ‘flowing’, ‘confident’, ‘effortlessly powerful’. But when I ask them to describe their own swings, I get a very different list!

There’s no question the typical club player struggles to find the freedom, timing and coordination that appear to come so easily to the expert. We could spend all day debating why that is; but for a better use of our time, let’s focus on what we can do to get those desirable traits into your action.

My 21-day Challenge offers just that. It’s a chance for the struggling golfer to reset, to learn some new concepts and ideas that will allow them to replace that stuttering, uncertain, misfiring action with the kind of confident, flowing motion we all aspire to possess.

You’ll find full details of the 21-Day Challenge on the *TG* website and at scottcranfield.com. Sign up and you’ll get daily videos taking you through the process. But for now, I want to share with you the principles that underpin the Challenge. They will allow you to develop new movement patterns that work with the body’s natural anatomy to produce an assured, consistent, slick action... and you will also see how the swing you’ve always dreamed of possessing is well within your grasp. So let’s start with a simple image that sets up the entire reset and Challenge: a circle.

YOUR COACH

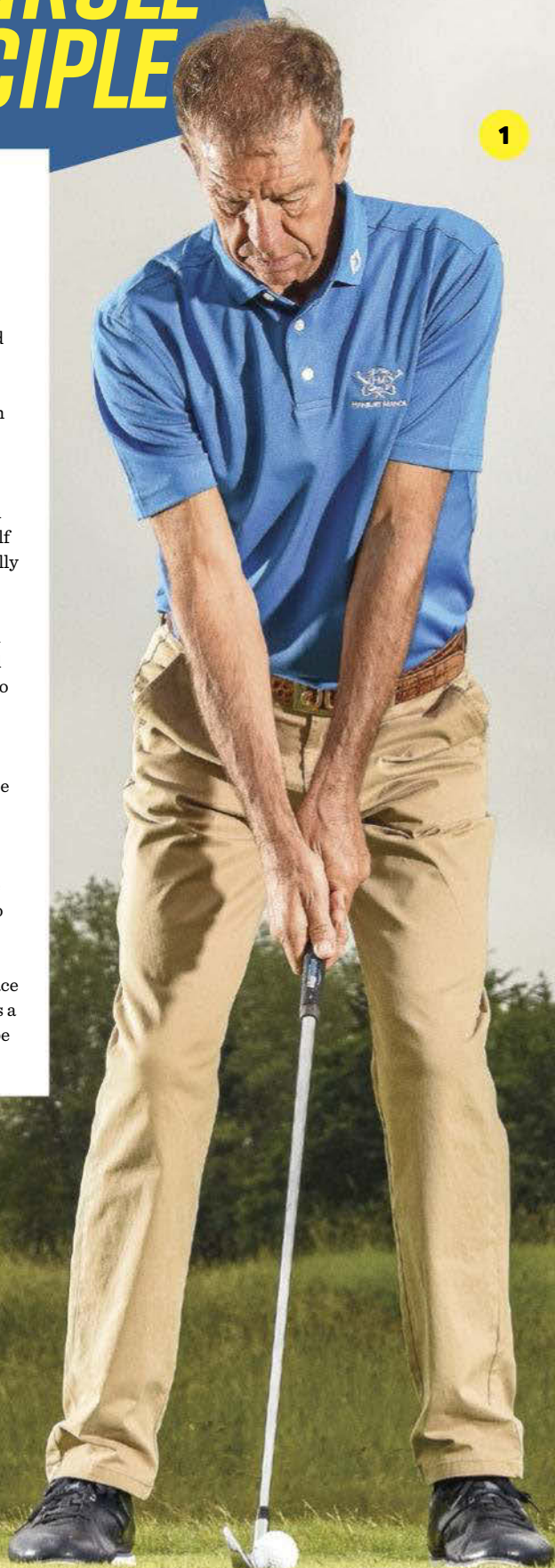


SCOTT CRANFIELD
PGA Master coach, expert
in mind-and-body coaching
and author of *Intuitive
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STAGE I: THE CIRCLE PRINCIPLE

To perform any motor skill, it's vital we have a clear mental picture of what we are trying to achieve. When we have that clear image, the movements needed to execute it present themselves. Consider, for example, banging in a nail with a hammer; the image is so clear that the motion takes care of itself. But when it comes to hitting a golf ball, this vision is usually distorted. The various technical aspects of the golf swing, coupled with the language used to express them, tend to create more confusion than clarity; and they create the common swing flaws coaches see every day.

I believe, though, that there is a simpler way. When you picture the swing as a circle, so many of the technical issues that plague the club player fall into place and the swing develops a far more effective shape and size.



MAKING THE CIRCLE

To get on top of this idea, place your attention on the clubhead. At set-up, picture the clubhead at the bottom of a wide circle, running right around you with your chest at its centre. Make your swing, feeling the clubhead trace the circle's perimeter as it swings around you.



ONE, WIDE CIRCULAR ARC

As the clubhead traces the circle's arc back and through, it automatically creates the arc and width every swing needs for power and coordination. The more technical your thinking becomes, the harder you'll find it to develop flow and rhythm. But armed with one, simple thought – to keep the clubhead moving on the circle – you free your mind to create natural coordination and speed.

PICTURING THE ANGLE

Of course, this circle is not vertical: it is tilted – on an angle – and this is generally what people refer to as the plane of the swing. To picture this plane or tilt, be aware that, with good set-up posture (more on this later), the club starts on plane... and will only move off plane if you manipulate it.

Shaft shows the way

The tilt of the circle is set by the angle of the clubshaft at address. Here, I'm using an alignment stick to help you picture that tilt.

1



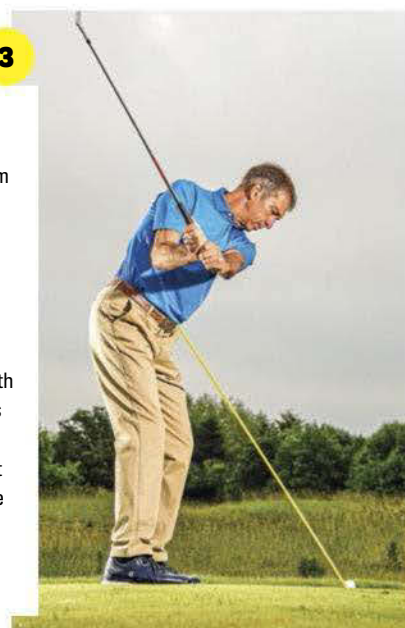
2



Keep track

If you have alignment sticks, try placing one behind the clubshaft on its address angle. Swing the club back and up on that angle, the clubshaft grazing or tracking the stick as it moves.

3



Checkpoint

A great checkpoint is halfway back, the lead arm parallel with the ground. Ideally the clubshaft will match the angle of the shaft. It's a good position to check on video as you swing back and through, but don't get obsessed with it; the 21-day Challenge is all about developing flow and confidence – and that starts with developing one simple, clear and unifying image of the entire swing as a circle on a tilt.

STAGE 2: TIMING

Hopefully the idea of the swing as a circle has set up a new and clearer way for you to picture an effective motion. In Stage 2 we build on this idea by getting to grips with how to get the club to flow properly within that circle. For this, we need an equally clear concept of how the various segments of our body interrelate and move during the swing.



1. GOING THE DISTANCES

Consider these three elements of your swing:

- The clubhead (outer zone).
- Your hands (mid zone).
- Your chest and shoulders (inner zone).

All three need to move during the swing. But they all move massively different distances:

- The clubhead moves around 30ft from start to finish.
- The hands travel around half that distance, 15ft or so.
- Your lead shoulder moves barely 2ft on its mini-turn back and through.

2. TURN OF SPEEDS

Hugely different travel distances... yet in a coordinated, flowing swing, they all start and finish at around the same moment. How is that achieved? The answer is of course because they travel at different speeds... speeds that are in a perfect ratio to the distance they need to travel.

- Travelling the furthest, the clubhead needs to move the fastest.
- The chest and shoulders move the shortest distance, so need to move the slowest.
- The mid-distance hands are somewhere in between.



WHERE WE GO

This might all sound a little theoretical... but if we want to develop a flowing and confident swing, it's so important we understand the relationship between distance-to-travel and

speed. So much of what creates awkward, jerky movement shows up in getting these relationships wrong. Here are two key common examples:



1

EVERYTHING SWINGING BACK AT THE SAME SPEED

When the club fails to outpace the hands and shoulders, we end up flat and overturned.



2

EVERYTHING TURNING THROUGH AT THE SAME SPEED

Expect weak, poorly struck shots... and plenty of backache!

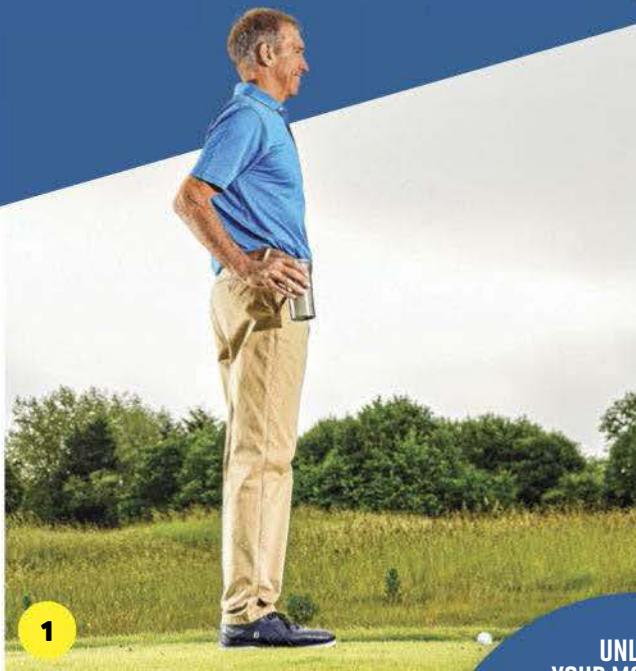
Both those examples have one thing in common: they are the consequence of placing excessive emphasis on the body turn and not enough on the swinging clubhead. As a result,

we move as a block, rather than sequentially through each area of our body. The 21-day Challenge addresses this by showing you how to get the clubhead swinging again. But for now, just

be aware that a well-timed, flowing, powerful swing needs the clubhead travelling fastest and the body slowest. Keep that in mind and better motion comes so much more readily.

STAGE 3: FOUNDATIONS

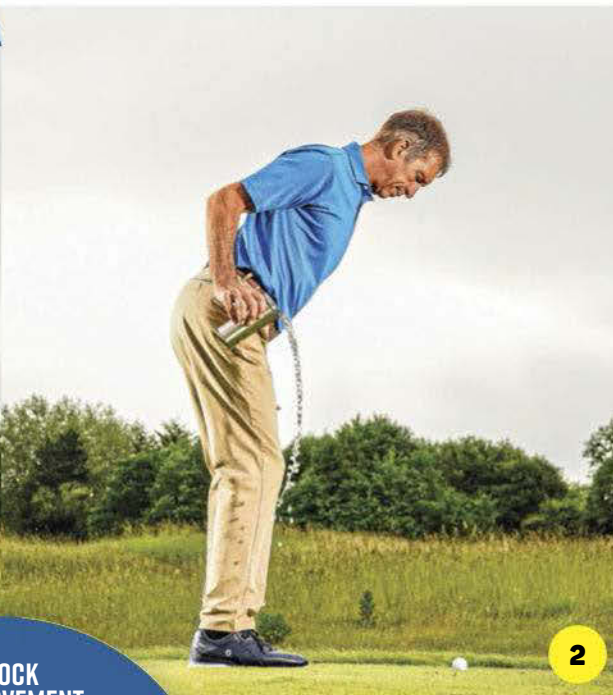
There are of course several swing foundations, including grip, alignment and ball position. But because the 21-day Challenge is primarily about building a natural and powerful momentum into your movement, we will focus here on its two most pivotal contributors: posture and balance.



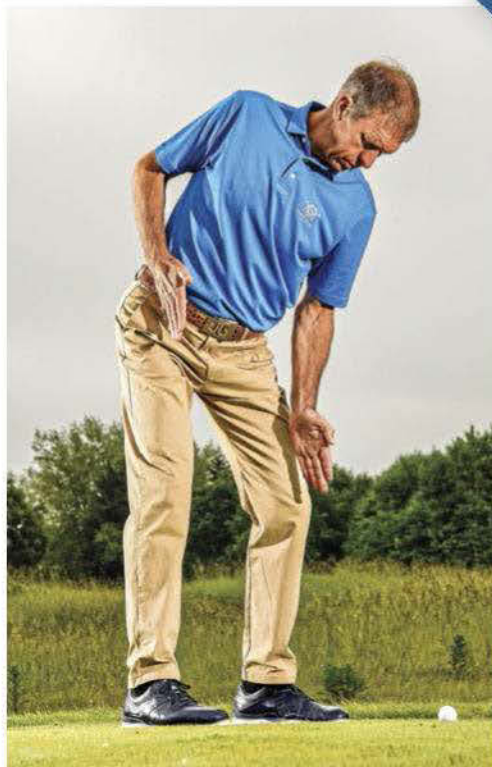
Stand upright. At this point, your belt line should be pretty much horizontal. Picture your pelvis as a vessel containing water. I'm holding a cup of water by my trail hip to represent that. As we stand upright, the belt line level with the ground, the water is contained.

UNLOCK YOUR MOVEMENT: HIP HINGE

The golf swing asks us to rotate on an angle. That's not the simplest movement pattern, but it becomes far more achievable when we set our hips properly at address. Setting the right hinge in the hips allows us to access the pelvis properly, control our motion through the hips and set the right tilt in the swing. Use this visualisation.



Now picture yourself tipping water out through the front of your pelvis; as shown, the belt line tilts with the cup. This idea helps you relax into the ideal, functional hip hinge. As with all elements of this swing reset, the full 21-day Challenge delivers drills to master this hinge.



Just to follow this through, let's now look at how the ideal hip tilts influence your movement for the better. To swing the club up and around us on the ideal plane, we need the hips to turn on their own, tilting in these ways:

- **Backswing:** trail hip moves slightly up, lead hip moves down.
- **Throughswing:** trail hip moves down, lead hip moves up.

When you hinge the hips correctly, this subtle hip tilt takes care of itself. On-plane rotation becomes much easier to achieve.



POSTURE AND BALANCE

Balance is of course at the heart of any powerful athletic movement. As soon as your brain senses any threat to its balance, it effectively shuts down movement until it is regained; so many of the swing's slowing, stalling moves can be traced to a loss of balance. Let's now take that hip hinge and see how it blends with the rest of your posture to help you create the perfect, balanced platform from which to build a more confident and efficient swing. Check:

- Your hip hinge is in place again here, the belt line (represented by the alignment stick) is a good reference.
- Hip bones are over ankles.
- Armpits are over toecaps.
- Spine feels relaxed and long.
- Arms are hanging comfortably from the shoulders.



NO! For reference, here I am in the anti-posture; with no hip tilt, I'm forced into a rounded back and saggy knees to get the club down to the ball. At club level, this is not an uncommon sight. Can you picture fluent, confident motion from this starting point?!

Ground work: the balance tripod

Naturally, we feel balance through our feet. Each foot has three principal points of contact with the ground:

1. The heel.
2. The base of the little toe.
3. The base of the big toe.

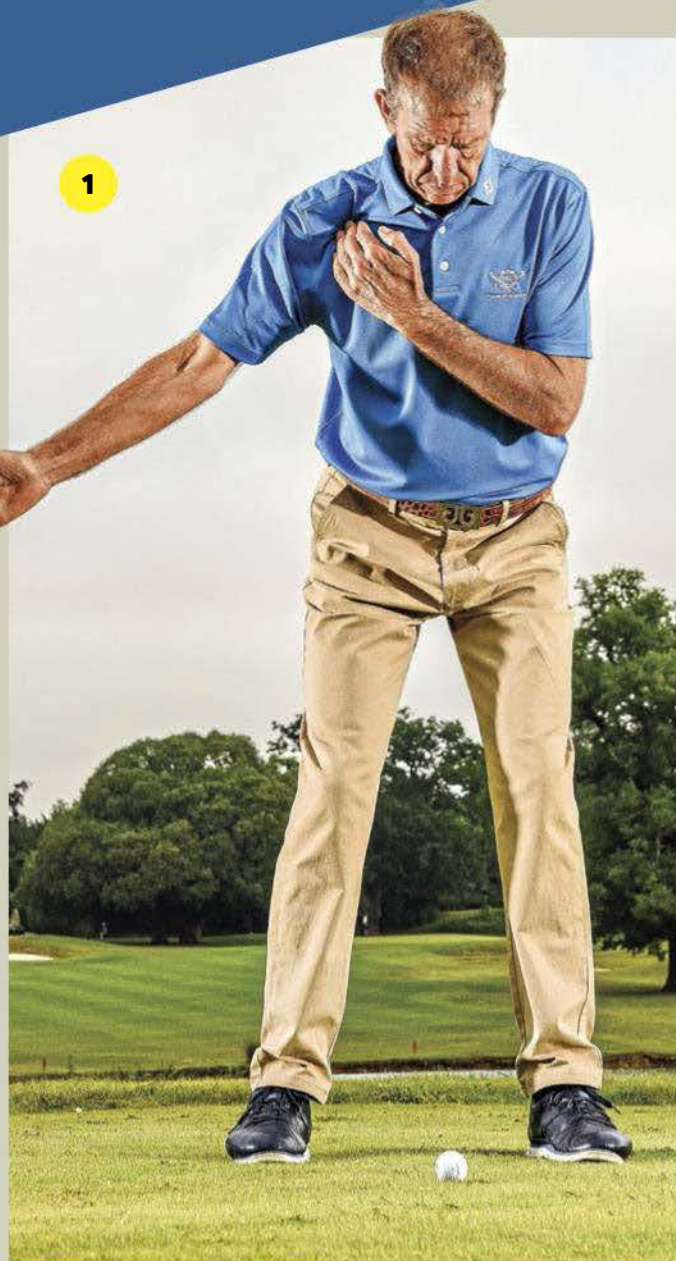
When you set good posture, you will feel your weight evenly spread across these three points on both feet. Keep this in mind as you work on your posture.



STAGE 4: STARTING THE FLOW

So far we've learned about the concept of the Circle Swing, developed a better understanding of timing and put some posture/balance foundations in place. Now it's time to start creating some new movement patterns that will help you build momentum into your action, and start getting your swing to flow again. This starts with the trail shoulder – right for the right-hander.

1



Start by taking up your address position. Let your trail arm hang in front of you. From here, swing your arm back till the hand is around hip height. But **DON'T** allow your shoulders to turn; the movement should feel more side-to-side than around you. The swing of the arm will come instead from the shoulder joint, which you will feel rotating and opening in its socket.

New sense of timing For most of you, used to trying to turn the body to move the arms, this mini-swing will be a new sensation. But think back to Stage 2, and the need to get

the hands moving faster than the core. Using the shoulder joint is how we achieve that, the hands and arms swinging freely and building momentum while the core remains relatively quiet.

2



Now let the arm swing through. Again, make this an arm-only move, and this time feel the shoulder rotating from open through to shut in its joint. If you struggle to feel this, try focusing on your forearm; a forearm feel tends to engage the shoulders while quietening the hands and wrists. Repeat this back-through 8-4 o'clock move several times, getting used to the shoulder joint – not the spine, chest and back – moving the arm.

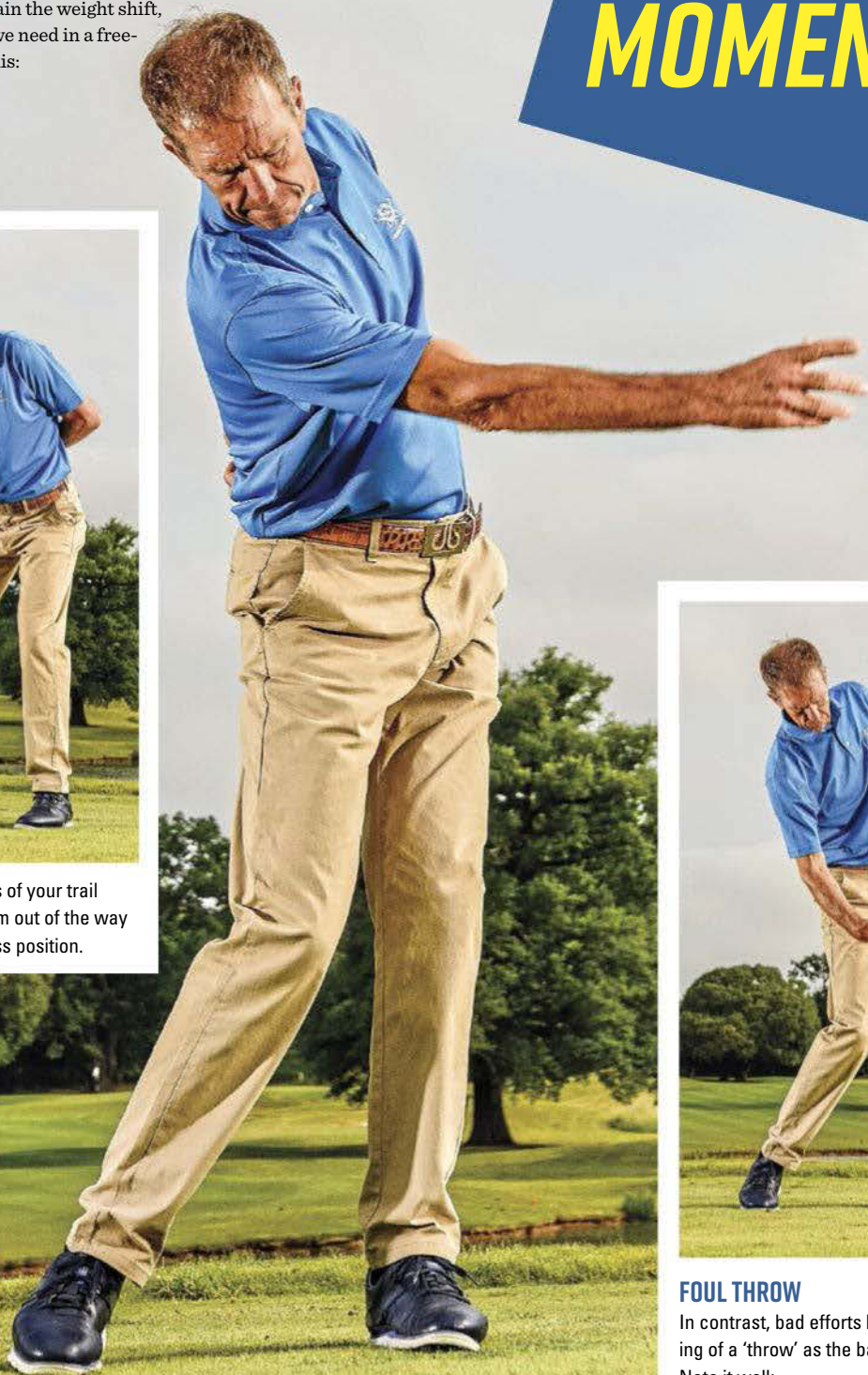
This small trail-arm swing is the first step in developing better timing and flow in your motion.

In the next stage of the 21-day Challenge, we build on the idea of getting that trail arm to swing by asking you to throw a ball. It's amazing how your throwing motion echoes your hitting one; and because throwing a ball encourages us to focus more on movement patterns than finding positions, it's an excellent way to train the weight shift, momentum and release we need in a free-flowing golf swing. Try this:

STAGE 5: BUILDING MOMENTUM

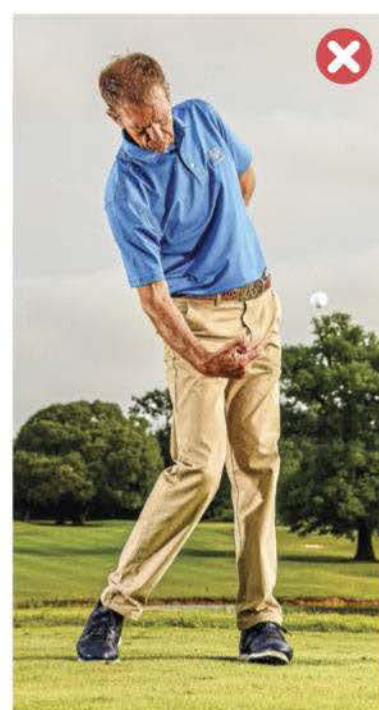


Hold a ball in the fingers of your trail hand. Tuck your lead arm out of the way and take up your address position.



Start by repeating the halfway back-and-through move as we learned in Stage 4, but don't yet throw the ball. Use the range of motion in your shoulder joint to gradually let the arm swing lengthen; your shoulders will start to turn back and through in response. Let the

momentum of your arm swing build until it feels natural to let the ball come out towards the target. After a few swings, you'll learn that when the ball comes out at a good height and pace, there is no actual 'throwing' going on; instead the ball simply 'leaves' the hand.



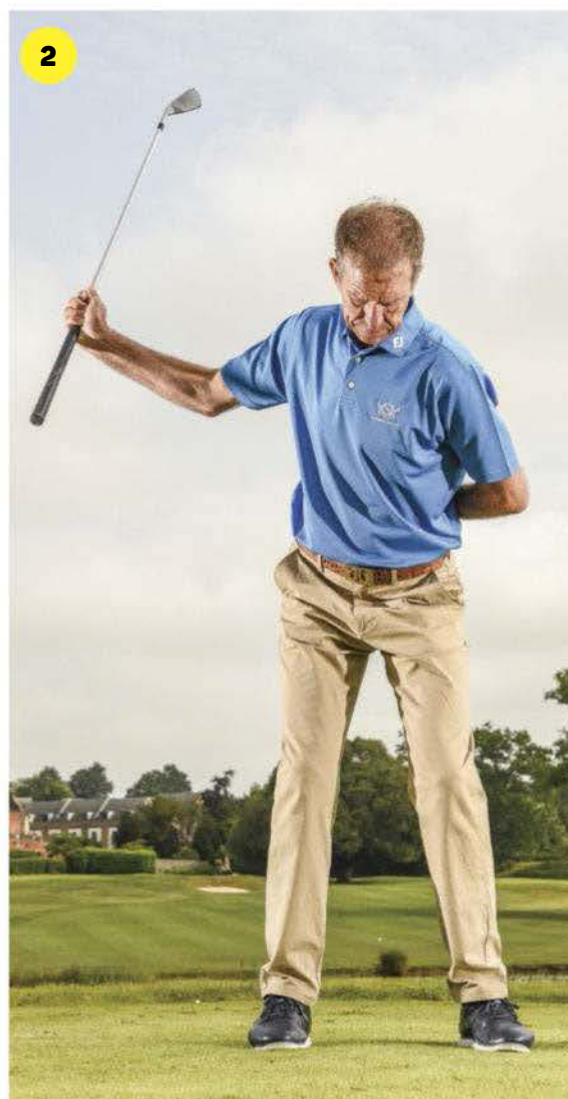
FOUL THROW

In contrast, bad efforts have a definite feeling of a 'throw' as the ball leaves the hand. Note it well:

- When people move well, with good momentum and flow, they don't 'throw' the ball out; it simply leaves the hand at the right moment.
- When people move badly, an independent sensation of throwing dominates the release... stalling weight shift and causing the swinging motion to lose its momentum.

STAGE 6: REINTRODUCING THE CLUB

We are most of the way through the 21-day Challenge now, and yet the focus remains on the trail arm. I make no apology for that. It's the unlocking of that trail shoulder that allows you to create the correct speed ratios we learned in Stage 2, and helps you fire great timing into your swing. But it's high time we brought a club back into the equation. Build on Stages 4 and 5 with this trail arm-only exercise.



BACKSWING: WORK THE TRAIL SHOULDER JOINT

Make a three-quarter backswing as shown. As before, your feeling should be of the trail shoulder joint rotating and the trail side of the chest opening up as the forearm swings the club back. It should almost feel like an archer, pulling back on the bow. The anti-move here sees the spine turning to move the club back and up, the shoulder joint passive and stuck in the same, internally rotated position it was at set-up.

ADDRESS: GRIP JUST BELOW THE HANDLE

When you get your trail arm to function well, you will start to develop the definite sense that the club is part of the arm. Indeed, the club will feel almost weightless because your forearm and shoulder joint are contributing to its movement. To develop this feeling, grip the club just under the rubber, the head hovering a few inches off the ground.



THROUGH SWING: NATURAL FREEDOM

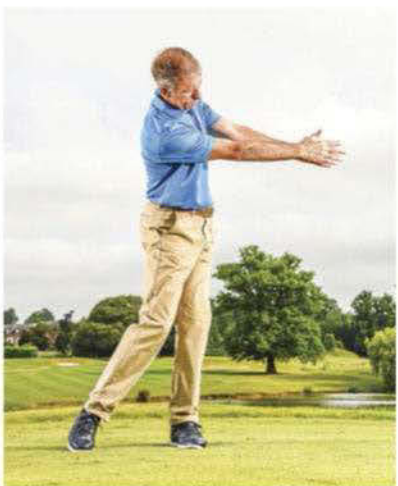
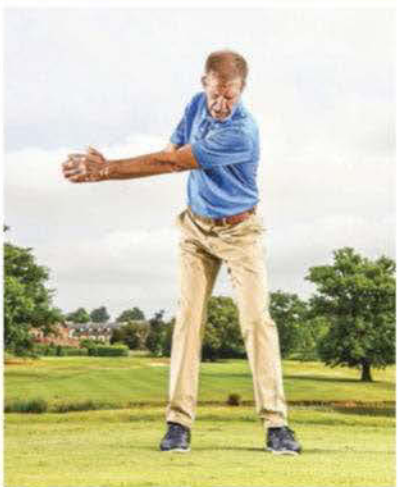
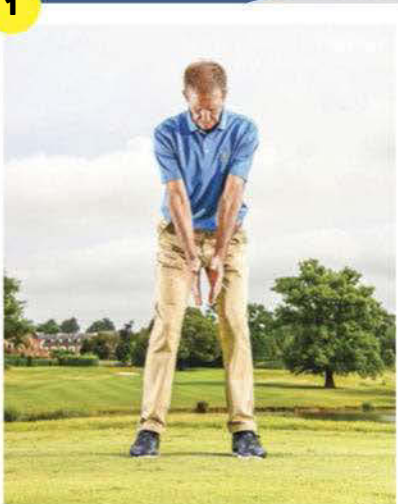
Again, use the momentum of the trail arm and the rotation of the shoulder to swing the club down and through. The core follows their lead, the chest turning to face the target. For golfers used to the idea of the body turning and the arms following, this might be a challenging idea. But think about other, more common movements you make... for example reaching back behind you for something. The arm moves and the body harmonises with it, falling into position. This is natural freedom of movement in action... and we need more of it in our golf swings.

3

STAGE 7: BLENDING IN THE LEAD SIDE

As mentioned at the start of this article, the 21-day Challenge is designed to help you develop new movement patterns that will see you reinvent your swing inside a month. So far, we've focused almost exclusively on new concepts like the Circle Swing and timing, and freeing up the trail shoulder to develop more functional motion. We finish by blending in the lead side to those new movement patterns. Do it in two steps.

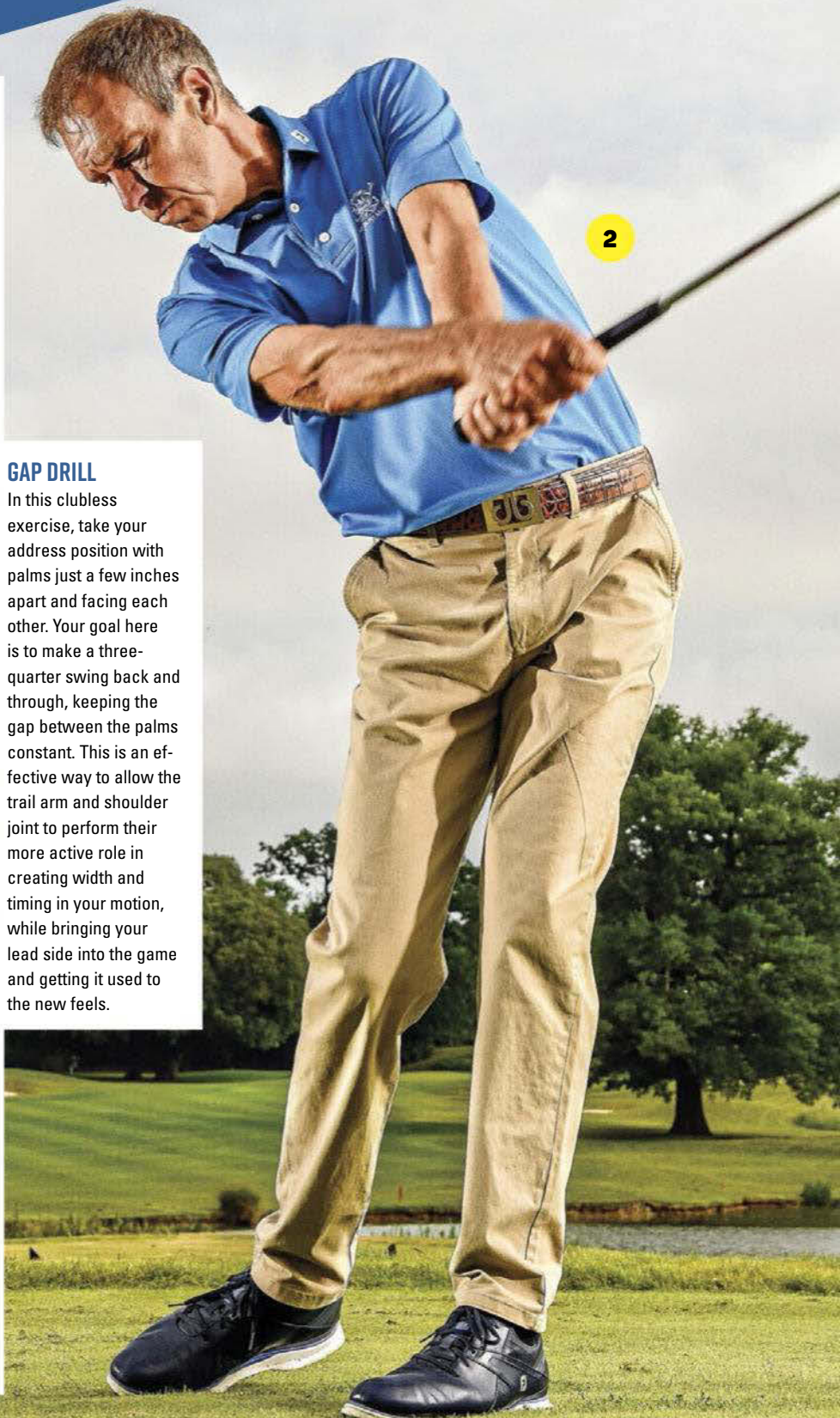
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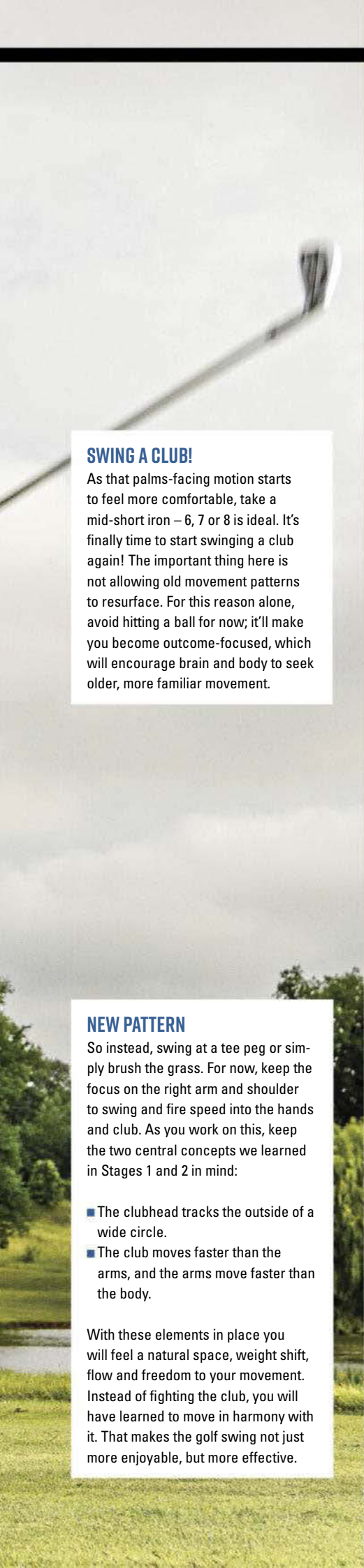


GAP DRILL

In this clubless exercise, take your address position with palms just a few inches apart and facing each other. Your goal here is to make a three-quarter swing back and through, keeping the gap between the palms constant. This is an effective way to allow the trail arm and shoulder joint to perform their more active role in creating width and timing in your motion, while bringing your lead side into the game and getting it used to the new feels.

2





SWING A CLUB!

As that palms-facing motion starts to feel more comfortable, take a mid-short iron – 6, 7 or 8 is ideal. It's finally time to start swinging a club again! The important thing here is not allowing old movement patterns to resurface. For this reason alone, avoid hitting a ball for now; it'll make you become outcome-focused, which will encourage brain and body to seek older, more familiar movement.

NEW PATTERN

So instead, swing at a tee peg or simply brush the grass. For now, keep the focus on the right arm and shoulder to swing and fire speed into the hands and club. As you work on this, keep the two central concepts we learned in Stages 1 and 2 in mind:

- The clubhead tracks the outside of a wide circle.
- The club moves faster than the arms, and the arms move faster than the body.

With these elements in place you will feel a natural space, weight shift, flow and freedom to your movement. Instead of fighting the club, you will have learned to move in harmony with it. That makes the golf swing not just more enjoyable, but more effective.

The seven Stages detailed in this article form the basic structure of the 21-day Challenge. Hopefully by now you have seen that we are dealing not so much with traditional swing coaching and positions, but more with movement patterns – replacing cramped, awkward, powerless motion with width, flow and easy motion that works in harmony with our anatomy.

In a nutshell, the Challenge asks you to:

1. Reimagine the golf swing as a circle, a simple image uniting mind and body.
2. Develop a clearer picture of timing, and how an understanding that different segments need to work at different speeds underpins a well-timed and powerful swing.
3. Refine posture and balance to lay the guidelines for a more flowing, more confident swing.
4. Retrain the trail arm and shoulder to create momentum and flow.
5. Blend these new patterns into your regular swing.

The actual 21-day Challenge goes into much more detail on this process, giving you the drills, exercises and feels that will help you master the principles of a more confident and natural swing. This will be in the form of a series of 21 videos that will arrive in your inbox each day. Together, they deliver the pathway to that flowing swing you knew was in you. I do hope you will join me.

- For more information on the 21-day Challenge, simply scan this QR code. Alternatively, visit todays-golfer.com or scottcranfield.com



PICTURE THIS

ROPE SWING

We all know the qualities of a great golf swing – rhythm, power, coordination, balance, timing. But for so many golfers, these qualities seem almost impossible to find. Why? Because more often than not, the pursuit of the positions that are supposed to deliver them jams us up instead. What we often need is a less technical, more instinctive way of training great mechanics... and thanks to the concept of swinging a rope, we have one.

Picture swinging a club-length of rope around you... or better yet, find some rope and cut it to size. The simple intention of creating speed and momentum in the swinging rope will develop a range of benefits:

- Overuse the hands, arms and wrists and the rope goes slack. You are forced to engage your core to drive the motion, as we see in every top-level swing.
- This means a more powerful, more coordinated backswing coil and a more dynamic impact as your body clears out of the way. It also mandates a smoother transition: you can't 'hit from the top' with a rope.
- Grip pressure softens as we seek to transfer momentum into the end of the rope through our rotating core.
- With the faster rope making a louder noise, we instinctively use sound to build and time speed; golfers using a rope easily develop what I call a 'sprint finish' and much better timing.



If you are feeling like your swing lacks coordination and power, give the rope swing a try. You'll be pleasantly surprised how quickly and easily it can organise a jerky, powerless motion into one synced and free-flowing unit.

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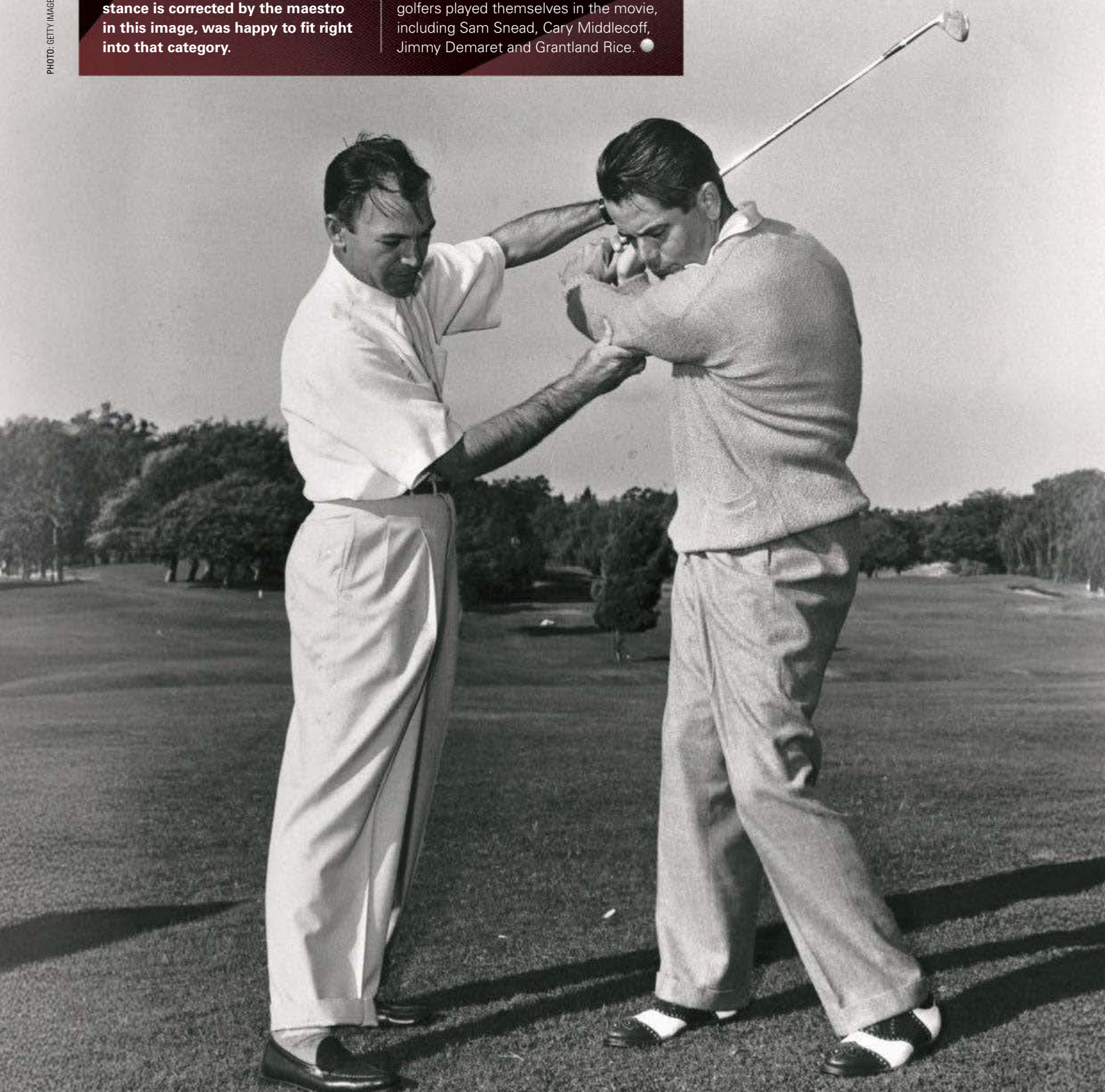
HISTORICAL LESSON

HOGAN HITS HOLLYWOOD

Can you imagine getting paid for taking a golf lesson from the legendary Ben Hogan? Actor Glenn Ford (right), whose stance is corrected by the maestro in this image, was happy to fit right into that category.

Here, Ford is receiving pointers on how to portray the famed golfer in the 1951 dramatisation of the life story of Hogan, *Follow The Sun*. Some big-name golfers played themselves in the movie, including Sam Snead, Cary Middlecoff, Jimmy Demaret and Grantland Rice. ●

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As time has gone on, the fitting process has become more thorough. Launch monitors and other modern tech have advanced the fitting process, maximising the attention to detail to

aspects like lie angle, shaft options, bounce and loft. Every base is covered down to the ground.

Over the following pages, some of the most significant golf and fitting brands showcase how they do their thing. See how the process can help you find the missing piece of the puzzle and lower your scores with a better fit.



BETTER FIT. BETTER GAME.

Confidence in golf doesn't just come from how you swing it. It comes from knowing your equipment has been tailored to you, right down to the finest detail.

That's why Titleist continues to invest as much in fitting as it does in crafting the game's most trusted products.

The updated 2025 range – led by the new T-Series irons has been designed to help golfers control the golf ball. But the product alone is only half the story. For Titleist, it's the fitting process that makes the difference.

Titleist sport some of the best fitters across the industry. This network of experts utilises advanced tools such as Trackman to make sure golfers are optimising club performance and fine-tuning set composition.

The 3Ds of fitting

Jonathan Law, Titleist's Golf Club Fitting Leader, says the focus is on three key areas. The Three' Ds'. These are foundational performance metrics that define how well iron set-ups and scoring club combinations work for a player at any level of the game. The Three Ds are:

1: Distance Control

Distance control refers to how reliably and predictably a player can carry each club through the air (i.e. the carry distance) and how well the set is "gapped" from one club to the next. It's about ensuring there's sufficient separation between clubs so that

no yardages are lost or duplicated.

"When we talk about distance control, we're really talking about carry distance through the air rather than total distance, because total distance is really relying completely on ground conditions," Law explains.

"So, we want to achieve that distance control. We want a consistent apex or peak height for the golf ball.

"Generally speaking, that's going to be the highest that that player can hit the ball with the correct launch and spin conditions. And then really what we want is every club in the bag that's a full swing club, that apex the height remains consistent."



Titleist
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A key target is a five-mile-per-hour ball speed separation between successive full-swing clubs. That, in practice, translates to about a 10-metre (or yardage) carry gap.

"Really for a scoring club, like an iron or a hybrid that you're hitting into a green, if it's achievable to get an apex that's achieving a consistent landing angle for the ball to stop on the green, that's our North Star.

"The distance control is really then separated by a five-mile-an-hour ball speed separation with each club."

2: Dispersion Control

Dispersion describes how tightly (or loosely) the shots are grouped — especially in the north-south direction (i.e. variation in distance). In simple terms, how consistent your carry is from swing to swing with the same club.

The fitter has more influence over the north-south consistency (through club parameters like loft, MOI (Moment of

Inertia)/stability, lie adjustments) than over the east-west (which often depends more on the player's swing).

"There are some things we can do with dispersion control. But East-West West is going to be golfer-related. If we can bring the distance control North-South in, then we know we're getting some consistency," Law says.

3: Descent Angle

Descent angle is about how steeply the ball lands. A steeper landing trajectory helps the ball stop on greens rather than bouncing or running out, which is especially critical on approach shots.

Titleist's fitting goal is often to reach a landing (or "land angle") of 40° or more — though not every player can physically generate that, depending on swing speed, launch angle, spin rate, etc.

The fitter's job is to maximise what that particular golfer can reach (via head, loft, centre of gravity configuration, etc.) and give enough control in the set to preserve separation.

"Our job as a fitting specialist is to get the ball to go as high as possible, realistically for that golfer, and then give them enough tools in their toolkit where they can get some distance separation with each club," Law adds.

Blended Sets Are the New Normal

For many golfers, a bag used to mean a single iron model, ranging from hybrids and long irons to pitching wedges.

That's no longer the case. With the expansion of the T-Series family, blending different models within the same set has become the standard approach, from the Tour down.

The concept is simple: every club in the bag has to earn its spot. A single iron model isn't always the answer from top to bottom, and fitting reveals where the "tipping point" lies.

"All of our fitting heads in irons are seven irons. And then what we do is, depending on the speed of the player, so let's say we have an average male golfer who's swinging a seven iron at 78 miles per hour.

"The first thing that we're going to go to is the five iron in the same iron model that we've fit the seven iron into. We want to then see a consistent apex and a 10-mile-an-hour ball speed separation for it to fit into that set.

"Now, if we don't get the ball speed separation or we don't get the height, then we move to the next chassis size. And we keep doing that until we run out of irons or we find an answer."

The Fitting Experience

Whether it's a blended iron set, hybrids, or the role of lofty fairways, Titleist's goal is to make the fitting experience transformative and enjoyable.

Team Titleist has two fitting experiences. One at the national fitting centre at Spring Valley Golf Club in Melbourne where golfers pay a service fee for a two-hour experience and 60-minute fitting events at golf clubs and facilities around the country.

"Our team have got a really simple philosophy on that. We've got to make the player better than when they turned up for the fit, and we've got to give them a great experience."

"It's about presenting the evidence to the golfer, giving them a great experience, educating them on what you think is going to be the best set composition to help them enjoy the game more."





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The Club Champion fitting experience is a personalised, data-driven process designed to optimise your performance.

Each session begins with a brief sit-down consultation to understand your goals and what equipment is currently in the bag. You'll then get into your work on the simulators, hitting shots with your clubs while Trackman and Club Champion's AI Fitter CoPilot capture key metrics like distance, spin, and accuracy.

Next, you'll test a variety of different club heads and shafts from over 65,000 combinations. Your master fitter uses both data and feedback to find the ideal setup for your swing.

Once dialed in, your specs are used in our hand-built club process to ensure your new clubs perform exactly as they did in the fitting bay. Every purchase is backed by Club Champion's Perfect Fit Guarantee and industry-leading support.

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- 65,000+ Hittable Combinations
- All Major Brands: Titleist, Callaway, TaylorMade, PXG, and more
- Perfect Fit Guarantee

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INSIDE THE PING FITTING PROCESS

If you've ever wondered how PING fittings deliver premier results, the answer lies in a methodical process that blends advanced technology with ball flight analysis.

PING's fitting philosophy began with Karsten Solheim's colour code chart, which matched lie angle and club length to a golfer's height and wrist-to-floor measurement. Decades later, the chart remains central to the process, now enhanced by ball tracking and data capture for even greater precision. Professionally fitted clubs, tailored to body, swing, and preference, continue to unlock better performance.

Behind this is the PING Golf Science team; engineers and researchers focused on constant improvement. Whether at a PING Fitting Studio or with a certified fitter, every session is designed to be precise, educational, and personal. Both indoor and outdoor fittings use TrackMan and techniques validated at the PING Proving Grounds to ensure consistency.

The process follows a systematic "process of elimination," narrowing choices until the two best-performing clubs remain. From there, ball flight, feel, sound, and consistency determine the final selection, delivering custom-built clubs that match each golfer's game.

Step 1: The Interview

Every fitting begins with a conversation. Your fitter will ask about your game, goals, and areas for improvement—whether that's a lower driver flight or a full-bag overhaul. If you track stats with a PING-approved app, that data is reviewed to highlight tendencies. From there, the dialogue covers appearance, feel, and performance

preferences to ensure the clubs help you Play Your Best. Fitters also use the PING Fitting Cart, which contains every spec and shaft option needed to fine-tune your bag.

Step 2: Static (Biometric) Fitting

Next is a static assessment. Using your height and wrist-to-floor measurement, the fitter determines lie angle (iron colour code) and shaft length, while hand size helps set grip. For metalwoods, you'll test lofts, shafts, and models. Players can also use PING's WebFit tool for an assessment.

Step 3: Dynamic Swing Test

This stage looks at how you deliver the club at impact. Indoors or outdoors, you'll hit shots with diagnostic tape and from a lie board while the fitter studies posture, swing path, and strike location. For irons, this confirms lie angle and shafts; for drivers, angle of attack helps dial in launch and spin. Wedge fittings assess turf interaction for grind selection. TrackMan 4 launch monitors ensure precise data on strike and shaft length.

Step 4: Ball-Flight Analysis

Ball flight finalises the specs. Launch, peak height, dispersion, gapping, and set makeup are all reviewed. The goal: maximum efficiency and the best balance of distance and accuracy. Poor fits often cost golfers distance—pairing a professional fitting with PING product can be game-changing.

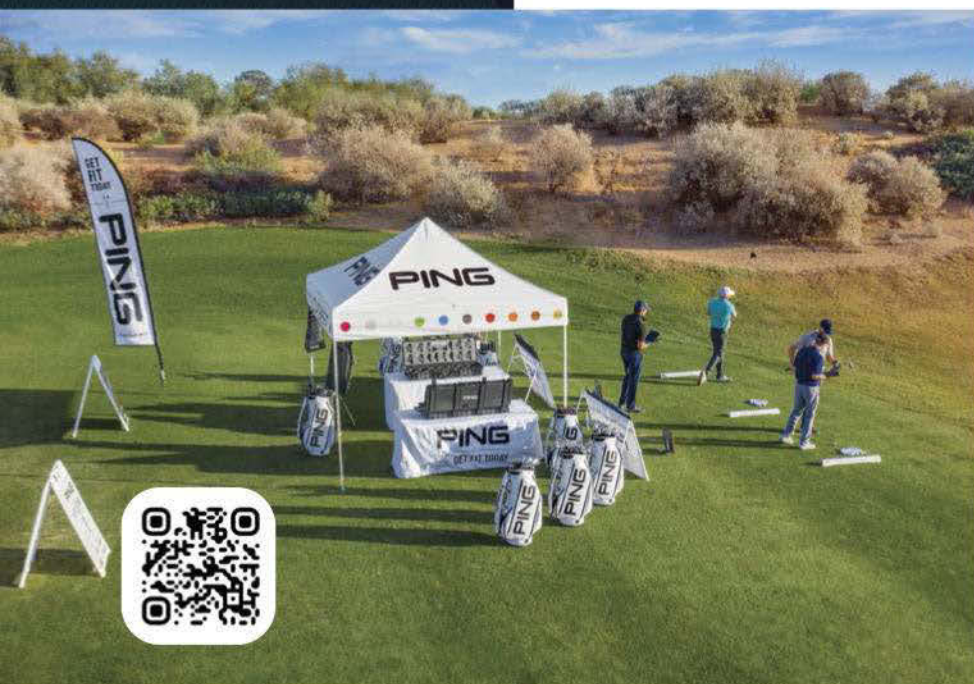
Step 5: Post-Fitting Process

The fitting doesn't end when you leave. PING encourages logging results with performance apps to monitor patterns. A Fitting Specialist remains a resource, reviewing data and recommending tweaks as needed. For golfers chasing lower scores, that ongoing support is invaluable.

Fit for Stroke

PING's Fit for Stroke system matches putters to your natural stroke type. The team at PING achieve this through the iPING to complete this process. The iPING is an app that turns your phone into a putting coach, tracking consistency and your stroke. Every model is colour-coded: blue for straight (face-balanced, forward stroke rotation of three and a half degrees or less), green for slight arc (mid-hang, forward stroke rotation between three and a half degrees and seven and a half degrees) and red for strong arc (toe-down, forward stroke rotation of seven and a half degrees or more). Most golfers fall into the slight-arc category, but whichever way you swing it, there's a PING putter built to roll it better.

Contact your local golf shop to schedule a PING Custom Fitting or visit www.americangolf.com.au





BRIDGESTONE
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FITTING MATTERS

When you think about golf equipment, clubs often steal the spotlight.

But there's one piece of gear that's in play on every single shot — the golf ball. Choosing the right one can make a bigger difference to your scores than you might think. That's why ball fitting has become an essential part of the modern game, helping players of all levels hit it further, find more fairways and ultimately, lower their scores.

Bridgestone Golf has long been a leader in this space. Since pioneering ball fitting back in 2006, the company has fitted more than 4.4 million golfers into the right ball for their game — more than anyone else. It's a number that highlights not just their expertise, but also the demand from players who want to squeeze every bit of performance out of their equipment.

And the truth is, ball fitting isn't just for the professionals. Tour players have seen the benefits, sure, but so have everyday golfers — from seasoned club members to those just starting out. If you play the game, you can benefit from the right ball.

You can jump online and use Bridgestone's "Find My Ball" tool to make sure you get into the right ball for you.

Ball fitting has become far more

accessible in Australia in recent years, with technology now making it possible to get precise feedback almost anywhere. Launch monitors are standard in most off-course stores and club fitting bays, and many golfers even have them at home. This data — ball speed, spin rates, launch angle and carry distance — forms the foundation of a modern ball fitting. What once required a dedicated event can now be done after a standard club fitting session, or even from a practice session into a net.

The "Find My Ball" fitting tool takes this information a step further. By inputting your own launch monitor numbers, you can compare your performance against thousands of live ball fittings conducted worldwide, most of them in the U.S. This ensures the recommendations are based on real golfer data rather than a simple algorithm or questionnaire. The result is a clear, evidence-based recommendation on which model will perform best for your game, tailored to your speed, spin and launch profile.

Ball fitting matters because it affects every shot in the round. The right model can mean the difference between holding a



green or running through, finding fairways or losing distance. Bridgestone's process gives golfers hard data to back up their choice, with the option to email results directly for reference. For Australian golfers, it's now a straightforward step in the wider fitting journey, complementing driver, iron and wedge fittings to ensure the ball is working in harmony with the rest of the set.

Behind the recommendations is an understanding of swing speed and compression. Optimising compression means optimising distance. Players with faster swings are best matched with higher-compression balls like the TOUR B X and XS, while those with slower swings will find more distance with lower-compression models such as the TOUR B RX and RXS.

In the end, golf ball fitting is about more than numbers. It's about giving every golfer the chance to play with a ball that matches their game, whether you're teeing it up on the PGA Tour or at your local comp on Saturday morning.

PLAYING WITH...

T-SERIES IRONS

Cost: \$349 (steel); \$379 (graphite)

Tested by: Callum Hill, Golf Australia Digital Editor



FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

I find there are few better feelings as a golfer than peeling the plastic off the face of a new set of irons. From your first ever full set, to doing it for the 5th, 10th, 100th time. It is an

instant serotonin boost which never gets old.

The new Titleist T-Series range is a phenomenal looking club, from the brand new T100s through to the T350s.

At first look, the new T-Series irons reinforce Titleist's design philosophy of clean, compact shaping. Each model progresses logically in size: the T100 and T150 remain traditional in profile, while the T250 and T350 introduce more topline and sole width without straying too far from a players' silhouette. The transitions are deliberate, which makes blending sets straightforward.

In testing, the standout was how stable ball flight remained across the family. The T100 delivered the expected precision – flatter trajectory windows with tight dispersion. The T150 introduced a touch more ball speed and height, with descent angles that clearly support green-holding. Moving to the T250, there's a measurable increase in launch and carry, yet spin rates stayed consistent enough to maintain distance control.

Titleist's fitting leader, Jonathan Law, can't speak highly enough of the new 250 Launch Spec, and this tester agrees.

"The 250 Launch Spec is an outstanding product. It's got all the assistance of a 250 with the thin L-Cup face, tungsten in the toe and the heel, the max impact support for the face.

"It's got traditional loft. So, the seven irons are the same loft as an MB, CB seven

iron at 35-degrees."

The T350 provided the highest ball speeds of the group, but what impressed most was the forgiveness on off-centre strikes. Retained ball speed and dispersion patterns suggest the hollow-body design and tungsten weighting are working as intended.

Feel was differentiated but not disjointed. The forged T100 and T150 offered the softest, most responsive impact, while the T250 and T350 leaned firmer and more energetic, consistent with their construction. None felt disconnected from the brand's overall "solid through impact" identity.

Overall, first impressions indicate Titleist have tightened the performance gaps between the four models. Each delivers on its intended role – precision, speed, distance, forgiveness – while maintaining a consistent family DNA.

HOW IT PERFORMED: On course and range testing confirmed the clear separation between the four models. The T100 was the most precise, with consistent spin windows and dispersion patterns that rewarded centred strikes. Ball speeds were moderate but entirely predictable, which is exactly what better players expect.

The T150 added noticeable launch and speed without a major trade-off in control, and because of this was my iron of choice. Shots peaked higher and landed steeper, making it easier to hold firm greens. The extra forgiveness was subtle but evident when contact drifted slightly from centre.

The T250 showed the biggest performance jump. Ball speed gains were immediate, particularly in the long irons, and carry distances increased accordingly. Launch stayed playable and spin rates proved stable enough to prevent shots from running out. For golfers seeking a genuine distance iron without severe gapping

issues, the T250 met that brief.

The T350 was the most powerful and forgiving. Launch was effortless, and even heel or toe strikes carried well past expectations. Distance consistency stood out most – poor contact rarely lost more than a few metres. While shot shaping was limited compared to the T100/150, the forgiveness and ease of use more than compensated.

TITLEIST SAYS: The new T-Series family includes the next generation T100, T150 and T350 irons, along with the brand-new T250 – Titleist's newest player's distance iron – plus the high-launching T250 Launch Spec model, which fits an entirely new player profile within the platform. Each iron is designed around specific performance characteristics, yet built to blend seamlessly in the bag.

As the most played iron brand on the PGA TOUR for 11 straight seasons and counting, Titleist draws on feedback from the game's best ball-strikers, discerning amateurs and its worldwide network of fitters. That insight drove three design objectives for the new T-Series: increasing long iron launch, tightening mid- and short-iron spin consistency, and improving overall carry distance consistency throughout the bag. Each iron is built to deliver specific distances within a consistent flight window, with more repeatability across the set.

Titleist's 3 D's – distance control, dispersion and angle of descent – guide both the fitting process and product development, with engineers maximising these performance parameters in every design. The result is the best-performing T-Series lineup yet.

New T-Series irons are available now at Titleist fitting locations and in golf shops worldwide. Golfers can find a fitting near them by visiting [Titleist.com.au](https://www.titleist.com.au).





PLAYING WITH...

CALLAWAY OPUS SP WEDGES

Cost: AUD \$329.99 | NZD \$399.99

Tested by: Callum Hill, Golf Australia Digital Editor



FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Callaway's wedges have always had a unique touch to them. This, and the fact that they are consistently a phenomenal product, is often why they stand out from the crowd.

I recall that the Mack Daddy 4 wedges featured the groove-in-groove technology, which was a signature design for opening up the face and allowing the ball to really spin.

The Jaws wedges were built on that. The MD5 version of the wedge boasted the "most aggressive groove to date." The spin and control that you had with these were elite, still one of my favourite products from Callaway of all time.

The Opus SP introduce a Spin Gen Face Technology. Which, for the golf club, tragic means combining three synergistic elements aimed at delivering more consistent spin and control. For the common man, it means these things will build on the reputation of their predecessors and provide optimal spin and control through first-class tech advancements.

Opus features a traditional teardrop profile with a slightly higher toe, a rounded leading edge, and a subtle offset. At address it inspires confidence without looking bulky. The Black Shadow finish reduces glare and frames the ball neatly, while the Brushed Chrome gives a classic, premium look. Balance in hand is excellent – the head feels substantial without being heavy, a reflection of the Tour-driven weighting.

Impact feel is solid and responsive. Centre strikes sound clean and penetrate well, while even slight mis-hits retain useful

feedback. The Spin Gen face treatment gives the visual impression of extra roughness across the hitting area, which hints at its performance brief: more friction, more control.

HOW IT PERFORMED: The Opus sits firmly in the low-launch, high-spin category. Full swings produced consistent spin numbers across clean and slightly imperfect lies. The Spin Gen technology kept the spin steady, even from damp grass; you could still hit predominantly to a number and back, given that your ball would come to a halt. That also meant shots launched flatter, climbed late, and descended with the control you want around the greens.

The new and improved face delivered consistent spin and controlled trajectory on chips, pitches, and delicate approach shots. Even partial swings produced reliable bite, allowing this often-unreliable ball-striker to feel some confidence in fighting the ball into tighter pin locations. In bunker situations, the refined sole geometry and multiple grind options ensured smooth interaction with turf and sand. Shots from soft sand launched easily without digging excessively, while tighter lies still allowed precise ball-first contact. Across a variety of lies, the wedges combined predictable distance, reliable spin, and strong feel, making them versatile tools for scoring around the greens.

CALLAWAY SAYS: Opus wedges combine Tour-preferred shaping with a higher centre of gravity for increased spin and precision.

The Spin Pocket™ is a re-engineered two-piece head that redistributes mass to optimise CG placement. By shifting weight higher, it promotes a lower, more penetrating launch – resulting in more spin

and control, particularly when fighting shots or attacking tight pins.

The new Spin Gen 2.0 Face is the most advanced in Opus history. A 17° groove angle with tighter pitch spacing increases groove edge contact for more consistent spin from various lies. Combined with a deeper cross-hatch laser pattern, it enhances friction for greater bite and stopping power on all approach shots.

Opus SP also features Callaway's Tour-validated Shape 6 profile, providing a clean look at address with precise leading edge shaping and refined sole geometry. Shape 6 is the final iteration of the Opus prototype shaping phase, approved by Tour players and major champions.

Progressive shaping in the gap wedges ensures seamless blending with modern iron sets. The Opus SP has already recorded the best initial Tour conversion for a Callaway wedge, with 32 in play at the Scottish Open. Players including Xander Schauffele, Jon Rahm, Min Woo Lee, Akshay Bhatia, Nicolai Hojgaard and Rasmus Hojgaard have all put them in play. Five grind options are offered – S, T, C, W, and the returning X Grind.

"We know the best players in the world are chasing spin and control, and with Opus SP we've delivered it in a completely new way," said Zack Oakley, Sr. Manager of Product & Category Management at Callaway. "Our new Spin Pocket strategically removes weight low and places more weight high, raising the CG to generate more spin with a controlled, consistent flight – giving players total confidence around the green."

For more information visit: <https://au.callawaygolf.com/>

TamarRidge
Tasmania

PRESENTS

A FEW DRINKS WITH...

RICKY PONTING

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

TASMANIA IS A MECCA FOR GOLF,
AND IT IS JUST GETTING BETTER.

what America does particularly well, and that's one thing I'm really keen to bring to Country Club.

You touched on the New Zealand Open. What keeps you coming back to those?

Mate, it's my favourite week of the year. I say it every year. I just hope that I play well enough every year to keep getting the invite back. That's the way I look at it. I've been lucky - maybe seven or eight times now that I've played. You get looked after. The hospitality is incredible. Flying on one of their airlines, staying in one of the hotels, playing golf - they look after you, almost second to none.

And that's the feeling you get straight away when you walk onto the course at the New Zealand Open. And that's not just me. Amateur players who turn up say the same thing. It's just an awesome week. If you happen to stay at Millbrook, that's an experience in itself. My family have just come back from another skiing trip last week. I think it's the 16th time I've stayed at the resort. We go summertime and wintertime. Even a couple of weeks ago, you can still play golf there. Millbrook turned it on for us. Queenstown itself is probably my favourite destination in the world for what we can do as a family in the wintertime. And then that week, we get to go back for the New Zealand Open. It's pretty cool.

As a cricket player and a coach, who were your favourite teammates to play golf



GOLF ON TOUR WAS - AND STILL IS - VERY COMPETITIVE. PICTURED HERE WITH MARK WAUGH IN 2001.

with? Did you have any really good battles while you were away playing cricket?

Yeah, we still do now. Even in India now, coaching over there, golf has taken off a fair bit, and certainly in a few different states; places like Bangalore and Delhi. There's some really good golf and cool destinations there.

Greg Blewett is probably the guy I've had the most battles with as far as cricketers I played with. James Hopes, who's now assistant coach with me in the IPL, is

a very low marker. I think he has a one handicap or something like that. Glenn Maxwell and other guys in the current Aussie team have low handicaps. You're always guaranteed a good game when you're away as a coach with those boys. I'm obviously 15 or 20 years older than most of them, but I'm doing my best to keep up with them now. But there's definitely no shortage of golf." 🏌️



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“GOLF COURSES PROVE DESIGN AND ECOLOGY CAN SIT SIDE BY SIDE.”

Given the recent debate about the value of golf courses to the community, it's worth highlighting how they can coexist with our native environment and even serve as beacons of biodiversity. With spring upon us, this feels like the perfect time to showcase how golf courses preserve and complement Australia's landscapes.

Spring is a wonderful time to step into the garden and onto our golf courses. Gardens are bursting with colour, jacarandas turn streets into rivers of mauve, and bottlebrush and wattles remind us that Australian natives can hold their own against any exotic. Yet while we celebrate our backyards and tree-lined streets, another landscape blooms in step with the season: our golf courses.

In many ways, golf courses are backyard gardens at scale – living extensions of botanic gardens, shaped to showcase both native plants and horticultural wonders from afar. The atavistic thrill of a remote forest is undeniable, but there's also joy in landscapes we've shaped: trees, shrubs, turf, rocks and water deliberately assembled to create new worlds.

You might not expect “golf” and “biodiversity” in the same sentence, but golf courses deliver far more in terms of sustainability than many realise. In Melbourne, ecologists found that courses supported more species of birds, bees and bats than nearby parks and streetscapes. The secret is variety – fairways edged with trees, wetlands, flowering shrubs and uncut roughs create patchworks that draw in life. While courses can't rival intact bushland, in urban areas they often outperform local parks.

Golfers experience this firsthand. Courses can host strong pollinator communities, bolster urban bird life and act as biodiversity “beacons” when they preserve native vegetation. They prove that design and ecology can sit side by side.

In Sydney's east, the relationship runs even deeper. Several coastal courses shelter fragments of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS), a critically endangered plant community. At New South Wales Golf Club, the superintendent conducts controlled burns to regenerate this fragile ecosystem – responsibilities rarely found in golf job descriptions.

That is the beauty of Australia's diverse landscape: golf courses reflect the change of geography and habitat with local character.

In the tropics, Cairns Golf Club nestles among rainforest and pandanus palms. Freshwater crocodiles inhabit ponds and waterways, while Cairns Birdwing and Ulysses butterflies flutter like sparkling jewels.

In the Blue mountains, Blackheath Golf Club is Australia's highest 18-hole course.

sandy brilliance of the Sandbelt to dramatic coastal layouts and forest fairways, courses are alive with magpies, rainbow lorikeets, kookaburras, banksias and grevilleas. Waterbirds forage among reeds, and roses soften stone walls of heritage clubhouses.

Across all these varied landscapes, a truth holds: golf courses may be built for play, but they are also living theatres of birdsong, blossom and biodiversity – each reflecting geography and season.



KALGOORLIE GOLF COURSE, WHERE GREEN FAIRWAYS CONTRAST WITH RED EARTH.

Mountain gums, flame trees, azaleas and rhododendrons line fairways. Sulphur-crested cockatoos descend like a punk band on tour – cracking pine cones and ripping about the course like it's their hotel room.

Head inland and you'll find Kalgoorlie Golf Club, where green fairways contrast with red earth. Mulga and spinifex set the Sidney Nolan scene. Galahs gather like noisy teenagers, wedge-tailed eagles ride thermals, and desert wildflowers stage a colour run after rain.

In the temperate zones – where most Australians play – the landscapes are familiar but never lose their magic. From the

Umberto Eco once wrote that a garden is “an instrument with which to rule the universe.” Gardens are our attempt to impose order on the wild, to forget – if briefly – that we are but specks in a vast universe. Yet abandon a garden and nature reclaims it with startling speed, a reminder of its enduring presence.

Golf courses embody that same balance between human activity and the natural world. They remind us that cultivation and wildness are not enemies, but dance partners. And when Welcome Swallows circle you on the fairway, why not join in the dance? 🌿

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