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GOLF MONTHLY

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special

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TIGER'S
50
GREATEST
MOMENTS

As Woods turns 50, we
count down the highlights
from his legendary career



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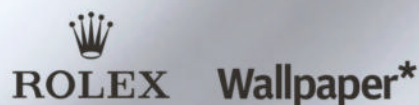
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OYSTER PERPETUAL
DATEJUST

A Watch that Made History

NICHOLAS FOULKES



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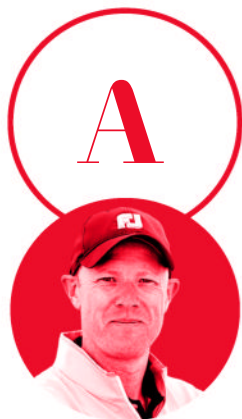
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Editor

Neil Tappin

neil.tappin@futurenet.com

As you will have seen from the cover of this issue, we are celebrating the 50th birthday of the greatest golfer of the modern era, if not of all time. Tiger Woods might not dominate the golfing landscape as he once did but his achievements continue to shine brightly. In fact, the emergence of Scottie Scheffler as a standout World No.1 has only served to underline the extraordinary accomplishments of his predecessor.

Allow me to throw some numbers at you. At the time of writing, Woods has played in 378 PGA Tour events and won 82 of them. That gives him a winning percentage of 21.7%. He made 339 cuts and finished inside the top ten on 199 occasions. He also spent 683 weeks as World No.1. For context, Scheffler has played in 150 PGA Tour events and won 19 times. That's a winning percentage of 12.7%. To equal Tiger's achievements by the age of 50, the Texan would have to win three times per year for the next 21 years.

The truth is that, as remarkable as these numbers are, they don't get close to telling the whole story. Golf is a sport that consistently proves itself unwilling to reward those who want it most. This is why sports psychologists often tell their

professional golfer clients to respond in the same muted way to success and failure, and why many of today's leading players come across as detached and robotic. Not Tiger.

In this issue of *Golf Monthly*, Gavin Newsham skilfully recounts Tiger's 50 most memorable moments. From his maiden professional win in 1996 to his US Open triumph with a broken leg at Torrey Pines in 2008 (and beyond), he was consistently able to deliver pure sporting magic. Accompanied by his iconic fist-pump, these emotionally charged moments captured the attention of new, diverse audiences all over the world.

There is little doubt now that Tiger is entering a new phase of his life and career. Of course, he will have a critical role to play as the sport evolves and the search for the next generation of superstars continues. Whatever direction the pro game takes, one thing is for sure – we will never see another Tiger Woods.



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KICK POINT

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YOUR VIEW

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

An ode to the game we love

I stand there just like Seve, with my golf club in my hands,
I wiggle everything I have, then settle in my stance,
I stare straight down the fairway, then at my golf ball on the tee,
Then I swing and hit the thing... and hear it hit a tree.

It sort of shoots out sideways then I find it in the rough,
I look at where the golf ball lies; this could be quite tough,
I take a club I think is right and swing it good and hard,
I hit the ball and off it goes, about 47 yards.

At least it's on the fairway now, I might just have a chance,
So, I stand and wiggle once again, with an iron in my hands,
This time the ball goes straight and true, and flies towards the green,
But when it lands I hear the splash... and we all know what that means.

I take a drop, then with a wedge, I chip it nice and high,
It's on the green, then I see it roll about 45 feet by,
I putt the ball and it goes quite well, but I forgot about the slope,
It sort of drifts off sideways and I'm beginning to lose all hope.

It's six feet now and I take it slow and try and find the line,
I've got it now, this is it, don't hurry, take your time,
I take the putt and watch it roll, it's going on its way,
It's getting closer to the hole, I'm excited, let me say.

And then it stops, six inches short, and I think, 'Oh what a shame,'
Things aren't going well today, it's a quite frustrating game,
I tap the ball into the hole, I've finished it at last,



I get my card and pencil out, and check my score and gasp.

I count the shots a second time, but the answer's still the same,
I can't believe I used to know how to play this game,

Seve wouldn't play like this, so it must be down to me,
It's taken eight to finish this hole... and it's just a short par 3.

But I'll play on like we all do, next time I'll get it right,

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

As a long-time reader and supporter of *Golf Monthly*, I'd like to share a story that truly deserves recognition. It's a reminder that golf is a lifelong game, without limits on age or ability, and one that continues to bring people together through passion, health and enjoyment.

In times when there's so much negativity in the world, the golf course remains a sanctuary – a place where people can step away from the noise, breathe fresh air, and embrace the challenge and beauty of the game, whatever the weather. With that in mind, I'd like to sing

the praises of my uncle, Charlie Auld (below), a 92-year-old Brechin Golf Club member who still plays every day.

He is a remarkable ambassador for Scottish golf – a living example of the physical and mental benefits golf offers,

and the community it builds. On August 21, he achieved an incredible milestone – a hole-in-one on the 3rd at Brechin GC. The oldest golfer to make a hole-in-one was 103-year-old Gus Andreone in Florida in 2014, but Charlie's achievement, at 92, is a moment that deserves to be celebrated and shared.

Paul Robertson, Brechin GC



I'll hit a good shot soon I think, at least I hope I might,
We can't be all like Seve, we just try to do our best,
We come back for the good shots... and forget about the rest.

John Baker, Yeovil

Caring for the course

It is the time of year when golfers wrap up warm and play when conditions permit. The prevailing weather dictates how much work the ground staff can do. Having played since my teenage years, I try my best to repair pitchmarks and replace divots. I played for the first time in weeks recently and struck the ball well, although I was rusty around the greens.

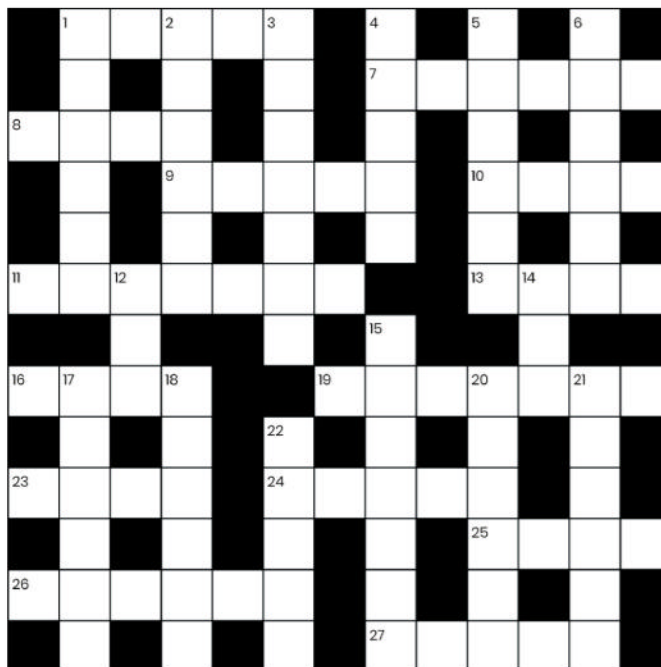
Afterwards I analysed my game and tried to work out the causes of my poor strokes: poor alignment, incorrect reading of green speed and losing concentration – the biggest cause of the latter being lots of time taken repairing pitchmarks and replacing divots left by other members! Every year, secretaries send reminders to members about how to look after our courses. Should we need this, as we should all be au fait with golfing etiquette?

Len Meeke, Brecon

It was ever thus

"I can't win anything as a low-handicapper – some high-handicapper is always shooting the lights out," is a common refrain from the anti-WHS brigade. But assuming these people have been playing for some years, I fear they have short or selective memories. I didn't play competitive golf pre-SSS/CSS, but such conversations were going on the length and breadth of the country in clubhouse bars about that previous system, too. I understand the frustration, but feel it was ever thus.

Eric Riddell, Tamworth



CROSSWORD

Compiled by Tait

Across

- 1 Mrs to go round to see Hartlepool-born Graeme (5)
- 7 Shut no routes for seven-time winner on PGA Tour between 1990 and 2003 (6)
- 8 Algebra equation dissected Carnoustie's 5th hole (4)
- 9 Clubhead parts (5)
- 10 Ornament partially depicts Corner of Augusta (4)
- 11 This year's Canadian Open winner (4,3)
- 13 Winner of 1947 and 1995 Opens (4)
- 16 Hilliest part where balls rest (4)
- 19 Ken rubs out design of hazards (7)
- 23 Partway removed target score for Major champion (4)
- 24 Else a different past winner of Senior Scottish Open (5)
- 25 Golf clothing firm (4)
- 26 One of the three Ws in 1 down (6)
- 27 Winner of this year's British Masters (5)

Down

- 1 County where headquarters of DP World Tour are (6)
- 2 Dane who won 2024 Ras Al Khaimah Championship (6)
- 3 Winner of this year's Irish Open (7)
- 4 Imaginary scratch player who completes a four-ball (5)
- 5 Type of green (6)
- 6 Broke Jimenez's record for most DP World Tour starts (6)
- 12 Hole-in-one from Matt Wallace (3)
- 14 Cut to Cliff in Devon (3)
- 15 Animal up chimney at Cornish club (7)
- 17 Now I do redesign of New York course (6)
- 18 Cheerful-sounding fellow who won 2024 Australian PGA (6)
- 20 Member of US President Cup teams of 2017 and 2022 (6)
- 21 Reportedly standing for captain of the US Solheim Cup teams of 1996 and 1998 (6)
- 22 He won three tournaments on the DP World Tour in 2025 (5)

ANSWERS

Across: 1 Storm, 7 Huston, 8 Brae, 9 Soles, 10 Amen, 11 Ryan Fox, 13 Daly, 16 Lies, 19 Bunkers, 23 Tway, 24 Eales, 25 Nike, 26 Working, 27 Noren.
Down: 1 Surrey, 2 Olesen, 3 McIlroy, 4 Ghost, 5 Island, 6 Howell, 12 Ace, 14 Axe, 15 Mullion, 17 Inwood, 18 Smylie, 20 Kishner, 21 Rankin, 22 Penge.

WIN!



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



Reitan shines in Sun City to land Nedbank title

Photography: Getty Images



● **Kristoffer, congratulations on winning the Nedbank Golf Challenge. How does it feel?**

It's really hard to sum up how I feel. I had a lot of nerves out there during the final round, but to get it over the line in the end is a better feeling that I can describe! I'm trying my best to deal with nervousness and fear and it's really, really difficult. I've managed to do that really well ever since mid-season last year. It keeps getting increasingly difficult, but I'm glad to have dealt with it in a good way to win the Nedbank. It means so much to me - I'm so pleased.

● **At what point did the nerves kick in during the final round?**

I hadn't been in this situation before in my pro career [ed: he was seven clear at one point on Saturday and led after round one]. It was very difficult. I didn't really have anything to base it off. I was feeling nervous all week and it just kept increasing towards the end. You could maybe tell on some of the shots, but I'm just really glad I was able to get it over the line and find the courage I needed to find to hit the shots down the stretch. I'm over the moon.

● **Was the birdie on the 8th hole after some early bogeys a settler for you?**

I don't know about a settler as it didn't really settle me! But I suppose so and it helped with the self-belief to know I could do it. I was pushed all the way and I'm just really glad I was able to keep the chasing pack at arm's length. I'm really proud of myself and my team.

Interview credit: Sky Sports Golf



DID YOU KNOW?

Cameron Smith came agonisingly close to winning his home open at Royal Melbourne, but it was a welcome return to form. He'd missed the cut in his previous seven non-LIV tournaments.



Tiger Woods was all smiles at the Hero World Challenge



Hideki Matsuyama defeated Alex Noren on the first play-off hole at Albany GC in the Bahamas

Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen won his first DPWT title with a closing 70 at the Australian Open





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● SHORT GAME



**“I DON’T KNOW WHY THEY
WEREN’T AT ALL WHAT
KEEGAN HAD ASKED FOR”**

Justin Thomas told the *No Laying Up* podcast that Team USA ‘argued with’ Bethpage staff over Ryder Cup green speeds



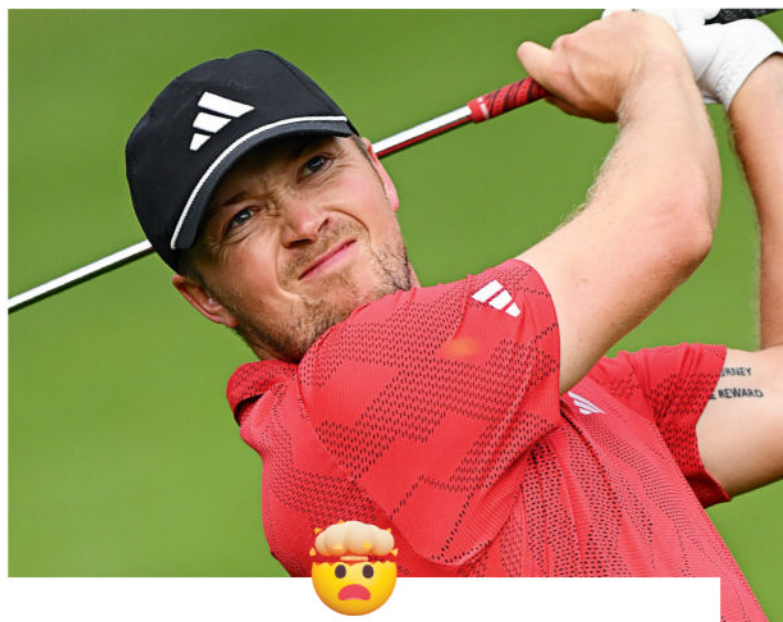
**“MAN, I WISH SOMETHING
MAJOR WOULD HAPPEN, BUT I
DON’T THINK IT’S GOING TO”**

Bryson DeChambeau says he can’t see golf’s great divide being healed any time soon



**“AFTER 450 DP WORLD TOUR EVENTS,
I’VE DECIDED IT’S TIME TO STOP
CHASING AND START EXPLORING
NEW OPPORTUNITIES”**

Two-time DP World Tour winner **Oliver Wilson** announced he’s calling time on his professional career



**“THE FACT TWO OF OUR
BEST TOURNAMENTS OF THE SEASON
ARE ON THE SAME WEEK IS JUST
MIND BLOWING”**

Richard Mansell questioned the decision to have the Australian Open and Nedbank Golf Challenge on at the same time

● IN THE NEWS

Fuzzy Zoeller dies aged 74

Former Masters and US Open champion Fuzzy Zoeller, born Frank Urban Zoeller Jr, died in November aged 74. The man from Indiana was the last player to win The Masters on debut, triumphing at Augusta in 1979. "I've never been to heaven and, thinking back on my life, I probably won't get a chance to go," Zoeller joked years later. "I guess The Masters is as close as I'm going to get." He went on to lift his second Major five years later at Winged Foot. However, his career was marred by controversy over a racist joke he made about Tiger Woods in 1997. He later wrote: "I've cried many times. I've apologized countless times for words said in jest that just aren't a reflection of who I am."



Zoeller defeated Tom Watson and Ed Sneed in a play-off to win The Masters in 1979

Jeeno Thitikul's scoring average for the 2025 LPGA season was the best in the history of the tour, beating Annika Sorenstam's record of 68.697 set in 2002.

Titleist was the number one ball and most played driver, iron and wedge on the 2025 PGA Tour.



● WHO AM I?

Answer in credit to the left

Born in Cornwall in 1886

First Briton to win three different modern professional Majors

Turned pro at 15 before moving to the US

Won the first two US PGA Championships

One of 12 golfers to be inducted into the PGA's inaugural Hall of Fame



● GOOD MONTH, BAD MONTH



Joel Dahmen

Sixteen missed cuts from 28 PGA Tour starts meant the American missed out on his card for next season. He ended the year ranked 122nd.



Dan Brown

Laurie Canter's move to LIV Golf meant Brown took one of the ten PGA Tour cards on offer on the DPWT, having originally missed out.



Matt Wallace

The Englishman finished just outside the top 100 in the FedExCup after the Fall Series, meaning he lost his PGA Tour card for the 2026 season.



Sami Valimaki

After a number of close calls, Valimaki became the first player from Finland to win on the PGA Tour at the RSM Classic in Georgia.

Can you enjoy playing golf in the rain?



Fergus Bisset

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

● Yes

Says Fergus Bisset

The lowest medal score I've ever posted at my home club was played in persistent rain. It was a Wednesday competition towards the end of the 2007 season. I played brilliantly and putted like a god. I narrowly missed a putt on the final green to match the course record.

I enjoyed that round... a lot. So, yes, I can enjoy playing golf in the rain. It all depends on mindset. If you approach a rainy day on the course as a chore, you will find it to be a chore. If you approach it as a challenge, you may find it hugely rewarding.

Battling the elements and not being beaten by them is one of the great feelings in golf, as far as I'm concerned. Posting a decent score when the weather is against you is far more of an achievement than cruising round in a low number in warm, clear conditions.

I enjoy preparing myself to beat the rain. I, like many golfers, have a very fancy waterproof suit that cost quite a bit of money. I like to make use of it. I also have a windproof umbrella, an umbrella holder on my trolley, an exceptionally good rain glove that becomes grippier the wetter it gets, a bag with waterproof zips and Gore Tex shoes that keep my feet dry in even the worst deluges.

Living in this country, if I didn't play golf in the rain, I'd play a good deal less often. British golfers must learn to enjoy playing in the rain.

A friend of mine once made a great observation when we were hillwalking in miserable weather. "It doesn't have to be fun to be fun," he said. It's so true. If the course is open, I will play and, one way or another, it will be fun.

● No

Says Jeremy Ellwood

To make sure I wasn't being too harsh in my opinion here, I checked a couple of dictionary definitions for "enjoy". The Cambridge Dictionary told me it was "to feel happy because of doing or experiencing something", while Merriam-Webster put it more succinctly: "to have a good time".

I then reflected on my experiences of playing golf in the rain over the years. I'm struggling to think of one instance where either definition accurately describes the mood I've been in as I've trudged round in the wet, watching clubs slip from my grasp, my ball go absolutely nowhere and anything and everything that I have with me being utterly drenched by the time I squelch off four hours later looking like a drowned rat.

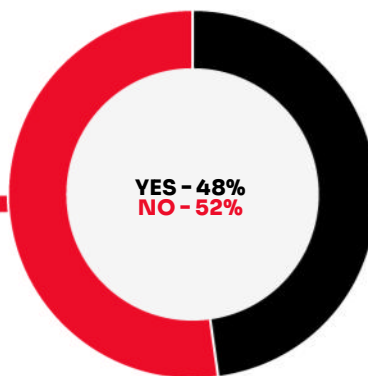
I have all the bad-weather gear you can shake a stick at, so that isn't the problem. The problem is that nothing I have experienced while playing in such conditions has ever made me want to sit in the bar afterwards with my playing companions and say, "Do you know what - I really enjoyed it out there today."

Yes, I've occasionally gritted out a decent score in the face of such meteorological adversity and there has undoubtedly been a

real sense of satisfaction in that. But enjoy? That would be stretching it a bit.

Sometimes you have to do it, as it would be poor form to drop out of a competition (with a last-minute back injury) when Michael Fish's modern-day counterpart points to a distinctly gloomy weather chart. But I'd never now choose to play golf if I knew I was going to get soaked, which tells me there is little, if any, enjoyment to be found in such activity.

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



● STAY AND PLAY

Crooklands, Cumbria

As part of a wider Cumbria break with Rob Smith, Jeremy Ellwood finds the perfect base for the county's southern reaches and enjoys a return visit to Windermere Golf Club

● **The golf**
Windermere: par 67, 5,122 yards

Laid out on rolling, and at times, rocky terrain a couple of miles from Bowness, Windermere is a beautiful place to play. Don't be fooled by the scorecard for there are some strong tests here, such as the rollercoaster 4th, which makes a mockery of its modest 380 yards, and the 17th and 18th on the final climb, an ascent that begins on the 16th, the course's solitary par 5.

My notes for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th read simply "tough", "real chance" and "very tough" and that is the beauty of this lovely course – interspersed among the challenges are genuine chances to score via potentially



Crooklands is very handily located

perfect base for golf trips to this area. It's a family business under new ownership, with both the inn and bedrooms extensively refurbished in recent years.

It cleverly mixes the feel of an old Cumbrian

drivable par 4s like that 3rd hole plus the 9th and 11th. Above all, any round here is enormous fun with views to die for.

● **The hotel**

Crooklands, on the A65 close to the major south Cumbria routes of the M6 and A590, is the

inn with the modern amenities and accommodation many are looking for, with comfortable, spacious rooms, a lively and friendly bar, and dining either in the older-style inn or more modern dining room with its contemporary decor. There are six dog-friendly rooms, too.

● **Best deal**

There are 11 courses within 30 minutes of Crooklands: Kirkby Lonsdale, Windermere, Carus Green, Bentham, Silverdale, Kendal, Casterton, Ulverston, Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham. Stay and play at Crooklands with Golf Lake District (golflakedistrict.co.uk) on a one-night B&B package with rounds at Windermere and Kirkby Lonsdale from £214.99pp based on two sharing on a Friday or Saturday night.

Sunday night B&B packages start from £189.99pp based on two sharing to include two rounds from a choice of Kirkby Lonsdale, Silverdale and Bentham. Tailor-made packages are available to suit all budgets, golfing abilities and tastes.

Challenging beyond its yardage, Windermere enjoys a delightful setting



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A 'plane' and simple iron-play drill

By Top 50 Coach Russell Covey

1

Yes, this is a toy aeroplane on my club! I'm always looking out for different kinds of props I can use in lessons, and Brian Manzella was the first coach I saw using this one. A lot of mid- to high-handicappers, particularly slicers, tend to try and keep the clubface facing the target line for too long post-impact. This image shows this poor position, with the giveaway the wings pointing to the right.



Slow swings

To get the most out of this drill, just rehearse some slow swings and focus on where the plane's wings are pointing. Don't worry about hitting any balls.

Photography: Matt Lincoln

3

All I'm trying to do – and this is where the visual aid of the aeroplane helps – is to get golfers to learn how to rotate the forearms, shaft and clubface. See here how the toe of the club is pointing straight up and the wings of the plane are horizontal. As long as the wings are at 90° to the face of the golf club, in theory, for most people, that's going to be straight(ish). You can also just about see how the hands work. They roll and rotate.

2

As you move into the longer clubs, what you'll inevitably see happening is more of a slice. Attaching a plane to the club can help those guilty to get away from passive hands. This is what we want to see. Getting into this position (same position but side-on to the right) may feel awkward at first; in fact, many people I teach find it strange as they feel like the ball is going to go way left.



● WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

Laurie Canter

The Englishman has turned down a PGA Tour card for a spot on the Majesticks LIV Golf team for 2026



Driver:
Ping G430 LST, 8°, Fujikura Ventus TR Black 6-X shaft.



Irons:
Ping Blueprint S, 4-PW, Nippon N.S. Pro Modus3 Tour 120x shafts.



Putter:
Ping PLD DS72.



3-wood:
Ping G440 LST, 15°, Fujikura Ventus TR Black 7-X shaft.



Hybrid:
Ping G430, 19°, Fujikura Ventus HB 10-X shaft.



Wedges:
Ping S259 prototype, 50° and 54°; Titleist Vokey SM10 Wedgeworks Proto, 60°, Project X 6.0 wedge shafts.



Ball:
Titleist 2025 Pro V1.

● SPOTTED ON TOUR

Sun City debut for Cobra

New Cobra OPTM drivers, including this LS version, were seen out in South Africa ahead of the Nedbank Golf Challenge.



Quantum leap

Tom McKibbin used a Callaway Quantum Triple Diamond Max driver just days after it appeared on the USGA conforming list.



Scottie still feeling blue

The World No.1 looks to have switched into the new TaylorMade Qi4D driver, retaining the custom blue face from his previous Qi10.



● GEAR NEWS

Kristoffer Reitan

came out on top at the Nedbank Golf Challenge in South Africa with a Ping G440 Max driver, 3-wood and hybrid, as well as a Ping Harwood putter from 2011.

Hideki Matsuyama

triumphed at the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas using a Srixon ZXi LS driver and Srixon Z-Forged II irons, as well as a Cobra Radspeed Tour 5-wood.

David Puig

won the Australian PGA Championship playing a Titleist TSR3 driver, Srixon Z-Forged II irons and a Scotty Cameron Phantom Circle T 9.5 prototype putter.

Rasmus

Neergaard-Petersen earned victory at the Australian Open in Melbourne using a Ping G440 LST driver, Ping i240 irons and a 2023 Titleist Pro V1 ball.

Jeeno Thitikul

was victorious at the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship using a Callaway Elyte Triple Diamond driver, a Callaway Apex UW hybrid and the Chrome Tour X ball.



Not much has changed visually since Black Ops, with PXG becoming known for its subtle, monochromatic designs

● LAUNCH OF THE MONTH

PXG Lightning metalwood family from £269 to £569



The trend of 10k MOI drivers is going nowhere. The Max-10k+ head takes MOI beyond 10k for the first time on a PXG driver



Lofts go up to a 27° 11-wood and a 34° 8-hybrid, providing extensive fitting options in the top and middle of the bag

● Fresh off the success of its Black Ops family of drivers, fairway woods and hybrids, it seems a new kind of storm is coming from PXG. While I can only presume the next collection of clubs will be called Thunder (because what follows lightning?), the Lightning family is built on a foundation of speed with PXG's full fitting armoury at the golfer's disposal.

● The Lightning drivers introduce a new Frequency Tuned face technology. This design works by matching the face's natural vibration frequency with the ball's compression at impact, resulting in a more efficient transfer of energy for faster ball speed. This is supported by a Spined Sole design that stiffens the sole, plus a weight structure that uses thin-walled carbon fibre for stiffness without

adding mass. There are four models: Lightning Tour, Lightning Tour Mid, Lightning Max-10k+ and Lightning Max Lite, so players of all shot-shape preferences and swing speeds can be fitted into a driver.

● Forgiveness has been enhanced by incorporating more carbon fibre in the sole area – up to 84% more in the Max-10K+ compared with the previous model. The back weight has been positioned further from the centre of gravity, increasing the moment of inertia, with the Max-10K+ achieving a combined MOI reading well over the 10,000 threshold.

● The Lightning fairway woods and hybrids share a similar approach to speed. Both feature a thinner face design – the fairway wood perimeter is 12.5% thinner and the

By Dan Parker

Three adjustable weights in the sole of the Tour, Tour Mid and Max-10k+ drivers offer plenty of adjustability, both during and after a fitting session



Q&A BRAD SCHWEIGERT
Chief operating officer at PXG

What was your goal when you first sat down to design what would become Lightning?

We put some high-level goals on the table for our engineers when setting out to create Lightning, and more ball speed was high on that list. We asked how we can make it faster, more forgiving and more versatile all at once. Making a club faster is a big challenge with the various USGA-conforming rules we have to work under, but our Frequency Tuned face is the concept that we've come up with to help.

How significant are the gains?

It's important to note that we're not talking about 10mph or more gains; the whole industry is working with tenths of a mile per hour. But what we've created here is a more efficient structure that is quicker than our last product while also maintaining the levels of forgiveness.

hybrid face insert is 6% thinner than in the previous Black Ops models. This allows for greater face flex, resulting in faster ball speeds and increased carry distances. Forgiveness is achieved through a high-MOI design, utilising a squared-face profile with perimeter weighting that pushes mass to the extreme edges of the sole to maintain a low CG.

- The fairway woods come in two distinct profiles – the new compact Lightning Tour, with a taller, more rounded face, and the standard Lightning, with a larger, squared-off face. Both club types retain the PXG adjustability system for dialling in trajectory and directional preference, with a huge array of loft options giving fitters ample ways to meet the demands of each golfer's personal gapping issues.



“PXG'S FITTING MATRIX IS THE ENVY OF THE GOLF INDUSTRY. MY FITTING FOR THE NEW LIGHTNING FAMILY WAS SO COMPREHENSIVE THAT I'M CERTAIN GOLFERS OF ALL ABILITIES WILL BE ABLE TO FIND AN OPTIMAL SET-UP HERE”

DAN PARKER, GM STAFF WRITER



The taller, more rounded Tour version of the fairway wood is a fascinating new addition. It will likely suit the eye of the better player

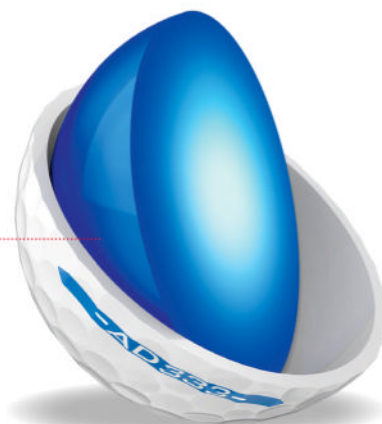


● NEW LAUNCHES

Srixon AD333 ball

£28 a dozen

By Dan Parker



The fine-tuned FastLayer Core has seen overall compression reduced to 68

GM SAYS

A softer feel and enhanced distance strengthen the new AD333's claim to be the ultimate two-piece ball for those seeking the perfect blend of feel, performance and value.

The silver foil element has been removed for more eco-friendly boxes



● Srixon is once again looking to cement the AD333's position as a market leader in the mid- to low-priced ball sector with its new version of this beloved two-piece ball. It retains its reputation for providing premium performance, particularly for mid-handicap golfers, while introducing meaningful technological advancements that enhance both distance and feel.

● The central story of the new AD333 is the evolution of its core and compression. Srixon has fine-tuned the FastLayer Core, which utilises a contrasting compression effect to maximise ball speed. The new AD333 model sees overall compression lowered to 68, which encourages a longer, straighter flight, especially on low-lofted clubs at the top end of the bag, while simultaneously delivering a more satisfyingly soft feel on iron and wedge shots.

● The new specialised Spin Skin coating is formulated with highly flexible molecular bonds, which allows the clubface grooves to dig deeper into the cover at impact. This maximises friction,

A new Spin Skin coating helps grooves dig deeper into the ball for maximum friction at impact

generates increased spin and provides the crucial control and stopping power needed in approach play and on those little shots around the greens – something no golfer will ever complain about.

● The aerodynamics of the ball have been optimised via a new 338 Speed Dimple Pattern, which has been engineered to improve overall flight performance by reducing the drag coefficient, allowing the ball to cut through the air with less resistance for a more penetrating launch and straighter trajectory. At the same time, a higher lift coefficient helps the ball stay airborne for longer to maximise carry distance.

● Beyond the on-course improvements, Srixon has reinforced its commitment to sustainability, with the new AD333 featuring more eco-friendly packaging. The brand has eliminated the use of silver foil from its already plastic-free boxes and moved to a new paper-based construction to help the brand achieve its goal of reducing waste without compromising the quality of the product inside.



SeeMore S-Series putters £425

SeeMore's SKx and SBx zero-torque putters feature the brand's patented Rifle Scope Technology and a milled steel face.



FootJoy Hyperboot £190

This boot blends the performance and style of the brand's Hyperflex shoe with practicality to help battle the elements.



SnapSwing training aid £24

The Bluetooth-enabled device lets you hit record on your phone via a button on the grip for effortless swing analysis.



XXIO 14 driver £749

New Ultiflex technology promises faster ball speeds while Activwing helps steady the downswing path to aid confidence.



MacGregor Tourney Max driver £219

This driver has a deep and low CG placement to help promote a higher launch and boost forgiveness.



Fujikura Speeder NX Gold shaft \$400

The Speeder NX Gold features Variable Torque Technology to offer a smooth feel with mid launch and mid/low spin.



Stitch Link bag strap £299

This strap's Bluetooth speaker, GPS functionality and built-in Bushnell screen will revolutionise the carrying experience.



XXIO 14 iron £240 (G) £220 (S) (per club)

A thinner neck plus high-density tungsten in the sole centre the club's energy for greater distance and launch.



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**Galvin Green
Ames - £319**
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stretch technology.



**Kjus Pro 3L 3.0 -
£449**
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stretch panels.

● THE GAME

● LOVE TO PLAY

TERRAS DA COMPORTA – TORRE COURSE

● Portugal

GF: from
€200

Stats: par 72,
6,790 yards



Just a mile inland from the unspoilt beach at Comporta to the south-east of Lisbon, the Torre course at Terras da Comporta is the region's newest gem and a perfect complement and foil to David McLay-Kidd's very highly rated Dunas course.

Situated just a few minutes to the north of its slightly older sibling, this is the first signature design from the pen of 2017 Masters champion Sergio García, and it opened for play just last summer. This new course is part of a

real estate development that will include upwards of 200 high-end homes as well as two luxury hotels, and it has already been awarded the accolade of 'World's Best New Course' at the World Golf Awards 2025.

The design covers a sprawling acreage of gently undulating and timeless duneland, with the low number of regular bunkers dwarfed by the vast swathes of sandscape that line most of the holes. Tight fairways, small greens and the occasional blind drive pay

homage to García's love for his native Real Valderrama.

"We tried to make it challenging yet somewhere that pulls you back to want to play it more and see if you can play it differently," the Spaniard has said. The short holes on the Torre layout are a particular highlight, especially the diminutive 5th, and there is great variety and beauty to savour all the way round the course.

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





Wayne Riley

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

● OPINION

In late December, the great Tiger Woods turned 50 years old. I'd urge you all to read the feature on page 32 counting down some of his greatest moments, but given I've known Tiger for 30 years or so, I thought I'd talk about his impact on the game and a couple of interactions I've had with him over the years.

To be perfectly honest, I don't know where I sit on whether he's the greatest golfer of all time. You all know the stats and facts, so I won't go into it, but can you rank anyone above Jack, a man who got to 18 Majors and recorded so many runner-up finishes? I'm not sure. It's an extremely difficult one. Either way, the impact Tiger has had on the world of golf is like nothing else we've ever seen before.

Every professional golfer who came after him owes so much to Tiger (and Arnold Palmer for that matter). Woods has meant so much to the game and he's had a huge impact on me personally, both in terms of playing and watching. I can't see him coming back and competing in Majors again, but there's still a part of me that hopes he can somehow get one more PGA Tour victory and reach 83 on his own. Currently, he's stuck on 82 and in a tie with Sam Snead.

My first interaction with Woods came before the final round of the Scottish Open at Carnoustie in 1995. I was leading the tournament and waiting in the players' lounge ahead of my tee time when a young guy with a USA hat came over to me. He introduced himself – he'd already finished his final round – and we were just chatting away. He was asking me what it was like waiting to go out on Sunday when you had the lead, and looking back it was surreal – the greatest

front-runner golfer I have ever seen asking me for advice at the start of his career.

He was a very quiet, unassuming young kid and he was all ears and keen to learn. I wasn't overly chatty given I was mentally preparing for my last round, but he was eager to soak up as much knowledge as possible. It was actually quite settling for me. I can remember everything about it 30 years later.

Since then, Tiger and I have got on pretty well – as much as you can get on with Tiger Woods. We're not going out for dinner or anything like that, but we acknowledge each other and he's always been very nice to me. I got to meet him up close and personal before he was a superstar and it's a really cool moment to reflect on.

Another memory that comes to mind is when he holed a beautiful putt on the 18th at the Dubai Desert Classic in 2008. Going into the back nine on Sunday, he was four shots off the lead having not played the front nine particularly well. I thought to myself, 'I'm going to see vintage Tiger Woods here.'

It was a bunched leaderboard and it would have taken a monumental performance to win from that position. Well, he ended up doing that without a play-off. Some of the things he was doing were out of this world. I was just shaking my head in awe. Even on the last, he made a bit of a hash of it, but he holed a 30-footer down the hill and gave it a big old fist-pump. Of all the tournaments I've seen him win around the world, that one sticks in my mind. It was a real 'show us what you can do' moment, and boy did he. It was just incredible – true champion golf.

I've always found Tiger to have a great sense of humour, which might surprise some people. He's always been so under the spotlight and you can become a bit guarded when that's the case, but I've always enjoyed my conversations with him away from the public gaze. There are definitely some parallels between him and Rory McIlroy. There's a difference between his public persona and private persona, for sure.

It's been a privilege to follow his career from such a close vantage point and I really hope he has one more hurrah in him. If he doesn't, though, it's been one heck of a ride.

“Tiger has meant so much to the game of golf and he's had a huge impact on me”



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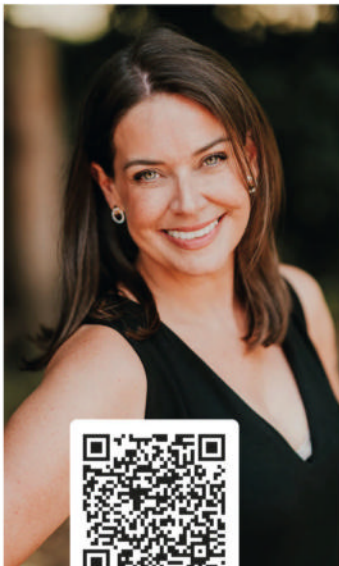
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Alison Root

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

● OPINION

I'm not one for making New Year's resolutions, primarily because by March they've usually fallen by the wayside. That's strange really, because I believe I'm very disciplined and genuinely want to succeed. Perhaps it's not a lack of discipline, but simply a case of being unrealistic with the goals I'm aiming for, especially when it comes to golf.

I need to accept where I'm at with my game and not keep trying to chase a score, thinking I can still pull rounds out of the bag like the player I used to be, especially since I haven't made any serious effort to practise and improve... until recently, that is.

This reminds me of my schooldays. Back then, I wouldn't study hard, but always just enough to get by. But as we all know, that 'just enough' philosophy doesn't cut it with golf. To be any good and play consistently, especially under the structure of the World Handicap System, you've really got to work at it.

Interestingly, seeing England Golf's data provides some much-needed perspective. We all strive for that perfect, lower number, but have you ever wondered what percentile your handicap puts you into as a golfer? The figures show that from over 780,000 golfers holding a Handicap Index in England, I'm actually doing okay at 13.3. Only 6.5% of female golfers hold a handicap between 11 and 15, compared to the majority (18.8%) who play off 26 to 30.

If you're happy simply enjoying your golf without striving for a lower handicap, that's absolutely fine. But if you're like me, talk is cheap, and the question is: what action am I going to take ahead of the new season? I did abandon that 'getting by' attitude last month, and

started with the most basic step by seeking professional help.

A bunker lesson at Colchester Golf Club with PGA professional Sarah Bennett was a revelation. I'd fallen into the hit-and-hope brigade and had completely lost the plot when it came to bunkers. I was losing so many shots by either not getting out on my first, or even second, attempt, or by airmailing the ball across the green.

I thought I knew it all. After all, over the years I've witnessed so many instruction shoots and read endless bunker tips, so in my head, I knew the right technique, thinking this was a blip and that miraculously the effective sand play I used to produce would return. Of course, I realise now, given the faults Sarah identified as having crept into my set-up and swing, that was never going to happen. It's incredible that I ever got out of the sand at all!

I therefore urge anyone struggling with their game to book a lesson. I'd really underestimated how what you feel is so different from what is real. Aside from immediately correcting my faults, the session also gave me a real confidence boost and left me feeling energised to go out and practise, knowing exactly what I should be doing now.

I'm sure it will also help improve my mental process, washing away the hit-and-hope confusion. While I'm no pro, this is where they excel. Take Lottie Woad, for example; her work ethic is unrivalled. Woad's coach, Luke Bone, has mentioned that she's often the first one on the range during a tournament week and he has to ensure that she doesn't tire herself out.

That kind of discipline, the dedication to process over result, is exactly what most club golfers (myself included) lack. Even professional players miss shots, they are only human, but what separates them is their immediate return to a process.

I know I'm talking a good game, but my new commitment, armed with expert instruction, is to adopt that same mindset – trust my technique, commit to effort, and know that even the inevitable missed shot is just my sign to stick to the plan I've practised. I hope that this time next year I'm telling a different story. Watch this space!

“With golf, a ‘just enough’ philosophy doesn’t cut it. You have got to work at it”

GOLF

GREG NICHOLSON
Est. 1978

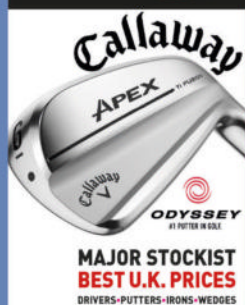
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THE GOLDEN AGE OF TIGER

Photography Getty Images

Golden age

It's hard to believe the man who has entertained, surprised and wowed us for decades is now 50 years old. **Gavin Newsham** reflects on 50 of Tiger's finest words, deeds and moments from the age of two to the present day

50

**RECORDS GALORE,
1997-2025**

Where do you begin? PGA and PGA Tour Player of the Year a record 11 times? Or maybe PGA Tour money leader a record ten times? Is it the Vardon Trophy winner a record nine times? Or the Byron Nelson Award that he has taken a record nine times, too?

Then there's the World Golf Hall of Fame, the PGA Tour Lifetime Achievement Exemption (created just for him), countless sportsman or athlete of the year awards – the list goes on and on. He even got the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Donald Trump in 2019.

49

**THE CHANGING OF
THE GUARD, 1987**

On November 28, 1987, Tiger Woods – aged 11 years and 11 months – and his father, Earl, played a round of golf at the Long Beach Navy golf course. Over the first nine holes, Tiger struggled and was over par, but once he reached the turn, he became an altogether different player.

With four birdies on the back nine, including one at the final hole, the youngster signed for a final total of 70.

The best Earl Woods, a decent player himself, could manage was 71. For the first time in their lives, Tiger had beaten his father in a round of golf, and though neither of them knew it at the time, Earl would never again be able to defeat his son on the golf course.

48

**PLAY IT AGAIN
SAM, 1982**

When he was just six years old, Tiger was given the opportunity to play a few holes of golf with seven-time Major Champion and 82-time PGA Tour winner Sam Snead at Soboba Springs in California. When his excited coach Rudy Duran told him of the invite, Woods was none the wiser. "Is he any good?" the youngster asked.

47

HE SAID IT, 1993
"I'M A NORMAL TEENAGER. IT'S JUST
THAT I DO ONE THING BETTER
THAN THE AVERAGE TEENAGER – AND
THAT'S PLAY GOLF"

Woods played in the 1992 and '93 Los Angeles Opens as a teenage amateur



46

**THE DECIMATION
OF STEPHEN AMES,
2006**

Before their first-round match at the 2006 WGC-Accenture Match Play at La Costa in California, Trinidad's Stephen Ames was asked about his chances against his first-round opponent, Tiger Woods, and questioned just how well the world number one was playing. "Anything can happen, especially where he's hitting the ball," Ames joked.

Tiger didn't respond, but when the pair took to the golf course, he let his clubs do the talking. After making birdies at six of the first nine holes, Woods closed out the game at the 10th, winning the match by a record margin of 9&8.

After the game, Woods was asked whether Ames' comments had motivated him to play better. "I just had to show him that I could still play," he replied.

The lesson was clear – never trash-talk Tiger.

45

IN DEMAND, 1992

When Woods was at Western High School in Anaheim, California, he often got requests from the media, keen to learn what made America's hottest young golfer tick. He once received a questionnaire asking him to write down which golfers he regarded as his heroes. His answer? None.

44

**A WORLD
CHAMPION, 1984**

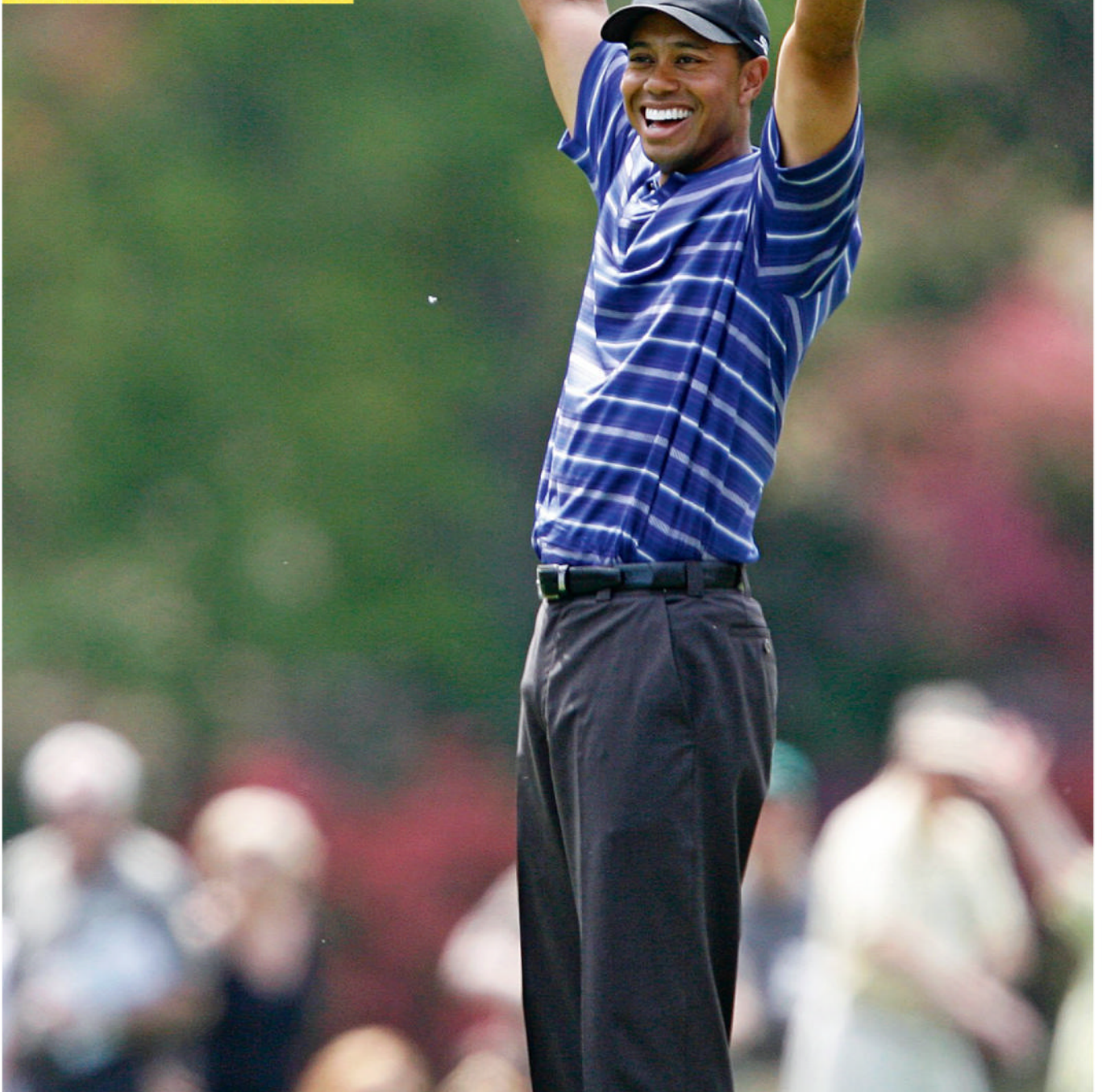
At just eight years of age, Woods won his first Junior World Championship title in 1984, beating opponents two years older than him. He'd go on to win five more Junior World titles, plus an unprecedented three US Junior Amateur Championships.

43

**A TIGER FIRST,
2006**

The 14th hole at Augusta National: Tiger Woods is standing in the middle of the fairway, has 163 yards to the hole and an 8-iron in his hands. In a flash, his ball is airborne and soon lands on the green, before taking a couple of skips forward and then diving straight into the hole. Cue major celebrations as Woods records his first ever eagle on a par 4 at The Masters.

Arms aloft as he celebrates his first par-4 eagle in his 12th Masters outing



42

DRIVES FOR SHOW, 2002

While Max Homa holds the record for the longest drive ever recorded on the PGA Tour – 477 yards at The Sentry in 2024 – Tiger Woods once hit a 498-yard ripper on the par-5 18th during the 2002 Mercedes Championships, played at Kapalua's Plantation course. Back then, however, drives weren't measured using Shotlink, the tour's official data-gathering system, so it has never officially been recognised.

41

MASTER MEETS PRETENDER, 1990

In spring 1990, Jack Nicklaus was giving a clinic at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles. For Tiger Woods, a child who had grown up with the sole aim of eclipsing everything the world's greatest ever golfer had achieved, here was his chance to show Nicklaus that his time as golf's GOAT was fast running out.

Sure enough, Nicklaus summoned Woods and asked him to come forward and play a few shots for the crowd. Tiger jumped at the chance, and when he arrowed his ball into the distance, there were gasps of amazement. Nicklaus smiled. "Tiger," he remarked, "when I grow up, I want to have a swing as pretty as yours."

40

TEENAGE TIGER NEARLY DOWNS DALY, 1989

In 1989, at the Texarkana Country Club, 13-year-old Tiger played with rising pro star John Daly at the Insurance Youth Golf Classic, an event pairing pros with junior golfers. A last-minute alternate, Daly had driven overnight from Arkansas to compete, but soon found himself four down at the turn. Petrified he might lose to a 13-year-old, Daly charged back with four birdies to snatch victory. Not that Woods was impressed. "He wasn't a smart player," Tiger said.

39

HE SAID IT, 2023
"TALENT IS SOMETHING YOU ARE BORN WITH AND A SKILL IS SOMETHING YOU DEVELOP. IN GOLF, 99% OF WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED ARE SKILLS"



38

BREAKING GLASS, 2001

From the day Woods signed with Nike in 1996, the sportswear giant used him to rewrite the rule book when it came to golf marketing. The Nike Tour Accuracy commercial in 2001 was a case in point. Like the famous ball-juggling advert, more of which later, it is just Woods on his own in front of a building with a club in his hands and three balls at his feet.

One by one, Woods hits the balls, with each one smashing a window a storey higher than the previous one, before he concludes with a trademark Tiger twirl of the golf club. Legend has it that it was done in one take, too.

36

HIS FIRST HOLE-IN-ONE, 1982

On May 12, 1982, at Heartwell Golf Park in Long Beach, Woods, aged six, recorded his first hole-in-one when he aced the 12th. Woods watched his ball carry the bunker guarding the front of the green, but wasn't tall enough to see where it landed.

Then he heard the cheers as one of his coach Rudy Duran's friends lifted him up so he could see his ball was actually in the cup itself. Elated, Tiger ran to the green to collect his ball until his celebration was cut short. "You idiot!" shouted one of his playing partners. "You left your golf bag back on the tee!" Tiger trudged back, still smiling.

37

MAKING HISTORY – AGAIN, 1991

As referenced earlier, in late July 1991, Woods, 15, became the youngest ever United States Junior Amateur champion in the event's 44-year history when he defeated Brad Zwetschke in the final at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill in Florida. He was also the tournament's first ever black winner. "You will forever be a part of history," Earl Woods told his son.

35

GOING LOW AT MUIRFIELD, 1992

At just 16, Tiger Woods announced his arrival in the 1992 US Amateur at Muirfield Village with a dazzling second-round 66. The high-school sophomore displayed maturity beyond his years, shaping shots and reading greens like a seasoned pro. He didn't win, but his precision and poise turned heads. "I know I can play with these guys," Woods said.



34

HIS MASTERS DEBUT, 1995

From the moment 19-year-old Tiger first set foot on Augusta National, he knew it was his kind of course. As the newly crowned US Amateur champion, Woods took his place in the Masters field in 1995 and finished in 41st place, tied with Payne Stewart and Mark Calcavecchia and one ahead of two-time champion Seve Ballesteros, to win the Silver Cup as low amateur.

When he got back to Stanford next day, making his 9am history class, Woods penned a letter to Augusta chairman Jack Stephens thanking him for letting him play. Describing the experience as "Fantasyland and Disney World wrapped into one," he said the tournament was where he "left my youth behind and became a man", adding that it was "the most wonderful week of my life". Well, at least until two years later...



Woods played
The Masters
twice as an
amateur before
then winning on
his pro debut

33

**WOODS BECOMES
A CARDINAL, 1994**

From his early teens, Woods had been pursued by countless US college coaches, but the intense battle to recruit him eventually came down to a choice between Stanford (the Cardinals) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. In an unprecedented move, Woods announced his decision at a press conference at his high school on Wednesday, November 10, 1993 and as soon as the news broke, Stanford's press office was bombarded with calls.

"We had John McEnroe, who advanced to the Wimbledon semi-finals the summer before college; swimmer Janet Evans, who won Olympic Gold Medals before coming here; and quarterback John Elway," said college representative Steve Raczynski. "None of them was in Tiger's category."



28

**GOING FOR THE
JUGGLER, 1999**

In 1999, Woods and Nike revealed a new advert in which Tiger stands in front of a camera and proceeds to juggle a golf ball on his wedge, balance it on the clubface, knock it behind his back and between his legs and then turn 90° and smash it out of mid-air into the distance.

What made it more impressive, however, was that Woods was meant to be filming another Nike commercial that day and director Doug Liman happened to see him messing about on the range and decided to film him as he juggled. Woods needed to complete his routine in exactly 28 seconds to be the perfect length for an advert, which, after four takes, he did.

32

**A MULTI-
MILLIONAIRE
OVERNIGHT, 1996**

When Woods then dropped out of Stanford and turned pro in August 1996, he did so with a contract from Nike worth \$60 million and another from Titleist for \$20 million. As Hughes Norton, his agent at the time, pointed out, it was four times what then World No.1 Greg Norman was getting.

30

SUB-70, 1989

Most golfers spend their entire lives dreaming of breaking 70. Not Tiger Woods. He did it for the first time on a regulation course at the age of just 12...

29

**SCRATCH THAT,
1989**

...and became a scratch golfer that very same year.

27

**A PROFESSIONAL
DEBUT ACE, 1996**

Woods' pro debut in the 1996 Greater Milwaukee Open saw him earn his first ever pro pay cheque for \$2,544, but the highlight of his tournament came in the final round when, at the 202-yard par-3 14th, he pulled a 6-iron from his Titleist bag and sent a soaring shot onto the green, watching as it took a couple of hops and disappeared into the cup. Some golfers go lifetimes without making a hole-in-one. This was Tiger's ninth – and he was only 20.

31

**THE SHOT THAT
SEALED THE
DEAL, 2019**

Maybe it wasn't the shot that won the 2019 Masters, but it was the one that all but ended Francesco Molinari's challenge. The Italian was two clear as they reached the 12th, but when he found Rae's Creek, Woods had the perfect chance to reel him in. With tension mounting, he used his decades of experience to hit the heart of the green and two-putt to close the gap on the leader. There were still six holes to play, but everyone sensed there was only going to be one winner.



26

**MIKE DOUGLAS
SHOW, 1978**

On October 6, 1978, ten weeks before he was three, Tiger made his TV debut on *The Mike Douglas Show*. Dressed in a red cap and shorts and carrying a tiny red golf bag, he calmly took putts and hit shots, charming the audience but looking uneasy. Father Earl, however, seemed to revel in the attention, but for Tiger, it was the start of a life lived in public view.



25

THAT ACE AT THE PHOENIX OPEN, 1997

Five months after he had turned pro, Woods teed it up at the 1997 Phoenix Open, where, in his third round, he gave golf one of its most electric moments. On the par-3 16th at TPC Scottsdale, the rowdiest hole in golf, he unleashed a towering 9-iron that landed softly, bounced twice and fell into the cup. The crowd erupted in chaos, beer flying, stands shaking, as Tiger first demonstrated his unique inability to perform a satisfactory high-five.

Tiger's ace in the Phoenix Open sent both him and the delirious fans into raptures

24

VICTORY AT THE NCAA's, 1996

In early June, 1996, Tiger capped off his stellar Stanford University golf career with a resounding victory at the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Championship. When he quit college to turn pro in August 1996, Woods, then 20, had won 11 times in two seasons. For context, Tom Watson won just two NCAA events in his four years at Stanford.

23

A BORN LEADER, 2019

Woods is the greatest front-runner golf has known. Not only has he won 14 events leading wire-to-wire, but in Majors, his record of winning 14 and losing just one having gone into the final round with at least a share of the lead is unmatched. Indeed, his only 'come from behind' Major win was his last one at the 2019 Masters.

22

HIS MAIDEN PRO WIN, 1996

Tiger announced his arrival in professional golf with a thrilling play-off victory at the 1996 Las Vegas Invitational. In just his fifth start as a pro, the 20-year-old defeated Davis Love III, sinking clutch putts and displaying all the poise of someone who had been on tour for decades. "This," he warned, "is just the beginning."

21

THE CHILD PRODIGY, 1979

When he was just three years old, little Tiger Woods, with just three clubs in his bag, stunned members at The Navy Golf Club in Los Alamitos, California when he took to the course with his father, Earl, and shot 48 over nine holes. Even in his early childhood, young Tiger's extraordinary talent was impossible to ignore.

"Better than most" perfectly summed up this monster putt at Sawgrass in 2001

20

HE SAID IT, 2009
"WINNING TAKES CARE
OF EVERYTHING"



19

THAT 3-IRON AT HAZELTINE, 2002

For all his many shots that defied belief, the 3-iron Tiger hit from a fairway bunker on Hazeltine's 18th in the 2002 US PGA is right up there. With one foot outside the sand, the ball well below his feet and the wind gusting, he faced around 200 yards to the green, with a huge tree right in front of him adding to the test.

In a flash, the ball soared out of the bunker, cleared the tree and landed on the green, leaving Woods with a birdie putt that, of course, he drained. "It was pure perfection," said playing partner Ernie Els.

16

A CUT ABOVE, 1998-2005

One of the many records Woods holds that is perhaps overlooked concerns his remarkable, almost freakish, consistency. In a streak that started in 1998, for example, he set the record for most consecutive cuts made, beating Byron Nelson's previous record of 113, before extending the mark to 142 when he finally missed a cut at the EDS Byron Nelson Championship in May 2005. It will never be beaten.

14

V IS FOR VALHALLA - AND VICTORY, 2000

In a season where Woods seemed invincible, it was left to journeyman Bob May to offer most resistance to Tiger's march into history. At the 2000 US PGA at Valhalla, both men played at their peak, but after a must-make birdie for Woods at the 72nd hole left both players tied on 18-under, it was Tiger who went on to claim the trophy in the three-hole play-off. He was propelled by an iconic birdie at the first extra hole, where, famously, he chased the ball into the hole. Leg three of the Tiger Slam was complete.

18

'BETTER THAN MOST', PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP, 2001

It's the 2001 Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass and Woods has overshot the infamous 17th hole's island green, his ball clinging to the fringe. Faced with a 60ft downhill, he spends an eternity reading what the commentators suspect is a triple-breaker before setting his ball on its way.

As it meanders towards the hole, it does indeed break every which way imaginable before dropping. Cue trademark Tiger fist pump. Famously, NBC commentator Gary Koch said Woods - or was it the putt? - was "better than most". But the truth, as anyone could see, was that Tiger in his prime was better than everyone.



13

HIS FIRST US AMATEUR VICTORY, 1994

After defeats to Tim Herron in 1992 and England's Paul Page in 1993, Woods, now 18, arrived at TPC Sawgrass determined to deliver a better display in pursuit of his first US Amateur Championship. Breezing into the match play phase, he struggled only once, coming from three-down with five to play to beat Buddy Alexander, the University of Florida coach who, like many contemporaries, had tried and failed to recruit him.

Awaiting Woods in the final was Trip Kuehne, one of three golfing siblings from a renowned Texas family. Played over 36 holes, the match saw Woods mount one of amateur golf's greatest comebacks. After trailing by six early on, the teenager clawed back into contention before sealing the match 2-up on the final green.

At 18 years, seven months and 29 days, Woods became the youngest winner of the US Amateur and the Havemeyer Trophy, eclipsing a record from 1909, when Yale sophomore Robert Gardner won at 19. He was also the first African-American champion. It would be the first of three straight US Amateur titles, cementing Woods' status among the game's greatest amateurs and foreshadowing the mental toughness and competitive fire that would soon redefine professional golf.

15

PLAYS A PGA TOUR EVENT AT 16, 1992

At just 16, Tiger strode onto the 1st tee at the 1992 Los Angeles Open at Riviera with the poise of a player twice his age. With huge galleries, including his high school golf coach and many school friends, who had bunked off for the day, Woods crushed a drive down the 1st fairway and left everyone in awe of his prodigious talent.

His playing partner, Bob Friend, was impressed. "As a PGA Tour pro, you get to see the prettiest golf swings in the world, but you listen too. You listen to the contact they make and the ball's flight. It sounded like rifle fire." Woods missed the cut, but it didn't really matter - he'd shown he could cope with the kind of rabid attention that would follow him his entire career.

17

WGC-ING IS BELIEVING, 1999

When the WGC events began in 1999 with their generous purses, it seemed like an ideal opportunity for other players to finally cash in. Tiger had other ideas. Not only did he win at least one of the four events every year from 1999 to 2009, but his record total of 18 victories is three times that of the next most successful WGC player, Dustin Johnson.



12

A ONE-LEGGED WIN, 2008

On one leg and sheer will, Woods delivered one of golf's most legendary performances at the 2008 US Open. Battling a double stress fracture in his leg and a torn ACL in his knee – injuries that would keep him out of action for the remainder of the year – Woods limped through Torrey Pines with grim determination, matching Rocco Mediate's every move before sealing victory in a gripping play-off lasting 19 agonising holes.

But it wasn't just his 14th Major; it was an exclamation point on his legacy, where pain met perfection and where Woods demonstrated, yet again, that there was nothing, not even broken bones, that could prevent him from winning.

11

THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP CAKEWALK, 2000

While Tiger's career is widely a catalogue of dominance, the 2000 season remains his undisputed masterpiece. Arriving at St Andrews for the 129th Open, he had already produced a blistering run of form – six straight PGA Tour wins capped by a 15-shot US Open demolition at Pebble Beach, more of which on our final spread. At the Old Course, he looked every bit the overwhelming favourite, and he delivered with surgical precision.

He opened with bogey-free rounds of 67 and 66, seizing a three-shot lead and never loosening his grip. Even his first bogey of the week – 63 holes into the championship – barely registered, as he answered with a burst of birdies and a towering fairway wood into 14 that instantly entered Open lore. On Sunday, only David Duval briefly applied any pressure before a pivotal birdie at 10 restored Tiger's cushion.

Woods closed at a record 19-under, won by eight, avoided all 112 bunkers and completed the Career Grand Slam at just 24 – a display that defined the greatest season modern golf has seen.

Tiger is back! Clinching the 2018 Tour Championship for his first win in five years



10

THE START OF THE COMEBACK, 2018

It had been five years since Tiger Woods had found himself in the winners' circle, but his victory in the 2018 Tour Championship at East Lake marked one of the most memorable comebacks in sports history. Just a year earlier, he was recovering from spinal fusion surgery and his world ranking had slipped to 1,199.

Sealing a two-shot win over Billy Horschel, Woods was pursued down the final fairway by thousands of fans, all of whom seemed as desperate to see him win again as he was. "I was having a hard time not crying on that last hole," Woods said. "I just can't believe I've pulled this off."

09

HELLO WORLD, 1996

Nike's groundbreaking advert, written by the late Jim Riswold, not only announced Tiger's arrival in the pro ranks, but signalled his intent to break down some of the barriers associated with golf and promote greater diversity. In the cosy, conservative world of golf, it was something else:

I shot in the 70s when I was eight.
I shot in the 60s when I was 12.
I played in the Nissan Open when I was 16.
Hello, world.

I won the US Amateur when I was 18.
I played in The Masters when I was 19.
I am the only man to win three consecutive US Amateur titles.
Hello, world.

There are still courses in the US I am not allowed to play – because of the colour of my skin.
Hello, world.

I've heard I'm not ready for you.
Are you ready for me?

08

CATCHING SLAMMIN' SAM, 2019

When he won the 2019 Zozo Championship in Japan, Woods finally equalled Sam Snead's PGA Tour record of 82 victories. While matching Slammin' Sam's long-standing record reaffirmed Woods' remarkable longevity and enduring excellence, it is now six years ago. Can he find that elusive extra win?

07

A SHOT FOR THE AGES, 2005

Fourteen seconds. That's how long it took from the moment the ball left the face of Tiger's 60° wedge to the moment it stopped, flashed its Nike logo and dropped into Augusta's 16th hole. A shot for the ages.

Woods and Chris DiMarco arrived at the 16th with Tiger two ahead. DiMarco found the green with a makeable birdie putt; Woods went long into the rough, leaving a seemingly impossible chip.

Then it happened. The deftest of touches saw his ball climb the slope, stop, turn about face and roll towards the hole. As it reached the cup's edge, it appeared to stop agonisingly short, before finally doing the right thing.

CBS announcer Verne Lundquist described it best: "Oh wow!" he exploded. "In your life have you ever seen anything like that!"

06

VICTORY IN GRIEF, 2006

At Royal Liverpool in 2006, Woods put on a masterclass in precision and emotional control. Still mourning the loss of his father, Tiger arrived at Hoylake with a plan and, crucially, the self-control to execute it flawlessly. He left the driver in the bag, preferring long-irons and stingers off the tee, while his rivals tried and failed to overpower the links. The result? A two-shot win as Woods became the first since Tom Watson in 1983 to successfully defend The Open.

05

A FEAT NEVER TO BE REPEATED, 1996

When Tiger Woods claimed his third successive US Amateur Championship in 1996, coming from five down to win in a play-off against Steve Scott, it proved to be the perfect ending to his amateur career.

In six years, from ages 15 to 20, Woods had won six consecutive USGA National Championships across juniors and seniors. He had triumphed in 36 straight matches on six different courses across the United States, from Portland to Ponte Vedra Beach.

It was a feat that not even Bobby Jones, the most lauded amateur golfer in history, had ever come close to emulating.



04

SEALING THE SLAM, 2001

When Woods won his second Masters in 2001, becoming the first player in history to hold all four Majors simultaneously, there were some curmudgeons who maintained that it wasn't a 'grand slam' as such, given they weren't won in the same calendar year. But whichever way you looked at it, the 'Tiger Slam', as it became known, was a unique achievement.

To give an idea of just how exceptional he was in that stretch from 2000 into 2001, you only have to examine his scoring in the four Majors, where he boasted a total of 53-under-par. His nearest rival, Ernie Els, was just 18-under – a scale of dominance never seen before, or since.

03

A MAJOR SURPRISE, 2019

If his win at the 2018 Tour Championship had suggested Woods was heading back to his best, then his victory at the 2019 Masters confirmed one of sport's greatest comebacks. Since his last Major win at the 2008 US Open, he had endured a dramatic fall: multiple knee and back surgeries, a debilitating spinal fusion, the collapse of his dominant swing and a very public personal crisis.

Injuries forced him to withdraw from events, lose world ranking status and even doubt whether he could walk without pain, let alone compete. Many believed his Major-winning days were over. Yet at Augusta, relying on discipline, strategy and renewed physical stability, Woods summoned his old brilliance to claim his 15th Major.



Back to Major-winning ways after 11 years at the 2019 Masters

02

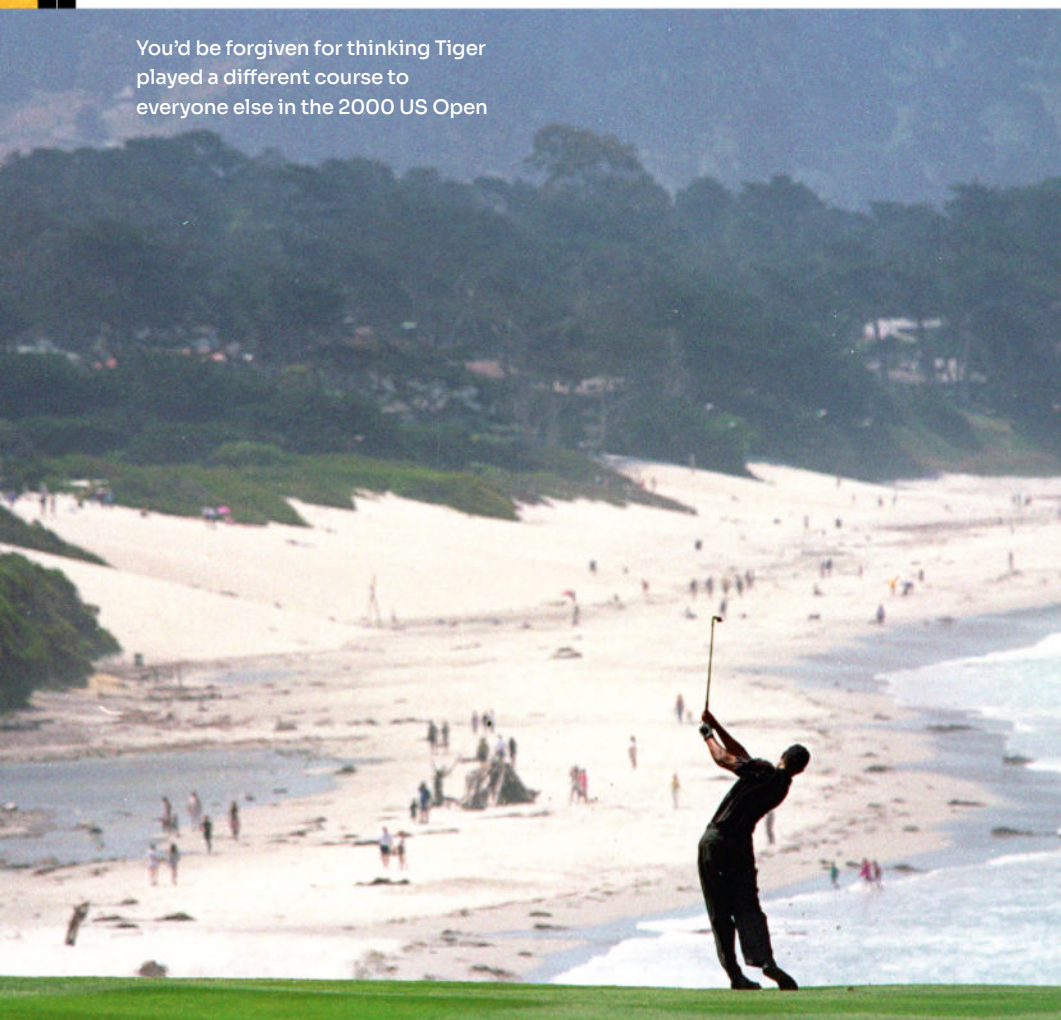
A DIFFERENT GAME, 2000

When Tiger won the 1997 Masters, it seemed he had taken the game to a new level. But when he triumphed at the US Open at Pebble Beach three years later, it was as if he was playing an entirely different game to everybody else.

Woods had been in red-hot form heading into the event, having already won four PGA Tour titles that year and taken six top-five places from his seven starts. But while most expected him to win, no-one could have foreseen just how dominant he would be.

Come Sunday night, Woods topped the leaderboard on 12-under, having led wire-to-wire. No other player bettered par, with runners-up Ernie Els and Miguel Angel Jimenez 15 shots adrift. It was the biggest margin of victory in the event's 105-year history.

In a tournament known for its predilection for putting par at a premium, Woods' tee-to-green play was exemplary. If his putting had been better – he averaged 29 putts per round – there is no telling just what score he could have achieved. That week, Tiger Woods didn't just win; he redefined what dominance in golf looked like.



You'd be forgiven for thinking Tiger played a different course to everyone else in the 2000 US Open



01

THAT MASTERS WIN, 1997

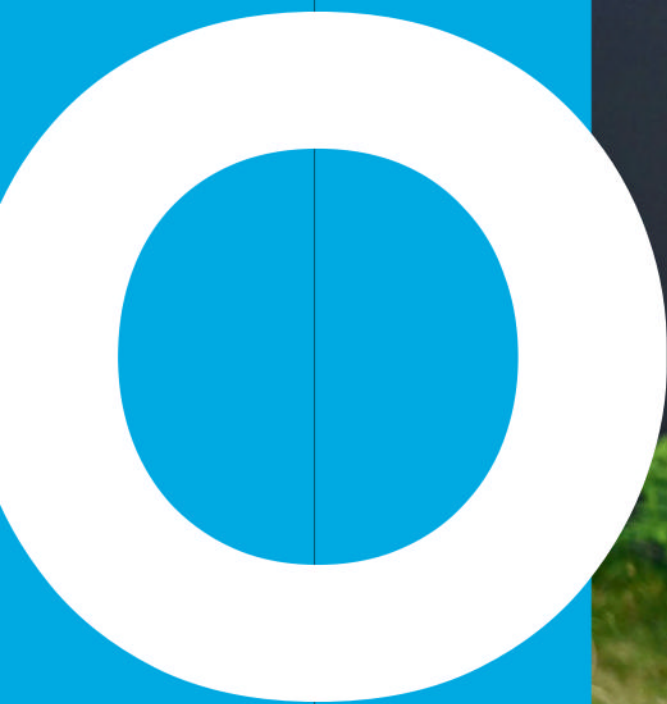
When Tiger Woods shot 40 for his first nine holes as a professional at The Masters, there were many commentators sniping from the sidelines who questioned whether this 21-year-old college drop-out really was the future of golf. But when he recorded 30 for the back nine, powered by four birdies and an eagle, for a two-under round of 70, everybody was sitting up again.

That Woods won The Masters in 1997 may have been a surprise, given it was his first time as a professional at Augusta and, for that matter, his first Major in the paid ranks. But the manner in which he succeeded proved a pivotal moment in golf.

Though Woods had already won twice on the PGA Tour and been named PGA Tour Rookie of the Year, his demolition of Augusta National was simply unmatched and the records he broke in the process are as numerous as they are impressive: the youngest ever Masters Champion, biggest margin of victory (12 shots), lowest score by a winner (270) – the list went on and on. Crucially, he also became the first African-American to win The Masters, a tournament that just a little over 20 years earlier was still refusing to let black players participate.

Yes, when Tiger took the 1997 Masters, he not only redefined what was possible on a golf course, but it seemed as though the event might finally have turned a corner. Here, after all, was a 21-year-old with a mixed-race background not just winning at one of the very places that fought so long to prevent men like him playing there, but doing so in a fashion that rendered everything that had happened there previously almost irrelevant.

It was, and remains to this day, one of the most seismic moments not just in golf, but in sport itself.



ver my 20+ years working in golf, I've been able to interview the last three chief executives of The R&A. One thing I can unquestionably say is that they are getting younger. That, combined with the fact I am getting older, means that my encounters with these men of high standing within our sport have had quite different dynamics.

I interviewed Peter Dawson in Japan. A composed and measured man, he said exactly what needed to be said, nothing more. I likened it to being summoned for a sensible talk with my school headmaster, who was also quite a cool customer.

Martin Slumbers and I sat down for three or four conversations during his tenure. Those meetings were more like relaxed discussions with my tutors at uni – they were a bit older and more

knowledgeable, but kind enough not to scoff at my silly questions.

In October, while attending the Asia Pacific Amateur Championship in Dubai, I had the chance to meet properly with Mark Darbon for the first time.

This was a new situation – speaking to a man in charge of golf for 100+ million players around the globe who is the same age as me. Weird.

Mark is a fresh-faced 46-year-old exuding confidence and charisma. He embodies the



MARK DARBON

Brave new

Fergus Bisset talks to The R&A's chief executive Mark Darbon about his first year in the role and what the future holds for golf

World

progressive approach The R&A is taking to push golf forward and draw newcomers into the sport. His background is impressive. He held a senior role with the London organising committee for the Olympic Games of 2012, was senior vice president of Tough Mudder Inc in New York, worked in cycling and was then CEO of Northampton Saints rugby club. He's also a low-handicap golfer. It doesn't seem fair, does it?

Over a fascinating 40 minutes, I was able to pick Darbon's brains on his first year in charge at The R&A, the state of the game, The Open Championship, the World Handicap System (WHS) and what he would change about golf...

How has your first year in the role of chief executive of The R&A played out?

It's been a bit of a whirlwind – lots to get up to speed with and a broad range of stakeholders. The R&A has a wide role so there are lots of bases to cover. I think I've made good progress, but I certainly know that there is still a lot more to learn.

Have there been surprises? Not exactly, but certain things have pleased me. I was concerned about the reaction I would get coming into golf from other sports but, across the board, I have been welcomed in. It is great to see the openness that The R&A is met with as you travel around the world.



The R&A invests heavily in the AIG Women's Open

What have you enjoyed most over the last 12 months?

It's about the people for me. I've enjoyed getting to know The R&A staff – dedicated and passionate about the game and their work. Also meeting other key players in the game – Fred Ridley from Augusta, Mike Whan at the USGA, Jay Monahan of the PGA Tour, and others. There's great collaboration and a clear desire to do the best for golf. It's fun to be part of.

And, of course, The Open Championship and AIG Women's

Open, being in the thick of the action. Coming from the thrill of matches in rugby, to be part of the buzz and excitement at these championships is amazing. I loved both the events in 2025.

How does golf compare to the other sports you've been involved in?

I think the values in golf are strong. There's integrity and respect at all levels. It's a huge positive for us, and something we can't lose. I've come from rugby and that's another sport with strong values. Rugby would love to have the level of growth we're seeing in golf participation globally, mind you. Golf is in a good place. I think that's important to be clear on.

Why is golf in a good place right now?

Golf is cool again, right? It's the sport of choice for sportsmen and increasingly, actors and musicians. There are influencers and content creators who are now producing some wonderful golf-related material, and all of those things are fuelling the sustained global growth that we're seeing.

Does that mean we can sit back and rest on our laurels? Absolutely not. There are challenges to overcome. We must integrate technology, break down some barriers – social, race, economic – in order to enable people to take part in this great game. But we're starting from a strong base.

How can we blend tradition with progress in golf?

We don't need to look at tradition, the here and now and the future as totally separate things. We should embrace heritage, the rich stories we have within our sport born out of its history. And we've already talked about the importance of the values of the game. If you're trying to get your kids into sport, a sport that has strong values and a bunch of other benefits – competition, camaraderie, mental health, physical health – those things are so important when making



Gareth Bale is a high-profile R&A ambassador from another sport

A portrait of Mark Darbon, a man with short brown hair and a beard, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with white and gold stripes on the collar and a small crest on the chest. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a blue vertical bar on the left.

MARK DARBON

Darbon believes
golf is in a good
place right now

**“THE VALUES IN GOLF ARE STRONG.
THERE’S INTEGRITY AND RESPECT AT ALL
LEVELS. IT’S A HUGE POSITIVE FOR US”**

choices and encouraging your kids to make choices. But at the same time, we can’t allow more old-fashioned views to be a block to future development.

What does that mean in practice?

I think it means you must have a range of facilities and formats that are open for different types of golfers. There are now, in the territories we look after, something like 44 million under-18s playing this sport and 80% of them are not playing nine- and 18-hole golf. We need to arm territories and federations with best practice and expertise to say, ‘These types of facilities and formats can really help you, at the top of the funnel, to draw people into golf.’ ▶



Darbon presiding over the prize ceremony at Portrush in July

What can we do to improve it?

We rolled out a campaign earlier this year which aimed to highlight the fact that we see manipulation of the handicap system as a form of cheating. We think we should be overt about that. I do think there's a cultural thing in the UK in terms of competitive golf. We have that history and tradition. We need to keep it but continue to educate and provide the right tools for committees and federations to progress the evolution of the system, and act when the system is being abused.

What would you change about it?

The system we have in the UK doesn't currently allow you to enter scores from international territories easily. We know that's a challenge, and it's being worked on. But at its core, a global system is extremely important for golf.

And the technology you mentioned?

Well, for example, my kids and most young people are now not watching four- or five-hour broadcasts. Our clip content, social media content, YouTube content must be best in class. That way we provide a shop window into our sport. We, as a governing body, must help federations around the world plus clubs and other institutions to better integrate technology, not to put off an older or more experienced generation of existing players, but to make golf more compelling for young people. I think we can build from the traditions we have, as long as we're progressive and thoughtful about our outlook for the future.

What about working with governments?

We need to work really thoughtfully with governments and third parties all around the world to support this work. One of the pressures on our game right now is a declining number of public facilities in many territories. We need to ensure that those facilities are in place, and we work with federations and governments to try and do that.

That's one of the reasons we're really proud of R&A-funded facilities like Golf It! in Glasgow. You can go to that facility as a total beginner, you can play Adventure Golf, you can have a hit on the range. There's technology there. And then, when you're ready, you can transition on to a nine-hole golf course, and a more traditional format of the game.

What are your views on WHS?

I like it. I do think you get a better reflection of your playing ability when the system is used properly and you submit more scores. If you look at our role, we have a responsibility to act globally. And if you look at WHS on a global level, feedback has been pretty good.

I think we totally acknowledge and accept that there's some criticism and, in some pockets, dislike of the system. You know, within our home territories, here in the UK, change is not easy, and we have to accept that.

The Open has grown and become more commercial in the last decade. What does its future look like?

The R&A has done a brilliant job in building and cementing The Open Championship as not just a great golf event, but as one of the leading recurring annual sports events globally.

It's the oldest Major, the only Major outside the US. I think maintaining that differentiated position is really important. A key for me is that we want The Open Championship to be the best all-around player experience in world golf.

How does that happen?

I've been lucky to meet a number of the elite players. I've typically asked the open-ended question, 'Tell me about The Open experience and how can we improve it?' That gives us great insight.

We've invested in the player facilities, and we put the players at the heart of the event. And we can't stand still. We need to keep moving and keep progressing in that space.

Sports stars like Steph Curry are helping to boost golf's appeal



And for the fans?

We want to continue to service the strong demand that exists, but we must be careful to protect the experience as well. It's about making that experience better, not just bigger.

And it's about working with and pushing our broadcasters and content teams to create product for those not lucky enough to be present – to excite, energise and inspire people to follow The Open.

It's a competitive landscape in terms of sporting events. We want to continue to cut through and elevate our event. It's important for us to grow our audience, to tell a story about The Open that exists for more than just a week a year.

What's new at Birkdale?

We're introducing a couple of new events. We've got the last-chance qualifier event at the start of the week. We're also looking at doing a champions event with former winners during the week again.

We will try to create appeal for broadcasters and followers of the game, to bring new innovation while embracing history and heritage. We want The Open to be the greatest event in golf. That's important as it's the commercial driver for The R&A. All the surplus we generate from it goes to fund all our other work in the game.

How can The R&A get the message across to the public that The Open funds golf around the world?

It's a good question, because that's something that stood out for me from the moment I was approached about this role. There's more we can and should be doing on the storytelling front.

I think we should be incredibly proud of the role we play, and we should shout about it more loudly. We can do that with strong content and strong storytelling. We are working with more ambassadors from sport and

With Henni Zuel in the Women's Open pro-am at Porthcawl



club side. It's about participation and engagement with the sport more broadly. If we want that pathway to flow through into the traditional formats, we have to ensure those traditional facilities are open and accessible to all. If the pathways aren't there, you can't get to the destination.

screen like Gareth Bale, Stephen Curry, Niall Horan, Kathryn Newton. I want more people to be aware of what we do.

How do we grow the women's game in the UK?

We're big believers in the shop window at the top of the game. That's why we invest so strongly in the AIG Women's Open to showcase the sport. We try to tell brilliant stories about elite-level golf, and we know that there's a proven link to inspire the next generation.

There's a big piece around the openness and accessibility of facilities. We've got many examples of best practice from all around the world to share with clubs through the home federations. More focus on families and fun formats, not just 18-hole golf.

I think it's important that we take a holistic view of golf, and don't just assume it has to be about the

The ball rollback is on schedule for 2028. Is the driver next?

Distance is a really important issue. It's something we'll always monitor, but the current focus is on the implementation of the changes with the ball. Right now, we're not looking at other things going forward, but once this is finished, I don't think we'd rule it out for the future. As I say, distance is an important question that needs to be answered!

If you could change one thing about golf, what would it be?

A stronger recognition at government level of the value and benefit of golf; greater recognition of the social and health benefits that relate to and flow from golf. And, on the back of growing that understanding, I'd like to see greater investment in the sport to build on this strong platform and trajectory we see right now.

Darbon is keen for The Open Championship to be the best experience in golf for both players and fans alike



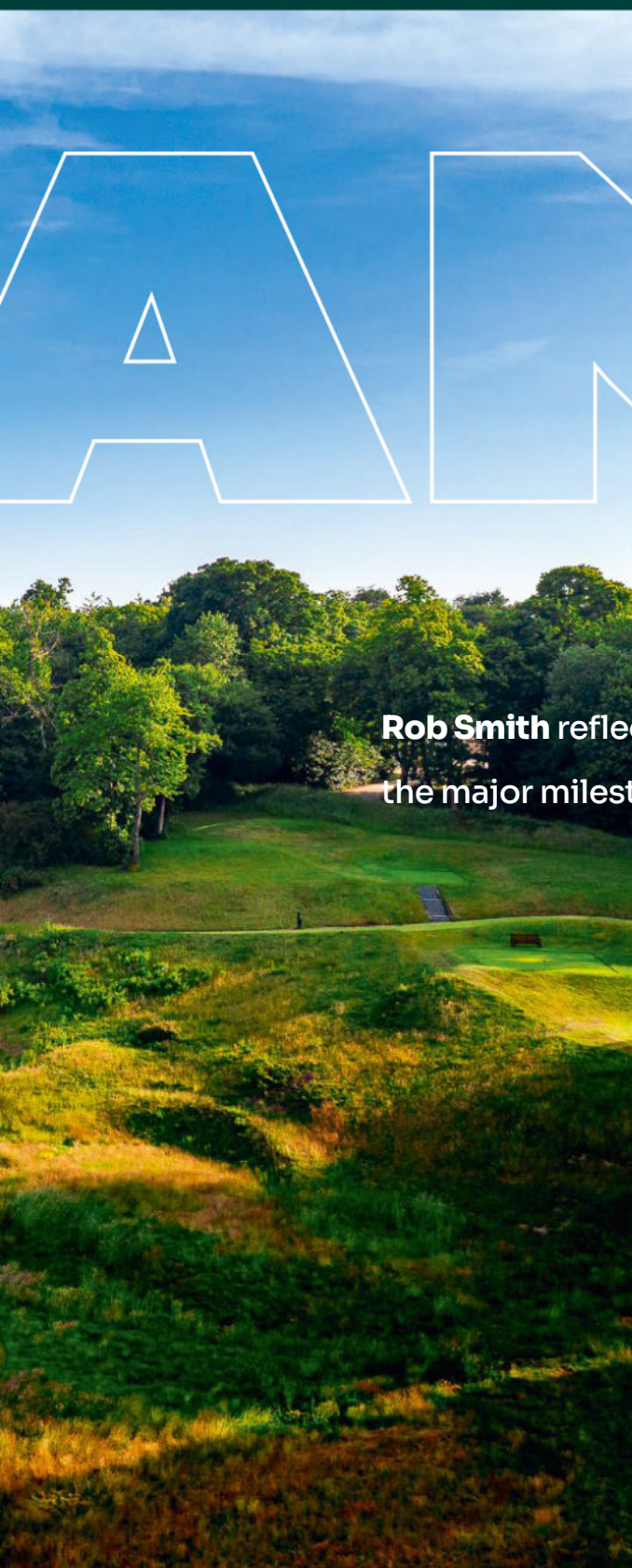
THE GRV

Photography Kevin Murray, Geoff Ellis, Getty Images, Jason Livy, Andy Hiseman, Rob Smith, Jeremy Ellwood



Looking down on the 17th
green at Rob's beloved home
club of Tandridge in Surrey

1,000 BRITISH ISLES COURSES



AND TOUR

Rob Smith reflects on a fulfilling journey as he passes
the major milestone of 1,000 British Isles golf courses →



Rob hit the 1,000 mark at
Cuckfield in West Sussex
in mid-November

even years ago, and perhaps as proof of a misspent adulthood, I reached the landmark figure of having played 1,000 golf courses around the world. And to quote editor Neil Tappin, “but none of them properly!” He has a point, and while I then thought this could well be my final significant golfing milestone, I more recently realised I might also be lucky enough to make it to 1,000 courses, not in total, but far closer to home... within the British Isles.

As you can imagine, playing somewhere for the first time generally requires longer journeys away from my home in Kent, but I am pleased to say that on November 13, 2025, I played my 1,000th such course. While I have also been lucky enough to play getting on for a further 300 courses in more than 40 other countries all over the world, this seems like the perfect time to reflect on what has been an amazing domestic journey.

● The early years

The first course I ever played was in the summer of 1977, the enthusiastically named Championship course at Addington Court near Croydon. In those days, it was a council-run municipal and a great asset for the community. Such was the naivety of youth that I ventured out on a Saturday morning with two college friends having never hit a ball before or even had a lesson.

I have no idea how we had managed to borrow clubs or how we survived the stares and wailing of those behind, but somehow we made it round and the seeds had been sown. I cannot remember now if it was love at first sight, but even if not, I was soon smitten with the game and a lifetime's obsession was up and running.

For the next 23 years, all of this took place alongside my career in IT, much of it buoyed by running a

work-based society with regular days out as well as one or two trips each year further afield. It helped that my mum had moved to the Highlands, near Inverness, as my regular trips to see her gave me plenty of opportunity to add to my tally at trophy courses including Royal Dornoch, Nairn and Skibo Castle, as well as lovely but less well-known delights such as Fortrose and Rosemarkie, Kingussie, Moray, Tain and Strathpeffer Spa. I often drove up from home and would make contrived detours to tick off the likes of Sillioth on Solway and Cruden Bay.

In the early 1980s, I joined North Downs Golf Club in Surrey, a very friendly place with a short but tricky course that I played as often as I could. Off a reasonably reliable handicap of 10, I also played in plenty of men's open competitions, albeit with little success. And when I say little success, I actually mean no success! I once made it down to single figures, 9.3 to be precise, but two weeks later, two rounds in the club championship on the same day took me back to 9.5. At least I did, very briefly, make it!

In 1987, I married for the first time. Marion was extremely sporty and although she hadn't played when we met, she was determined not to be a golf widow, took evening classes and within a year or so

Rob first played Tain after his mum had moved up to the Highlands



Rain gives way to sunshine on a visit to Machrihanish Dunes on Kintyre



was quite brilliantly down to 10. I now had even less of an excuse not to over-indulge my passion for courses, and together we played from Ashridge to Loch Lomond, and from Minchinhampton to Waterville.

In 1995 I made the two-mile move down off the hill to the Harry Colt course at Tandridge where I have been ever since. Quite naturally, Marion followed me and enjoyed it fully until sadly her cancer meant that she could play no more. When she passed away in 2005, golf in general and Tandridge in particular became a fundamental focal point of my fractured life and in many ways have held me together and provided a structure ever since.

● A new beginning

In 2002, my career took a massive swerve when I became editor of a golfing trade publication, *The Golf Club Secretary*. This opened more doors to playing, and when I took over the role, my course count stood at 430 worldwide, fewer than a third of what it is today. This also connected me to various figures in the golf media industry, most importantly Mike Harris, who edited this very publication for 17 years from 2006.



Rob describes Bingley St
Lves as a hybrid golf course

It was he who recognised my insatiable appetite for courses and kindly offered me the opportunity to work with the magazine, initially reviewing courses before later also becoming involved with the rankings. It seemed only logical that I should attempt to play all of the *Golf Monthly* Top 200, and of the current lists, I am now missing just four in Ireland and two in

Scotland, all from the Next 100. The Top 100 is, by its very nature, a moving feast – *Golf Monthly's* less so than most others – and so I was proud to recomplete playing all 100 in 2024 when I finally made it to the very engaging Murcar Links.

Back to my life away from golf, and in 2008 I was fortunate enough to remarry, and although Rachel is a passionate and quite dedicated non-golfer, her mum is a former lady president at Hollinwell, coincidentally one of my favourite courses.

From my earliest scribbblings with the magazine to this very day, I have genuinely loved visiting the new and very different offerings we have throughout these isles. I am still regularly surprised and delighted to stumble on new and quite different examples of the amazingly strong variety we have on our doorstep, such as these: links (Hesketh and North West); heathland (Sand Moor and Scotsraig); parkland (Belvoir ▶



Teeing off at Gleneagles on
a press trip to Scotland
back in 2015

► Park and Trentham); moorland (Clyne and Matlock); clifftop (Glen and La Moye), downland (Lewes and Purley Downs), hybrid (Alnmouth, Bingley St Ives and Manchester) and absolutely everything and anything in between.

Perhaps with the exception of true links, I think that assigning a category to probably half of our courses is asking for trouble. More often than not, especially as courses have been upgraded, enhanced or just tweaked, there are traces of more than one style. As a keen advocate for variety, I fully applaud this and am more than happy for a course to span various pigeon holes. Ultimately, we are exceptionally spoilt for choice and there is genuinely something for everyone.

● The eye of the beholder

While playing all of the Top 100 is of course a real privilege, my courses colleague Jeremy

Ellwood and I are far from alone in having done so. A good number of readers have ticked off the list, and while I totally endorse the methods we use to create the *Golf Monthly* rankings, it is worth highlighting that, for me at least, there is often a real difference between best and most enjoyable.

Using the tried and trusted criteria, which are well documented and designed to reflect the collective views and preferences of all regular golfers, the *Golf Monthly* Top 100 works very well. But we all have our own particular aspects that excite or please. For me, they are the two Vs.

‘Variety’ is key and I love a course where every hole is a new and different adventure. No matter how strong a hole is strategically, I am not so interested in having recurring but subtle variations on the same theme repeated throughout the round. My other V is ‘views’, and as shallow as you may now decide

me to be, I want each hole to look attractive in its own right, and better still, I want views away from the course that lift my heart and give me solace on those rare occasions when my game is not quite 100%!

● They think it’s all over...

Fittingly, I played my 1,000th course with my fellow courses junkie Jeremy – the beautifully sited Cuckfield in West Sussex. Here, we were joined for lunch by local resident and leading golf photographer Kevin Murray who kindly snapped me on the final green. Not even its most ardent fan will argue that this pretty nine-holer is the greatest strategic design in the world, but I will stand by my oft-repeated mantra that there’s no such thing as a bad golf course.

Admittedly some are less appealing than others, but I like to think that each and every one has something of merit. As for Cuckfield, it has glorious, panoramic views over the countryside as well as a lively and friendly clubhouse serving excellent food. Also very appropriately, it has a bar that serves my favourite drink, Harvey’s Sussex Best Bitter.

Kington in Herefordshire is England’s highest course and a lovely place to play

5 PERSONAL FAVOURITES



I would like to make some all-time personal recommendations here, and as I often sing the praises of *Golf Monthly*’s Top 100 and Next 100 courses, I have selected five favourites that aren’t among those upper echelons, but which I personally enjoy more than many that are...

Kington

England’s highest 18-hole course and an absolute joy. On a clear day, you can see forever. I will repeat my assertion that if there’s an inland course with finer views anywhere in the country, I have yet to play it.

Perranporth

I have friends who question the number of blind shots and unpredictable bounces, but remain convinced that this elevated Cornish links is one of the most scenic and enjoyable courses I’ve played.

Fortrose and Rosemarkie

When I graduated and first became smitten with golf, I spent endless hours here trying, and failing, to perfect my game. Its exposed setting on a beautiful promontory remains a favourite.

Cruit Island

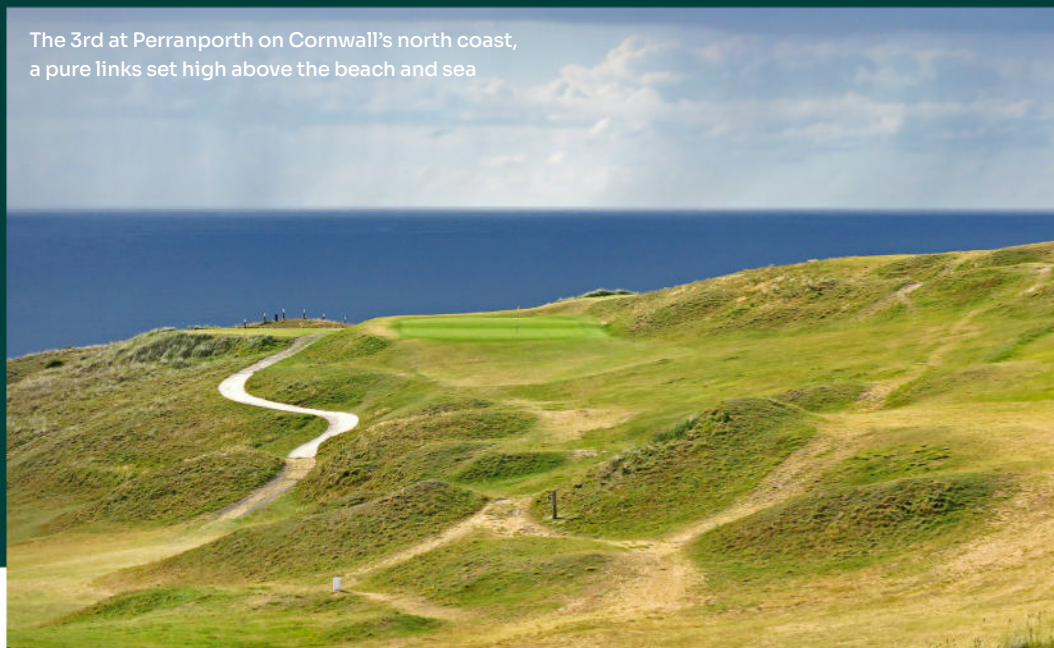
Going off-piste on a tight Donegal schedule to squeeze in a game here was one of my best ever impromptu moves. This quirky and unique nine-holer has more charm and joie de vivre per hole than just about anywhere.

Shiskine

On my golfing radar for over 40 years, I finally made it to this striking 12-holer on Arran in summer 2023 and played it in sun, rain, wind, hailstones and a perfect sunset. I’m going back again this summer!



Rob briefly made it down to single figures while a member at North Downs



The 3rd at Perranporth on Cornwall's north coast, a pure links set high above the beach and sea

So there we have it: 755 courses in England, 49 in Ireland, just 23 in Northern Ireland, 114 in Scotland, 51 in Wales and eight in the Channel Islands or Isle of Man. A total of 32 courses at Royal golf clubs, one ten-holer, three 12-holers, and sad to say, 39 courses at 37 clubs that are no longer with us. Perhaps my next target should be 1,000 British Isles courses still in existence.

● What do I know?

Playing 1,000 courses of every shape and style in every corner of these isles has given me a number of personal insights. While I would still argue that I am fundamentally not a golf course expert, I'd say my experience over getting on for half a century means I do know something about the subject.

Even allowing for my personal tastes and preferences, I'd say I can recognise the differences between average, good, great and exceptional. This has helped inform my work with, and understanding of, the rankings, though to be clear, I stay firmly out of the conversation when the subject of my own beloved Tandridge arises. There is no doubt that it has improved out of all recognition in my 30+ years of

membership, but I'm too close to the club to be dispassionate so I leave that debate to others.

However, while on the subject, there is one other important thing that my life in golf has confirmed – that my membership and the relationships it has created and developed as well the fun and, at times, frustration it has given me, have all been key to my life. Again, I know I am far from alone in this.

● What does it all mean?

On reflection, my golfing odyssey has meant more to me than I can adequately put into words. A part of me regrets that I didn't do something more worthwhile, not that I necessarily had the potential or wherewithal. It would have

been lovely to make a contribution to the greater good, and while recommending great golf courses is a treat and some people have been kind enough to thank me for pointing them in the right direction, I've not saved anybody's life. Which is slightly ironic, as you could argue that golf has saved mine.

I hope it's not too melodramatic to say that even though music is another great passion, my golfing adventures have been the soundtrack to my life. They have taken me to places I would otherwise never have dreamed of visiting, and enabled me to meet more interesting and accomplished people than my failing memory can hold onto. The friendships that have blossomed from my membership at Tandridge and my work with *Golf Monthly* are enduring and priceless, and I feel beyond lucky to have enjoyed a life blessed by so much good golfing fortune.

The final thing about which I'm convinced is that regardless of how many stunning trophy courses there are worldwide, there are more than enough courses in the British Isles with something memorable, enjoyable and unique to last the keenest of golfers a lifetime.



Sand Moor is one of several fine courses in and around Leeds in Yorkshire

the beginner
the weekend warrior
A product for every golfer
the casual player
the professional



Find out
more



RANGEFINDERS



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SHOT TRACKING

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Shot Scope

● INSTRUCTION

HOW TO EXCEL IN CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

Golf doesn't get any easier out of season, but these tips could help keep your scores down

● By Top 50 Coach Ben Emerson
with Baz Plummer

At this time of year, facing testing conditions on the golf course is the reality for many club golfers, but that doesn't mean you can't excel and shoot low scores. The key to navigating winter golf like a pro is being able to adapt, so I have seven tips here that can help you to play your best whatever the weather.

Through a mix of set-up changes, strategy considerations and the addition of some crucial shots to your winter arsenal, I'm going to help you fight back defiantly against the elements in your next round... ►

Data provided by
Shot-Scope

OFFICIAL DATA
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1

LOW STINGER OFF THE TEE

The low stinger should be part of every club golfer's shot repertoire, especially when conditions get tough. There are a couple of things you need to do at set-up to ensure you don't expose too much loft. First, you need to get your chest on top of the ball, as you want to compress it to help it fizz through the air.

To achieve this, you need to put the ball ever so slightly back in your stance and grip down the club to get your hands a little closer to the shaft, which provides more control over the clubhead. You also need to get your hands quite far forward.

A desirable feeling is that your hands are going to stay ahead of the clubhead throughout the entire swing. It is your chest that is really driving this swing – not your hands or arms – to help create a low, stinging compressed shot.



Having the ball back and hands forward will help to promote a more penetrating flight



2

DEEP ROUGH

When you find deep rough on the course, particularly when it's wet, your priority is safety and getting back out onto the short stuff.

You need to make a couple of set-up changes when you're in the thick stuff, especially if it's buried and you can barely see the golf ball. Early contact is key, as you don't want to hit behind it in this kind of grass. If you do, the club is going to get snagged and the clubface will twist.

At set-up, place the ball really far back in your stance and take a wide, stable base. Move your weight and sternum over your lead side and get your hands ahead of the golf ball.

It's important to feel a little more steepness in the swing, so pick the club up quickly and slam the clubhead down into the ground, making sure to hit the golf ball first. You aren't going to see a big follow-through here, as your only goal is to just stab this thing back out onto the fairway.



Safety first every time from this position. Go for a steep swing to ensure you make ball-first contact

3

GOING FOR THE GREEN FROM OFF THE FAIRWAY

When you just miss the fairway and find the semi-rough, you need to check if the lie is good enough to go for the green. If it's sitting down (right-hand photo), that's a red light – just wedge it back onto the fairway. The lie in the left-hand image, however, is a green light and a couple of set-up changes will ensure good contact.

Grip down ever so slightly, widen your stance and set your weight a bit more on the lead side to promote a steeper angle of attack. The club may twist left as it hits the grass, so you could also open the face a little to allow for that. Other than that, just swing normally and commit.



4

MUDDY LIE AROUND THE GREEN

As a rule, if you've got nothing to go over, don't try to go over it – keep the ball low and running. To do this, have your feet nice and narrow, your weight on the lead side and the grip of the club just ahead of the ball. Avoid too much wrist action – you want more of a putting stroke action here to nip the ball off the surface.

If you have to go higher over a bunker or hollow, take a more lofted club and stand really tall. I like to get the toe of the club nice and low, so pick your hands up and open the face slightly, then feel like you're cutting across the ball with more of an out-to-in swing. This should slide the ball up the clubface and get it airborne.



Muddy lies are inevitable at this time of year, but there are different ways to tackle them

5

COMPACT SAND IN BUNKERS

When you encounter a wet bunker that's full of compacted sand, you need to make a couple of key set-up changes in order to escape unscathed. Crucially, you want to avoid exposing too much of the bounce on your wedge. But you do need loft to get the ball up quickly, especially in a deep bunker like this one, so

I would stick with your 58° or 60° wedge and make some simple adjustments. Put the ball back in your stance a little and create a wide base. Really focus on your weight being on the lead side and keep it there throughout the swing. Pick the club up quickly to encourage a steep angle of attack, but you actually don't want a big follow-through for this shot. As you hit the sand beyond the ball, that sand will decelerate the club – but you do need to commit and really hit down deep into the sand after the ball.

Focus on a deep hit into the sand past the ball and let the surface decelerate the club naturally





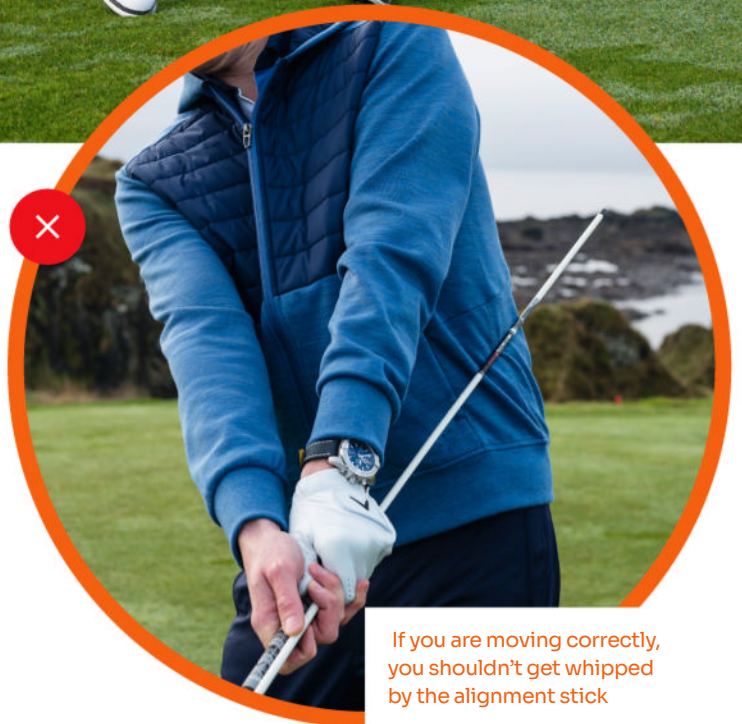
6

SHORT-GAME ALTERATION

If you are playing in challenging conditions, excelling around the greens can be particularly difficult. One of the most essential shots you can play is the low, spinning chip, which not only keeps the ball out of the wind but also helps it to stop really quickly. It's key in winter.

This is a great drill to understand the role of the wrists and body in this shot. Place an alignment stick straight down the grip (photo right) and do a few rehearsal swings. I want you to feel that you're turning your body and not getting whipped by the stick.

Your hands need to be ahead of the ball to take some loft off the club. This will help you to get used to a takeaway and follow-through that is more body-related than centred around the wrists. To hit the shot, make sure your hands are ahead of the ball, take a wide stance, limit the involvement of your wrists and focus on the body turning back and through.



If you are moving correctly, you shouldn't get whipped by the alignment stick



PUTTING ON SLOW GREENS

I would always advise club golfers to make a few important changes to their pre-shot routine and stroke on slow greens to help ensure they have effective acceleration and make good contact.

In the pre-shot routine, make your practice strokes from three or four feet behind the ball rather than next to it, staring at the hole the whole time. This helps the brain to understand the acceleration needed for the stroke in hand, while appreciating the distance from behind the ball.

As for set-up, ensure the ball is a little further forward in your stance and the handle of the putter slightly ahead of centre. Focus on a centred strike and that feeling of accelerating past the ball.

A great practice drill is to place two tees behind the hole and aim for the tees. A short putt is never going to go in, so don't be afraid of a pace that will get the ball marginally past the hole. Then it's all about reading the line and watching the ball topple in.



Putts that are short never go in so focus on getting the ball to the tee pegs just past the hole



INSTRUCTION

By Top 50 Coach
Alex Elliott

Shot on location at
Infinitem Resort



● LONG GAME

Flush your fairway woods

Angle of attack is crucial with fairway wood strikes, so avoid being too steep (bottom right) or trying to scoop the ball into the air (bottom left)



1

Not striking fairway woods effectively is a common fault, with many issues stemming from a feeling of intimidation when

standing over the ball and looking down on what appears to be very little loft. This can cause players to lean back and almost feel like they're helping the ball up into the air, but that's not conducive to good ball-striking. Imagine the clubhead is a plane landing on a runway. You want the 'wheels' to just touch down as the club moves through impact with the ball.





Rotating rather than swaying is the key to stability



Stabilising your swing is important as many club golfers also sway with their legs. This makes consistent contact very tricky due to the bottom of the arc moving around in their swing. Try this at home. Put one hand on your lead hip and one on your trail hip, then rotate your hips back and through,

focusing on a rotational movement instead of swaying off the ball (avoiding the position in the image on the left).

Make some practice swings with a focus on replicating a good turn in your lower body. Imagine there's a wall behind you and press your back pocket on your trail side into the wall on the backswing, then your back pocket on the lead side into the wall as you swing through.



Keeping the club lower for longer will help to increase your margin for error and improve the strike quality. Here's a great drill to help.

Create a gate using two tees, which you place around a ball's width nearer the target than your actual ball position, as here.

Knock the ball away and address the ground where it was sitting. As you move through the impact point, aim to brush the ground through the gate rather than leaning back to avoid the tees. Losing the ball helps you focus on transferring your weight properly and turning your hips effectively. Start with some half swings then add the ball when you feel comfortable, focusing on a smooth, stable strike as you swing through.



Brush the ground between the gate through impact

● INSTRUCTION

● ASK THE EXPERTS

How do I hit a draw with a driver?

By Top 50 Coach **Ged Walters**

You need to understand three important factors that affect shot shape. The white alignment stick pointing straight down the fairway is my ball-to-target line, which is where you would aim off the tee.

The white stick to the right of that (pointing at the trees) indicates the face angle at impact and the red stick the ideal club path. Essentially, the face needs to point right of the ball-to-target line but left of the path to hit a draw, so use this simple set-up next time you practise.

Common fault

If the face at impact is also pointing in the same direction as the path, the result will be a push out to the right rather than a draw.





What's the best way to maximise my distance when driving downwind?

By Top 50 Coach **John Jacobs**

It's all about launch, so you've got to tee the ball high, push it further forward in your stance and get more of a tilt in your shoulders at address. All of these things are helping you to imagine that you're trying to hit it up a slope – you must remember to hit up through the ball to maximise launch.

These simple adjustments to your set-up will help you to find the higher-launching, lower-spinning flight that you need to take maximum advantage when you're driving downwind.

Tweak your aim

With the ball off your left toe, impact comes a little later in the swing's arc, so you need to aim a bit further right.

Is there a good way to control distance on long putts from the fringe?

By Top 50 Coach **Alex Elliott**

For this type of fringe putt, you really need to determine the high side and the low side of the putt, then walk to the low side and create an equidistant triangle that covers your ball, the hole and your current position. Reading the putt from the low side will give you a much better perception of the distance needed.

Now return to your ball and look up and down the line as you do your rehearsal swings, considering each time what will be required to get the ball to the hole based on the information you learned from your low-side read.

Don't read from behind the ball

On long putts like this, especially from the fringe and below the level of the green, don't make the mistake of trusting your eyes from behind the ball as this will most likely cause you to come up short.





● INSTRUCTION

By Top 50 Coach
Sarah Bennett

Shot on location at
La Cala Resort, Spain

La Cala
RESORT
COSTA DEL SOL · SPAIN

Photography: Howard Boylan

● SHORT GAME

Putting drills to improve your strike



Attach two alignment sticks together with elastic bands approximately 3ins from the ends of the rods, placing the other ends under your armpits as here. At first, just practise the feel and momentum of the stroke without a putter in your hands. The aim is for the shoulders to move in a connected, uninhibited putting motion.

Then, strike some putts letting the putter rest where the elastic bands are, with your hands underneath the sticks and your forearms resting on them. This drill prevents too much independent wrist action and promotes a feeling of the forearms remaining level. Try it for both short and long putts.



2

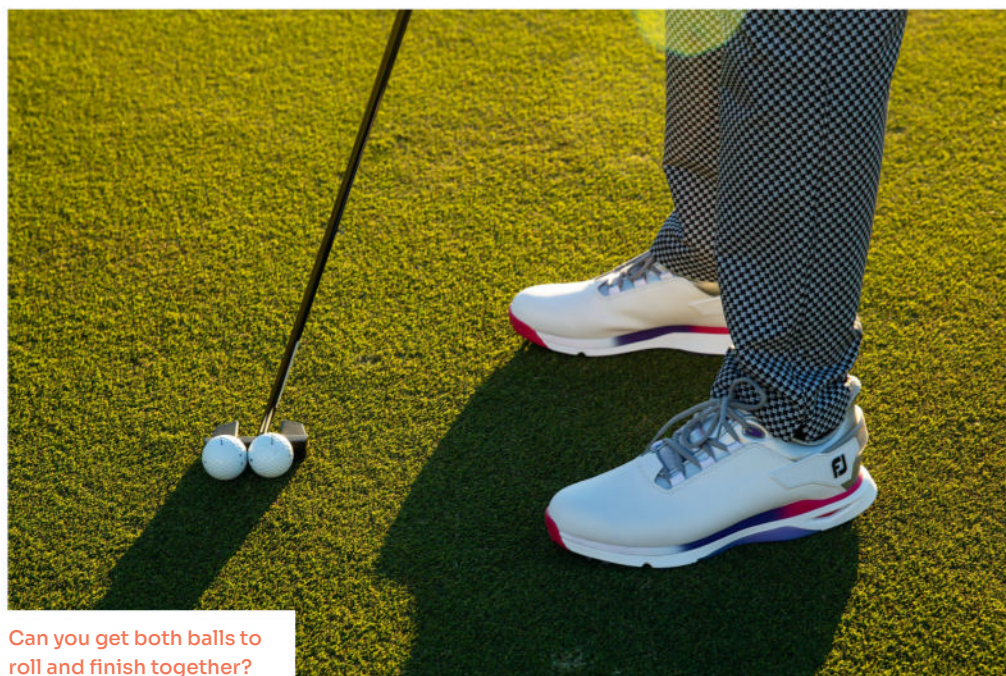
This is a super drill to improve your strike. Place a tightly rolled towel down, firm enough to maintain its 'roll'. Take your putting stance on the towel and, at first, just focus on maintaining balance and stability. Make a few putts concentrating on keeping the weight in the centre of your feet, not tipping towards your toes or heels. When you remove the towel to hit some putts, you should feel rock-solid as this helps to stop unwanted lower-body movement.



Try to keep your weight in the centre of your feet

3

This drill offers feedback on face position at impact. Set two balls down together and hit a 6ft putt. Both should roll and finish level with each other. If the ball nearer your feet heads off first, you have opened the face (a push).



Can you get both balls to roll and finish together?

4

Striking the centre of the face is a key area to focus on to improve your putting, both for distance and direction. Place two bits of Blu

Tack on the face a little wider apart than a golf ball, one towards the toe the other towards the heel. The aim is to strike that sweetspot in the centre. After five successful strikes, make the challenge harder by moving the Blu Tack blobs closer together. You will, of course, know about it if you miss the centre – the strike will feel 'dead' and the ball will veer off.

The Blu Tack will tell you where you make contact





All smiles for Bryson with a replacement shaft on the way

● RULES

By David Wilson
rules manager at
The R&A

● FROM THE TOUR

DAMAGED CLUB

There are specific Rules relating to the clubs we carry and use when playing. Some Rules relating to clubs, most will be aware of – the 14-club limit, for example. But there are also some lesser-known Rules governing these vital pieces of equipment.

One such Rule relates to what a player is permitted to do when a club becomes damaged during the round. First, clubs do wear over time via normal use – wear marks on the face or scuffs to the sole, for instance. These are not deemed damage under this Rule. But when a club is damaged, as when Bryson DeChambeau's driver shaft snapped in the 2020 US PGA, the Rules relating to the use, repair or replacement of the club apply.

If a conforming club (such as DeChambeau's driver) is damaged during a round, the player may repair or replace the club, except in cases of abuse, provided it does not cause unreasonable delay. And the club can be considered conforming for the rest of the round, so it can continue to be used.

"Damaged during a round" means that any part, feature or property of a club is changed because of any act during the round, such as in a stroke, by an outside influence or other means, like leaning on

the club. So when DeChambeau leant on his driver and the shaft snapped on the 7th tee, he was permitted to either repair or replace his club. He chose the latter option by having a replacement shaft brought out to him on the course.

For a tour professional to add a replacement club is perhaps slightly easier than for the general club golfer. However, the replacement club does not need to be a like-for-like replacement – for example, if your driver snaps in the same manner, you may be able to replace the club with another one from your locker, car boot or the pro shop if the course layout and geography permit.

As for cases of abuse, such as snapping a shaft over the leg, the player is not permitted to repair or replace the club then.

R&A

DAMAGED CLUB ESSENTIALS

- You can replace or repair a damaged club during a round, except in cases of abuse, but must not unreasonably delay play in doing so.
- However the damage is caused, the club is deemed conforming for the remainder of the round and can continue to be used.

Photography: Kevin Murray, Getty Images

YOUR QUERIES RESOLVED



Playing a four-ball match, one of my opponents lifted a rake outside a bunker as it looked like his partner's ball would hit it. The ball then rolled past the bunker and onto the fringe. Was that allowed?

Allan Joss, via email



It's not permitted to move movable obstructions or loose impediments (with the exception of some specific objects on the putting green) that might affect where the ball will come to rest once that ball has been put into motion. It should have been the general penalty here (loss of hole).

David Wilson, The R&A



Are you allowed to lift a rake to prevent a ball from hitting it?



● R&A WINNERS

Each month, the readers whose queries are featured receive a St Andrews bobble hat with Claret Jug motif and a sleeve of Titleist Pro V1s with R&A logo.



Can you press down a divot in your relief area before dropping?



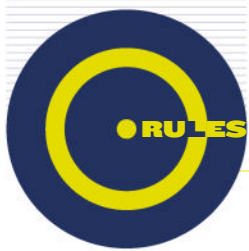
In singles match play, my opponent took a free drop away from a sprinkler head. Before dropping, she pressed down a raised bit of turf in her relief area. Was she allowed to do that?

Jane Thomson by email



Once the process of taking relief has started and the relief area has been established, you are not permitted to alter the conditions affecting the stroke within that relief area prior to dropping. Your opponent was in breach of Rule 8 and subject to the general penalty (loss of hole).

David Wilson, The R&A



MODEL LOCAL RULES

Local Rules cover features that are specific to a course or a particular competition. You will generally see them on the back of a scorecard, or on a competitors' rules sheet, but they will likely also be published elsewhere, on club noticeboards or perhaps the club website.

Local Rules can define boundaries of the course and penalty areas. There might be Local Rules regarding abnormal course conditions, immovable obstructions and integral objects. In competitions, there might be Local Rules covering

advice and equipment. Local Rules are a modification of a Rule or an additional Rule that a committee can choose to adopt.

If a committee does choose to adopt a Local Rule, they can follow or mirror one of the Model Local Rules in doing so.

Section 8 of Committee Procedures in the Rules of Golf covers Model Local Rules. This section gives committees guidelines and templates for how to put Local Rules into place.

Model Local Rules can be adopted in their entirety, or they can be used as an example of how

to write a particular Local Rule. But, if a committee does change or modify the wording of a Model Local Rule, it must be sure that the changes are consistent with the stated purpose of the Local Rule.

If a Local Rule is put in place that is not consistent with the guidelines in Section 8, rounds played with that Local Rule in place will not be considered to have been played according to the Rules of Golf.

Committees are not allowed to use Local Rules to change the Rules of Golf just because they want a Rule to be different. Neither can they apply penalties for various breaches differently to the ways stated in the Rules of Golf. Unless it is otherwise stated, the penalty for breaching a Local Rule is the general penalty.

Some Local Rules may be long-standing, such as the status of a road running through a course as an immovable obstruction. Other Local Rules may be introduced because of a temporary situation. Perhaps most common of these would be Model Local Rule E3 – preferred lies. Such temporary Local Rules should be removed when the situation no longer requires them.

“COMMITTEES CANNOT APPLY PENALTIES FOR VARIOUS BREACHES DIFFERENTLY TO THE WAYS STATED IN THE RULES OF GOLF”

Preferred lies should remain in place only for as long as they are required



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

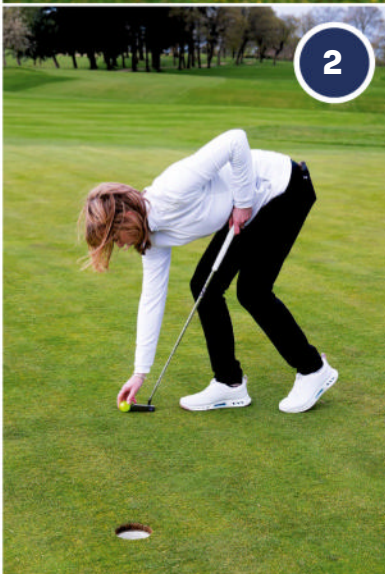
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE

R&A



1
In match play, Alison repairs an old hole plug on the putting green on her line of play and taps it down with her putter. What is the ruling?

- A. There is no penalty.
- B. Alison receives a one-stroke penalty.
- C. Alison receives the general penalty.

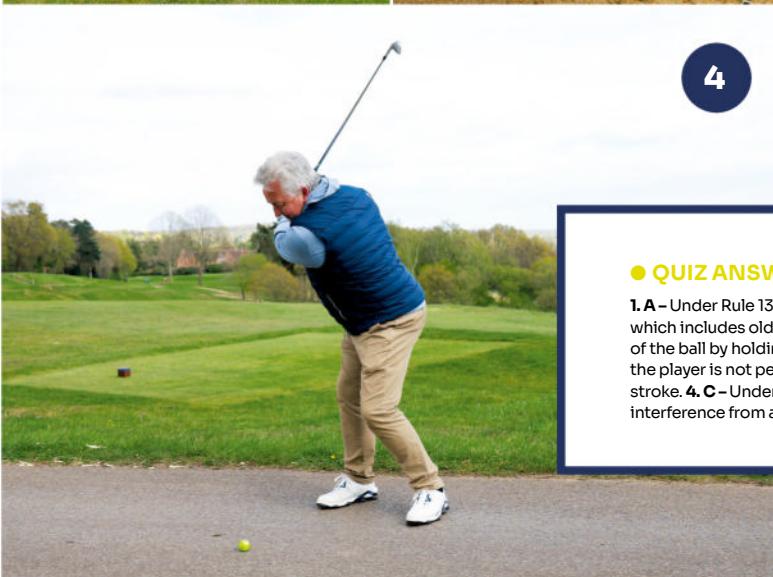


2
Alison wishes to mark and clean her ball on the putting green, and to mark the ball she uses the toe of her putter. What is the ruling?

- A. Alison receives a one-stroke penalty.
- B. Alison is disqualified.
- C. There is no penalty.

3
Jezz removes what he believes to be a stone from the bunker next to his ball, but in doing so realises it is a clump of sand. What is the ruling?

- A. There is no penalty.
- B. Jezz receives a one-stroke penalty.
- C. Jezz receives the general penalty.



4
Jezz's ball comes to rest on an artificially surfaced cart path, and for his next stroke he plays the ball as it lies. Which of the following is correct?

- A. Jezz must take free relief from the cart path, so receives the general penalty.
- B. Jezz must play the ball as it lies.
- C. Jezz may take free relief or play the ball as it lies.

● QUIZ ANSWERS

1. A – Under Rule 13.1, the player is permitted to repair damage on the putting green, which includes old hole plugs. **2. C** – Under Rule 14.1, the player may mark the position of the ball by holding a club on the ground right next to the ball. **3. C** – Under Rule 8.1, the player is not permitted to remove sand to improve the conditions affecting the stroke. **4. C** – Under Rule 16.1, the player may choose to take free relief when there is interference from an immovable obstruction, but there is no requirement to do so.

● EQUIPMENT

96%

A clever design that impressively addresses a common concern about zero-torque putters



By GM staff writer
Sam De'Ath



The multi-material construction allows zero-torque benefits in a more visually palatable package

● REVIEWED

ODYSSEY S2S TRI-HOT #7 PUTTER £499

The concept of the new Tri-Hot range is simple: "We've moved zero torque forward," Odyssey says. This isn't just a marketing gimmick, it's a solution for what is often perceived as the biggest complaint about this style of putter. Previously, many zero-torque models required you to use a significant

forward-press grip of up to 3°, which doesn't seem a lot, but proved to be uncomfortable for many golfers who are more used to traditional putters and grips.

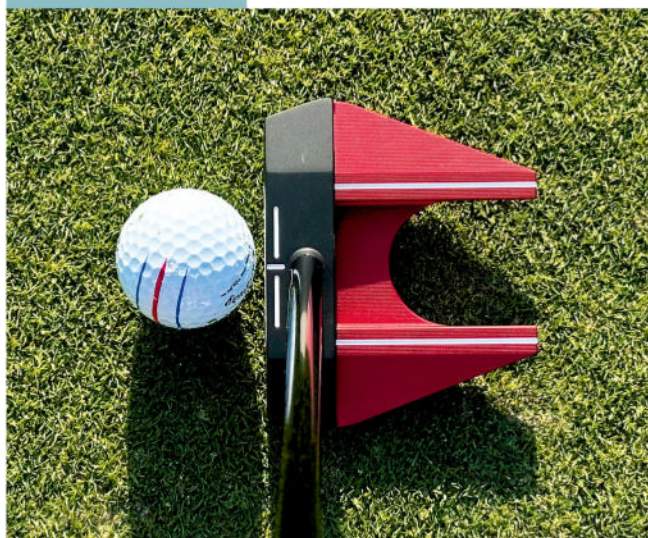
The S2S Tri-Hot fixes this through a complex and clever multi-material head construction, which unlocks the ability to have the shaft entering the head far closer to the putter face.

The #7 is one of three putters in the new S2S Tri-Hot line-up (four if you include the Jailbird Cruiser option), all of which are designed with the 'zero torque forward' philosophy in mind.

By using light aluminium and steel, as well as over 140g of tungsten (which is a lot!), Odyssey has moved the CG so far forward that over 80% of the weight now sits below the topline of the putter.

With the head weight so far forward, the shaft can also enter the head right above the topline, meaning these putters look much more like conventional centre-shafted models than zero-torque putters at address. This is something that has bothered me with other zero-torque putters I have tested, so when I first looked down on this version, I was extremely excited.

At address, the difference is night and day from Odyssey's



The fangs and cross-hairs combine to offer very clear alignment assistance

The rear fang section is crafted from lightweight aluminium



The Ai-dual insert combines a soft outer layer with a firm inner layer for consistent speed across the face

The vast majority of head weight is close to the face so there's no need for shaft lean

“AT ADDRESS, THE DIFFERENCE IS NIGHT AND DAY FROM THE PREVIOUS S2S RANGE. IT SITS PERFECTLY SQUARE AND FLUSH WITH NO MANIPULATION”

SAM DE'ATH, GM STAFF WRITER

previous S2S (Square 2 Square) range. The putter just sits perfectly square and flush to the ground with no manipulation, and the red and black colour scheme looks really clean thanks to the matte finish. This new, cleaner look is a huge visual upgrade and makes alignment effortless, particularly in the #7 fang-shaped model featured here.

The head's 'fangs' are already a superb alignment tool, but when you combine them with the new cross-hair system, I found it very straightforward to set up to my intended target. The reduction in shaft lean meant I wasn't fixated

on my hand positioning, so I could just let the putter fall naturally into place.

The feel is the other major story (and upgrade) over the previous S2S design, thanks to a new Ai-dual insert that's noticeably softer and more responsive than the previous generation's. It truly brought back the nostalgia of the original White Hot insert and how cushioned that felt, combining the plush feel of urethane with a positive, responsive roll.

The entire putter gives off a premium aura, and while it does come to retail at a fairly premium price point, everything I saw and felt when testing goes a long way to justifying that outlay.

● UP AGAINST



L.A.B. Golf OZ.1i £499

The closest a zero-torque putter has looked to a traditional mallet model.



Scotty Cameron Studio Style Fastback OC £499

The new OC putters offer low-torque performance and exceptional feel.



TaylorMade Spider 5K-ZT £449

The benefits of a Spider with a new look. Promises unmatched stability.

● KEY TECHNOLOGY

1

The multi-material construction has allowed Odyssey

to design a zero-torque putter with over 80% of its weight under the topline.

2

The new F.R.D. groove design gets the ball turning end-

over-end instantly, thanks to grooves set at a 19° angle to promote forward roll.

3

This AI-designed, dual-layer insert has a soft outer layer and a firm

inner layer, helping to create a soft yet responsive sensation off the face.

4

All of the new S2S models come fitted with a heavier and stiffer

Black SL 120 shaft (SL 140 in the Jailbird Cruiser) and a new Pistol Plus grip.

REVIEWED

SCOTTY CAMERON PHANTOM 11R OC PUTTER £499



Onset Center technology optimises the putter's resistance to twisting

This is Scotty Cameron's first low-torque offering along with the Studio Style Fastback OC option. The Phantom 11R OC putter blends the stability of a low-torque design with the responsive, chain-link face-milling that has proved so popular. So, if you're looking for stability without sacrificing feel, this might be the putter you've been waiting for.

At address, the Phantom 11R OC is a sleek, high-MOI mallet that boasts an exceptionally clean

95%

The shaft enters the 11R OC's head directly through the centre of gravity

aesthetic. The single, short sightline offers good alignment, and helped match the putter face up square to my target, especially when using a line on the ball.

The minimal 1° of shaft lean is something I love about this putter. This helps promote a natural hand position and a clear, unimpeded view of the topline. I've found other zero-torque models have far more shaft lean, setting your hands in an unorthodox position.

The OC (Onset Center) name refers to the shaft being set back from the leading edge and entering the head directly through its centre of gravity, delivering maximum stability for a square-to-the-path stroke.

Scotty Cameron's R&D team has clearly made responsiveness a priority, with the addition of that full chain-link milling pattern – the same one we saw in the newest Studio Line – providing a soft-yet-solid feel that really helped with my distance control.

The Phantom 11R OC delivers a satisfying, muted 'click' without feeling too dull – the perfect amount to provide good feedback on strike without being overly intrusive.

The Onset Center technology is immediately noticeable with the putter head simply not wanting to twist, although it does take a little time to get used to the feeling if you're moving from a more conventional-style putter.

The Scotty Cameron Phantom 11R OC putter promotes a straight-back-and-through motion with almost no effort, calming the hands and letting the bigger muscles control the stroke as you simply rock your shoulders.

This stability is already tour-proven with the likes of Australian Elvis Smylie winning his first two events immediately after switching to a tour-only prototype of the 11R OC, citing improved consistency via its set-up.

The face's full chain-link milling pattern provides a soft-yet-solid feel



KEY TECHNOLOGY

1

The 'R' in the name signifies softer, more rounded edges than the standard Phantom 11's to create a confidence-inspiring and flowing profile.

2

The head weighs 15g more than in the standard models and is balanced by a custom black shaft and a tapered Scotty Cameron Matador Mid grip.

3

The head has a single alignment line, which extends back to the shaft placement. The Phantom 11R OC is available both right- and left-handed.



An 18g sliding weight at the rear of the head helps you to dial in your preferred shot shape

● REVIEWED

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS MAX DRIVER

£ 3 7 9



The Tour Edge Exotics line has earned an excellent reputation for being a great-value choice, competing with the best drivers without the corresponding flagship price. The Tour Edge Exotics Max excels at correcting poorly struck drives and offers excellent acoustics and an 18g sliding weight at the rear of the head that provides genuine, tangible customisation.

It is aimed squarely at golfers seeking maximum forgiveness and playability, with this model

81%

Forgiveness and playability are the main goals of the Exotics Max

replacing the well-regarded E725 and promising enhanced stability and a powerful corrective bias.

In terms of looks, I have to say the aesthetics are somewhat of a disappointment compared to the E725, which was a lot sleeker and more sophisticated. The new alignment logo doesn't suit my eye but that is purely subjective.

The impact sound is a definite improvement on the E725, which was a little hollow and high-pitched. The Exotics Max delivers a more solid thud that's much closer to the heavy sound I look for in a driver.

The feel at impact is also very stable, giving you instant feedback wherever you have made contact and it sits comfortably in among the most forgiving drivers on the market.

Despite my views on the looks, the Max performed pretty much as reliably as the E725, which I really liked. This model is engineered to be extremely forgiving and it fulfils that brief.

The large profile and deep centre of gravity create a high MOI, making it exceptionally stable through impact and the highlight was the sliding weight at the rear of the sole to help fine-tune your preferred shot shape.

Tour Edge offers a wide range of custom shaft options at zero upcharge, allowing you to dial in a premium shaft – a feature many major manufacturers still charge extra for. Furthermore, Tour Edge even offers a trade-in programme.

The Exotics Max is a solid, forgiveness-focused, great-value driver and its performance and sound make it a viable option for mid- to high-handicappers seeking help to find the fairways, even if I prefer the E725's looks.

A deep centre of gravity and high moment of inertia help make the Exotics Max driver extremely stable



Words Joe Ferguson

● KEY TECHNOLOGY

1

The standout feature is the 18g sliding weight at the rear of the sole. Its standard neutral setting helps deliver the straightest ball flight.

2

Positioning the 18g weight in the 'Draw' port promotes a seven-yard, right-to-left ball flight and vice versa for the 'Fade' set-up.

3

The 360° titanium Ridgeback frame reinforces the clubhead with exceptional strength to help optimise energy transfer for maximum ball speed.



EQUIPMENT

REVIEWED

VICE PRO PLUS TRACER BALL £27 PER DOZEN



The Tracer markings help with alignment off the tee and on the green

The Pro Plus is Vice's flagship ball in a comprehensive line-up. It is a four-piece, tour-calibre model that is engineered specifically for high swing speeds.

The Tracer pattern is hard to ignore when taking these balls out of the packet for the first time. The multi-line design is similar to that of the popular TaylorMade TP5 Stripe, and you can see how this ball could help those who struggle

92%

The Pro Plus is a great choice for those who swing the driver at 110+mph

with alignment from the tee and in hitting their start lines on the putting green.

It was immediately clear this ball is aimed at those who naturally produce a decent amount of speed. Golfers who swing in excess of 110mph will reap the full rewards of this ball's performance characteristics, and it will also appeal to those seeking a firmer feel around the greens.

I swing a driver at about 117mph so found the four-piece construction, combined with its high compression, translated into a powerful and penetrating flight. Interestingly, Vice suggests you could rotate the Tracer graphic 90° when playing from the tee to more effectively assist with aim, thanks to its combination of vertical and horizontal guides.

The Pro Plus offered a stable and mostly predictable flight with the irons. I did see a few shots that came out with very little spin, but for the most part, I was seeing the

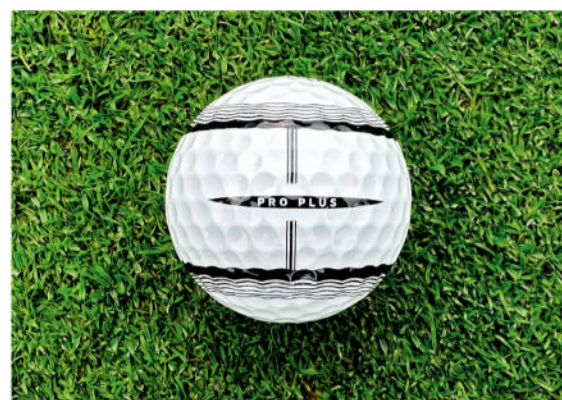
ball travel the same distance I'm used to and at the same trajectory.

However, this ball's true character shone through in the short game. The feel is noticeably firmer than its three-piece Pro sibling, which was something that appealed. This firmness provided a lovely, crisp click and gave me a real sense of control and feedback. There are similarities here with the Titleist Pro V1x.

On the greens, the Tracer's alignment benefits are obvious. They frame the ball perfectly, making it incredibly easy to see your start line and get immediate feedback on your stroke.

I would class the Pro Plus Tracer among the best value golf balls and there's a strong case for it being the best ball Vice has ever made. It is well worth a try.

The cover offers quite a firm feel around the greens



Words Sam De'Ath

KEY TECHNOLOGY

1

The Pro Plus generates more backspin than any Vice ball and its high-energy speed core delivers impressive distance off the tee – a great blend.

2

A compression rating of 100 means the ball is optimised for high swing speeds. If you want maximum greenside spin, it's a great choice.

3

If you're not a fan of the Tracer design, you can purchase the Pro Plus in multiple different colour options – something Vice is well known for.





TOULON FORMULA 90 PUTTER £649



The Toulon Formula 90 is arguably the most polished zero-torque mallet to hit the market for golfers who value a blend of feel and new technology. The Formula 90 has been designed with 90° of toe hang and is engineered to keep the face square to the path, attempting to return it to impact back where it started. It's a fairly compact, wide-bodied mallet that sits beautifully behind the ball, and aesthetically it really is right up there.



NEW BALANCE 574 GREENS V2 SHOE £95



This shoe draws direct inspiration from one of the brand's best-sellers, the classic 574, which has been a High Street mainstay for years. The crossover makes perfect sense; take a shoe renowned for comfort and style and tailor it for the golf course. The visuals and comfort levels are impressive and despite being a spikeless shoe, the outsole's traction elements keep things stable even under the stress of a driver swing.



AVODA GOLF W2 WEDGE £172



The Avoda W2 is a highly forgiving and versatile short-game tool, built on the strength of its unique sole configuration. Extremely high bounce, expertly integrated with severely bevelled edges, makes this wedge virtually 'unduffable'. While the aesthetics are clean, the main story is the incredible sole grind, with bunker performance arguably the best in our testing for many years. Available in lofts of 50°, 55° and 60°.



MACGREGOR TOURNEY HYBRID STAND BAG £99



This is a great option with many excellent qualities, including good storage, a well-built frame and an affordable price. Capable of being used on either a trolley or your shoulders, the Tourney is packed full of helpful features and one of the best stand bags we've tested recently. From the 14-way divider to the special cooler pouch and the Velcro golf-glove patch, we were thoroughly impressed during multiple rounds of testing.



AMAZON BASICS CORE SOFT BALL £18 A DOZEN



Amazon has entered the golf ball market and the Basics Core Soft is a fairly solid first effort. It falls straight into the extreme budget, soft-feel category, although the down-range performance was sub-par. It's a viable option for those just getting into golf who want a soft-feeling ball. However, more experienced golfers will notice significant drawbacks in distance, spin and consistency that will likely prove a deal-breaker for them.



BGT BRAVA TOUR SHAFT £339



Breakthrough Golf Technology (BGT) earned its reputation by revolutionising putter shafts with its Stability line. The Brava Tour now brings that same commitment to stability and control into drivers with a shaft designed for serious golfers with 90+mph swing speeds who crave more accuracy and control. The Brava Tour's tip stiffness and controlled energy transfer make it a great option for high-speed players struggling with dispersion.

I was wondering how we can interpret driver backspin and, in particular, how it links to lateral dispersion? Surely a high-spin ball is more likely to lead to a greater dispersion?

Nick Fields, via Kick Point

I have a couple of schools of thought on this. I've always said that spin is your friend. The more backspin you get on your ball, the straighter it's likely to fly – it's why your pitching wedge goes straighter than your 3-iron.

There is actually no such thing as sidespin in golf, just a tilted spin axis with the ball spinning backwards. The conventional thinking has always been that the more the ball is spinning, the less



'Sidespin' is really a tilted spin axis as a ball spins backwards

likely it is to go off line. However, in theory, once the spin axis is tilted, then the more revolutions you have on that golf ball, the more this will enhance any curvature in flight.

If you're someone who does tilt that spin axis, the spinnier the ball you use, in theory, the more curvature you're going to get. If you're trying to neutralise that shot shape, then the lowest-spinning balls you can find will certainly be beneficial.

The caveat is that a lower-spinning ball is going to give you less greenside control and stopping power, so it's a balancing act. Of course, let's not forget that the delivery of the clubface can also tilt the spin axis – and, believe it or not, the inner material of the ball may not be centered properly.

HOW YOUR EQUIPMENT MIGHT BE ILLEGAL

Most club golfers would probably struggle to pass a rules of golf test, for each of the 25 rules has various exceptions. Knowing them all may not be essential, but having a grasp of the key rules, including Rule 4 – The Player's Equipment, can be extremely useful.

It's not uncommon to discover a 'rattle' when you hit one of your woods, especially if they're the adjustable type. Giving golfers the tools to shift weights and dial in ball flight has been one of the most significant advancements in equipment technology this century.

The slight danger is that you don't tighten things up properly, which can unfortunately leave you playing with a non-conforming club. Every part of the club must be properly attached for it to be considered conforming under the rules – so be sure to tighten that screw and sort that rattle, or you risk being penalised.

While we're talking about adjustability, you cannot adjust a club during a competition or handicap-counting round. If you're playing a social round, you're free to adjust away and tinker until you find that optimum setting. However, if you get your wrench out to change your setting in a competition and then play a stroke with that club, you will be disqualified from that round.

Be careful, too, about those small stickers you put on the clubface to help certain types of launch monitor detect club data. They are classed as a non-conforming external attachment and if you play

a shot with a club that has one on in a competition, you will be disqualified. But remove it before you hit that club and all is well.

Another well-known one is not using the slope feature on a rangefinder in a competition. Under Rule 4.3a, the first breach is a general penalty and the second disqualification.

Here's a good one. Teaching pros often tell you to play chip-and-runs with a putting-type stroke, but that doesn't mean you can turn a chipping club into a putter. You are not allowed to use a flat-faced putter grip on any club other than the putter.

Finally, the maximum tee length is 4ins and tees that are designed to indicate the line of play or unduly influence the movement of the ball are non-conforming. You have been warned!



By staff writer
Dan Parker

Leaving just one small sticker on the face will get you in big trouble if you use the club



HEAD TO HEAD



**KIRKLAND
SIGNATURE** £35
FOR TWO DOZEN



**AMAZON BASICS
CORE SOFT**
£17 A DOZEN

DIRECT-TO-
CONSUMER
BALLS

✓ This latest model features a premium three-piece urethane cover, providing a high-end finish at an affordable price point. The ball boasts a classic, subtle aesthetic.

8

Looks

5

The looks are underwhelming, with the outer cover feeling fairly cheap to the touch. The alignment feature is a little bold, too, which detracts from the overall look of the ball.

✓ There's a noticeably softer impact feel than with the previous generation, especially with irons and wedges. It's a major improvement, but not as soft as most premium balls.

8

Feel / sound

7

The Core Soft name rings true, especially with the scoring clubs. This softness can make it feel like the ball jumps off the face, especially on pitches, making distance control tricky.

✓ Good ball speed, but up to ten yards shorter than some premium balls. The main drawback is disappointing greenside control, with a higher ball flight and less grab on pitch shots.

7

Performance

6

Performance was inconsistent. Low distance output off the tee due to excessive backspin and much less spin on mid-range pitches – up to 2,000rpm less than premium alternatives.

✓ The benchmark for value thanks to improved feel, durability and decent performance. A strong option if you want to save money without resorting to a real budget ball.

10

Overall
appeal

7

A solid first extreme-budget effort. A good soft-feeling option for new golfers needing a ball they can afford to lose, but significant drawbacks in distance and consistency.

✓ You want good performance at a great price

✓ You prioritise soft feel in the long game

✓ You want a ball that has a premium look

Go for this if...

✓ You're new to golf and affordability is key

✓ You aren't overly bothered about aesthetics

✓ You would benefit from additional spin

REMOTE ELECTRIC TROLLEYS

The remote electric golf trolley has moved from a niche luxury to an incredibly popular piece of on-course technology. Just a few years ago, the market offered only a handful of contenders worth considering. Today, it is brimming with innovation, offering golfers a mix of more high-quality options as well as new 'value' options.

This expansion is great news but makes choosing the right model more complex. Having thoroughly tested the latest models, I've broken things down into three categories: best value, best with GPS, and best remote experience.

● Best value

I'm defining 'value' in this category as remote trolleys available for under £1,000. While I appreciate that this is still a significant investment for many, it represents the entry point for premium remote functionality.

The Stewart V10 Remote is a trolley that strikes a dramatic pose. It combines Stewart Golf's classic chassis design with its latest technology. And while the 'list' price is over £1,000, it can often be found under this price during sale periods, hence its inclusion here. Keep an eye out for price drops!

The remote experience is superb, a trademark of Stewart products. Its wide wheelbase contributes to exceptional stability, making it steady over any terrain. Crucially, it features the latest Active Terrain Control, which maintains the speed you set, whether climbing a steep hill or traversing a descent – it simply will not



By GM
staff writer
Dan Parker



run away from you. For pure remote functionality at a lower price, the V10 is outstanding.

That said, it is somewhat awkward to live with day-to-day. Its large size means it does not fold down compactly, making it bulky for transportation and a little tricky to get in and out of the car. Getting the battery in and out requires removal of the whole front section, which is fiddly. It also lacks a proper anti-tip rear wheel, using only a small stabilising nub. While the remote control is exemplary, it suffers overall due to its size and design.

The Motocaddy ME Remote at £999 would be my pick in this category, offering a brilliant remote experience coupled with superior day-to-day usability.

Motocaddy's compact-folding M7 GPS Remote



“THE REMOTE TROLLEY MARKET IS BRIMMING WITH INNOVATION AND A MIX OF MORE HIGH-QUALITY MODELS PLUS SOME GREAT NEW VALUE OPTIONS”

Think about what you really need before choosing a remote trolley

It is the most compact and hassle-free option in this sector. As part of the popular M-Series, the ME folds down remarkably small, making it incredibly easy to transport and store. It also features a useful integrated stand, allowing it to remain upright when you store it, a small detail that makes a huge difference in daily life.

While basic – it still uses a wired battery connection and has only a simple dial on the handle – the remote control functionality is excellent. A key advantage over the Stewart V10 is its versatility. It can be instantly switched from remote to handheld mode via the dial, a necessary function in my opinion when crossing car parks or tight bridges.

GM pick: [Motocaddy ME](#)

● Best GPS remote

For the golfer who wants the ultimate all-in-one package, a remote trolley with a seamlessly integrated, high-performance GPS unit offers a complete experience.

The Motocaddy M7 GPS builds on the M-Series' excellent chassis with a high-powered in-built GPS. Like the ME, it folds compactly, inverts its wheels and is incredibly easy to live with. A major plus is the self-disconnecting battery, which reveals a charging port in the chassis and allows simple, direct charging with no need to ever remove the battery from its housing.

The GPS has seen major improvements in recent generations. Full-course mapping is now included for free (removing a previous subscription charge), and this allows you to immediately access all the benefits of GPS on a responsive touchscreen with excellent graphics and dynamic green view, which shows the

exact shape of the green and surrounding hazards. You can even drag and drop the pin position and mark lay-up points, making it a useful assistant when mapping out how to play the hole ahead.

Despite all this, the Motocaddy M7 has been notably superseded in the GPS stakes by Powakaddy's RX12 GPS. This trolley's biggest game-changer is its huge, 5in portrait touchscreen display. This change in orientation from the traditional landscape view on other models makes complete sense on a golf course, as you can view the hole in its natural, vertical field of play. The 5in screen (the M7's is 3.5in) offers a more vibrant and vivid display with smartphone-level touchscreen quality, which completely elevates the GPS experience.

Powakaddy also offers the RX10 GPS, a slightly more budget-friendly option with a 3.8in portrait screen, but the flagship RX12 sets a new standard. While the remote functionality of the Powakaddy is comparable to the M-Series – I couldn't pick between either model in this regard – the revolutionary portrait GPS display makes the Powakaddy RX12 GPS the champion in this all-in-one category.

GM pick: [Powakaddy RX12 GPS](#)

● Best remote experience

This category is for the golfer whose primary need is a trolley that handles the course with minimal input, offering the most stable, intuitive and stress-free remote control available.

The market is rich with trolleys offering superb remote control. The Alphard Cybercart, though not as refined in the looks department, boasts rapid remote control technology, making it a decent competitor if you can get over the quirky design. Alphard also offers the Club Booster V2 – an excellent value choice at around £800 – which is a remote-controlled rear chassis that can convert any matching push cart into an electric remote trolley.

The Motocaddy M7 Remote sits between the entry-level ME and the high-tech M7 GPS. If you love the M-Series' brilliant folding and charging mechanism but want a higher-spec, remote-only



option, this is a strong, compact and highly usable choice.

However, this category is dominated by Stewart Golf, the brand that pioneered 'follow' technology about a decade ago and which focuses almost exclusively on remote and follow products, giving its engineers a deep understanding of remote stability and control.

The Stewart Q Follow is what most people associate with the brand. Clip the remote to your back pocket and the trolley maintains a safe distance behind you, following you up and down the fairways. It offers a true sense of freedom and is the best-executed follow technology by far, despite some niche brands' attempts to mimic it.

Both the Q Follow and Vertx boast a folding mechanism that is quicker and more compact than the M-Series, complete with a clever carry handle for easy lifting. Crucially, the Stewart trolleys benefit from an extra-wide wheelbase. While competitors use a 360° rotating front wheel for manoeuvrability, Stewart Golf's wider base makes its trolleys fundamentally more stable across uneven ground.



Stewart Golf's Vertx (above); Powakaddy's new 5in portrait touchscreen (inset)

The Vertx offers the best remote experience for me, matching all that the Q Follow does, minus the follow technology, but with the same superb chassis, the same great folding mechanism and the same wide, stable wheelbase. Like the V10, it also offers Active Terrain Control, the key to the best remote experience for me as it cleverly maintains a set pace and direction, uphill or down. A remote trolley is meant to remove distractions and let you focus on your golf. The Vertx does this brilliantly, requiring minimal user interaction with the remote once set.

GM pick: [Stewart Golf Vertx](#)

Verdict

This test has hopefully brought to light some of the considerations you need to make when navigating the remote trolley market, which is still a relatively small and niche category overall. For me, the choice would be between the sheer value of the Motocaddy ME, for those wanting to use a remote model for the first time, and the best-in-class performance of the Stewart Golf Vertx.

While the ME is a brilliant entry-point model, the step up to the Stewart Golf Vertx is worth the extra investment. Its superior folding mechanism, coupled with the profound on-course stability and 'set and forget' Active Terrain Control, makes it the ultimate example of a remote electric trolley. It simplifies the game, freeing you up to focus on the next shot, and that is the true measure of a great piece of golf equipment.

	ALPHARD CYBERCART	MOTOCADDY ME	MOTOCADDY M7	MOTOCADDY M7 GPS	POWAKADDY RX10 GPS	POWAKADDY RX12 GPS	STEWART GOLF Q FOLLOW	STEWART GOLF V10 REMOTE	STEWART GOLF VERTX
RRP	£1,249	£999	£1,249	£1,449	£1,349	£1,549	£1,749	£1,199	£1,200

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● RETRO REVIEW

What was the most popular second-hand club of 2025?

PGA professional Joe Ferguson investigates the various factors that help to explain why one particular club is still flying off the shelves 18 months after its release...

In the highly competitive golf club market, where brand loyalty runs deep and new models drop every year, it's fascinating to see which ones truly capture the golfer's attention. Having studied the stats with our friends at GolfClubs4Cash, it's clear that in 2025 one driver was the undisputed king of the second-hand market: TaylorMade's Qi10 Max.

● Why are so many people buying it?

I recently picked up my own Qi10 Max from GolfClubs4Cash for just £287.99, around half of what the

major manufacturers are charging for their new flagship models. This incredible value immediately makes it attractive, but its dominance goes far deeper than price alone.

The consensus seems to be the Qi10 Max hit a perfect storm of performance features and tour influence, which made it irresistible to the average golfer. But what were the ingredients of that storm? I wondered whether the first reason

for its popularity was the immense credibility and confidence built up in the Qi10 range as a whole by TaylorMade's professional staff.

Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler spent pretty much all of the 2025 season using a Qi10 driver (albeit a different model) with massive success, ticking off three of the four Majors between them. Seeing all this success and the club's familiar blue carbon face no

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



By GM staff writer and PGA professional Joe Ferguson



TaylorMade's Qi10 family has enjoyed much success on tour



Joe believes a shorter shaft may be a key factor in the Qi10 Max's enduring popularity

doubt built huge confidence in the performance of the entire Qi10 family of clubs, with recreational players potentially gravitating towards the Max model for its added forgiveness.

Another reason behind its longevity here could be the fact it is heavily draw-biased, which is often a significant factor for the vast majority of golfers battling a persistent slice. For those players, having a high-MOI (moment of inertia) head and a CG bias that actively works to turn the ball over and reduce a right miss is a game-changer.

However, I believe the biggest reason for the Qi10 Max's success may be down to a 'happy accident' by the engineers at TaylorMade. When they designed the Max head, they pushed the shape down to create depth from front to back to maximise MOI. In doing so, the hosel naturally moved lower to the ground by around a quarter of an inch. Rather than adding this length back into the shaft (to maintain the traditional 45.75in length of the rest of the range), TaylorMade just let it roll. As such, the Qi10 Max played a quarter of an inch shorter than its siblings, the core Qi10 and LS models.

● Why is this so crucial?

I suspect that reducing the playing length even slightly helps players find the middle of the clubface more often, and this efficiency has significant benefits for both distance and dispersion. To test this theory, I conducted a simple experiment, bringing along three

identical KBS PGW driver shafts – one at 44ins, one at 45ins and the final one at 46ins.

After a good number of test shots, predictably, the shaft absolutely produced more clubhead speed the longer the length became. However, my average ball speed actually dropped every time I went up in length because I simply wasn't as efficient at finding the middle of the clubface.

Interestingly, this was a perfectly linear relationship for me. The 44in driver produced the least club speed but the most ball speed, while the 46in driver delivered the exact opposite, with the 45in option sitting right in the middle of both.

This was fascinating for me to see in my testing, and only served to reinforce the often forgotten rule that centred contact is always king. You can talk all day about angle of attack, shallow versus steep, rotation and any more endless technical thoughts, but

simply put, they are all superseded by the overarching need for centred contact – even with a head as forgiving as this!

The TaylorMade Qi10 Max, therefore, offers a unique value proposition: a club backed by tour success that's built with maximum slice correction, incredible forgiveness and a slightly shorter, more efficient playing length that helps golfers find the sweetspot. It is a compelling combination that explains why it became the most popular pre-loved club of the year for GolfClubs4Cash.

Great performance at an attractive price



Shaft length	Club speed	Ball speed	Smash factor
44in	115 mph	172.5 mph	1.50
45in	117.1 mph	171.0 mph	1.46
46in	119.8 mph	170.4 mph	1.42

PACKAGE SETS

Why would you buy a package set as opposed to selecting different irons, woods, wedges and a putter? Primarily, convenience – it can save you hunting around and doing lots of research for all the clubs you need. For a lot of golfers, especially those who don't play very often, it's a more appealing option. Although we always recommend going down the custom-fitting route, the fact is, this isn't for everyone.

Pretty much all package sets used to be designed for beginners and high-handicappers. Many of those featured here still have forgiveness very much in mind – typically via oversize heads and user-friendly looks – but some of the latest options are also suitable for intermediate and more experienced golfers.

We've tested a wide selection of sets, and it's been interesting to see the number on offer steadily increasing, along with a significant move by some brands to offer a more premium option. Whether that's down to more people taking up the game, we're not sure, but there's certainly greater choice now than five or six years ago, and that has to be a good thing.



Different shaft options are available with the Ben Hogan FW-817 (from £299.99)



Wilson's Advantage X31 (£449) is a comprehensive set offering superb value



Team TaylorMade Junior clubs (£249-£499) come in three sizes or age brackets

“PACKAGE SETS ARE A PRUDENT INITIAL INVESTMENT FOR NEWCOMERS TO GOLF OR THOSE WHO CAN ONLY HIT THE COURSE RELATIVELY INFREQUENTLY”

DAN PARKER, GM STAFF WRITER

● TOP BUYING TIPS

1

Make sure you know how many clubs come with the set. The same models/sets are often available with different numbers of pieces or clubs.

2

Choosing a set with fewer clubs than the 14 that the Rules permit can be a good way to go, as it gives you the option to add to your bag as you progress.

3

Pay extra close attention to the putter if one comes as part of the set, because this is the club that every golfer will be using the most.



Callaway XR 13 £1,499
The well-thought-out gapping and performance of these clubs earned this set a place in our Editor's Choice awards. The clubs are easy to hit throughout the set.



TaylorMade RBZ 2.0 £1,249
The driver is a particular highlight, with its adjustable hosel allowing players customisation options. Not many sets come with such a high-quality putter (a Spider).



PXG Wildcat £1,500
The attention to detail here and premium quality of each individual club is unrivalled in the package set market. Exceptionally user-friendly for newcomers to golf.



Vice Boost Starter £454.99
The driver and hybrid offer good distance and the irons produce a towering flight – ideal for new players and intermediate golfers looking to upgrade at a good price.



MacGregor DCT4000 £329.99
A functional and easy-to-use package set, more suited to the golfer looking to make the transition from casual range-goer to regular course player.



Ben Sayers M8 £359
A very forgiving 13-piece set packed with game-improvement technology. Comes with a spacious bag and a classic mallet-style putter.



Cobra Fly XL 2 £699
The quality of these clubs, which boast a modern, sleek design, makes them a very good starting point for newcomers. The stand bag is also very impressive.



Stix Jack Nicklaus Essentials £610
Aesthetically, one of the best package sets on the market. The irons are worth a special mention: soft-feeling while offering good control and a repeatable flight.



Tour Edge TE-400 £699
A set that features more than enough options for even very experienced golfers. The quality of the cart bag and headcovers is a real bonus. Exceptional value.



Callaway Women's Reva £1,299
Arguably the Aston Martin of women's package sets. Designed for premium performance, it is luxurious in looks and made from high-quality components.



Wilson Profile SGI £399
A very good entry-level set that features high-launch graphite shafts to help make the game a little easier. The stylish design also gets the nod.



Ram Golf SDX £269.99
One of the best sets in the 'more affordable' category. The clubs, which target the beginner, feature larger sweetspots and plenty of game-improvement technology.

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COURSES

MUST PLAY

● Essentials

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Stats: par 72,
6,384 yards

GF: round: £95
Mon-Fri

Basingstoke

With its roots dating back to 1907 and a rudimentary nine-hole course close to what is now the town centre, Basingstoke Golf Club has enjoyed a long evolution before settling in to its exciting new home less than two years

ago. It is now situated on a gently undulating and perhaps surprisingly peaceful parcel of downland just south of the M3 in Hampshire. And while the club's new course is just a well-struck drive from its previous 15th green, in



virtually every other respect it is really a million miles away.

● A happy coincidence

During the Great War, the original course was used as a training airfield, which led to the need for a new home in the 1920s. The great James Braid, winner of five Open Championships, was enlisted to design a full 18-hole course at Kempshott Park. It opened in 1928 and the par-70, tree-lined course remained Basingstoke's home until the opportunity to sell the land for housing arose five years ago.

By happy coincidence, the proprietary club at Dummer whose course had been designed by Peter Alliss and Clive Clark in 1992, was looking for a new owner.

The income from the sale meant that Basingstoke would be able to take over a pleasant but unremarkable layout and invest in an ambitious redesign as well as a beautifully appointed clubhouse.

● Take two

Architect Bruce Weller was engaged to create something new, modern and more challenging. The aim was to build a course for the 21st century, and this he has achieved with greens constructed with creeping bent grass, rubber-crumb bunkers, two new lagoons and the latest in irrigation technology.

All of this has resulted in an extremely enjoyable course that can stretch to a testing 6,842 yards from the back tees. The first couple of holes take you gently

up to the higher ground before the real drama begins at the par-5 4th with two lakes flanking the left side. This is followed by the beautiful short 5th, played over a pond, and the excellent 6th where the green again has water awaiting anything short and left. The 7th is a tempting short par 4 alongside what looks like an old quarry, and you return to the dazzling new clubhouse via the very strong dogleg-left 9th.

The back nine is even more fun and varied with highlights including the par 4s at 13 and 14, while the closing hole is a peach, a long par 4 with a lagoon lining the left. Basingstoke has also invested in a soon-to-open, state-of-the-art driving range and a short-game area, and is now very much a club of the times.





● COURSES

● PLANET GOLF

Cream of the crop

Elliott Heath ticks off two of the Algarve's very finest courses as he stays and plays at Palmares Ocean Living and Golf before heading to Monte Rei

In October, I was lucky enough to visit two of the finest resorts in arguably Europe's best golf destination of The Algarve – Palmares Ocean Living and Golf and Monte Rei Golf and Country Club. I was excited to see these two powerhouses, and having spent time at both, it's easy to see why they're so highly regarded.

Palmares, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2025, is home to three

contrasting and equally spectacular loops of nine. It's a decent-sized resort with a range of modern apartments and a highly rated five-star boutique hotel, as well as a driving range, Michelin-starred restaurant and impressive clubhouse, voted Europe's best at the 2024 World Golf Awards. You certainly won't find many better outlooks from a clubhouse, with the ocean in full view beyond the Praia (Beach) nine below.

Monte Rei is regarded as not only the Algarve's finest course but also one of the very best in Portugal



The Alvor nine (holes 1-9), is the most parkland-style of the three; the Lagos nine (10-18) features water and is closer to the sea, while still having parkland qualities; and the Praia nine (19-27) is almost entirely by the coast, playing among the sand dunes. There are too many stunning holes to label one the signature, with almost every tee boasting ocean views.

The 4th on the Alvor is probably a favourite of many, me included, with this downhill par 5 offering up a phenomenal vista from the tee. The 17th is another beauty, a downhill dogleg-right par 5 playing towards the Praia nine, where you simply have to get your camera out to take a snap. There are some striking par 3s, such as the 12th that plays over a lake and the long 14th, which sees you tee off next to some impressive ruins. The 13th and 15th are very strong par 5s, which again feature glorious views of the ocean.



Palmares boasts three nines and a range of stylish modern apartments

Palmares is currently undergoing a fair amount of construction, with multiple villas being built and plans for Portugal's first JW Marriott hotel. I don't think it's as famous as Vilamoura or Quinta do Lago, but it's easy to see why some people view it as the Algarve's second best offering.

● The Algarve's finest

Monte Rei has been on my bucket list for years and I can genuinely say it exceeded expectations. The resort is home to an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus course regarded as the very best in the Algarve, four restaurants and a classy, grand clubhouse – a beautiful spot to spend a few hours.

Monte Rei is also home to apartments and a pool, making it one of the best premium stay-and-play resorts in Europe. I stayed in a two-bed apartment that was modern, light and luxurious, and just a five-minute walk from the clubhouse.

There's no ocean at Monte Rei, but it's so good it doesn't need it. Its setting, next to the Serra do Caldeirao mountains, is stunning and the entire resort feels incredibly tranquil and almost cut off from the outside world. The first thing you'll notice is that the service is truly

outstanding, too, with the helpful staff on hand to meet your every need.

Coupled with the breathtaking views and incredibly peaceful setting, this masterpiece of a course, carved into the hills and surroundings, starts strongly courtesy of a dogleg-right par-4 opener. It's a brilliant scene-setter and the course never lets up, with jaw-dropping, and very challenging, holes coming thick and fast.

It's a demanding test of golf as you work your way up and down hills, over lakes and around testing bunkers. There were many highlights for me, including the long and straight par-5 8th, where a huge tree overhangs the green front-right.

The par-3 9th is a brilliant hole playing over a small canyon, with the green surrounded by multiple intimidating bunkers. I had seen photos but it was even more special in person. I obviously found a bunker off the tee but chipped in for par after thinning my sand shot, so I have some very good memories!

The signature hole is either the 9th or the par-4 13th, which plays from a raised tee down a steep hill to a green set above water with the hills beyond. It's a jaw-dropping hole, but there are many others

that give Monte Rei huge strength in depth and make for a very memorable round of golf.

Like Palmares, Monte Rei is only getting better. A second Jack Nicklaus course is on the way, with the aim of creating "the premier golf destination in southern Europe". I'm sure that goal will be met once completed.

Elliott parred Monte Rei's signature 9th after a bit of an adventure



Belfast

Jeremy Ellwood enjoys a mix of courses in and around Northern Ireland's capital, including a long-overdue maiden game at Rory McIlroy's home club

My latest Northern Ireland jaunt was a new experience in that I travelled on the overnight Stena Line ferry from Liverpool to Belfast, with a cabin to while away the eight-hour crossing in the land of nod.

Hitting Belfast docks at 6.30am meant a dawn arrival as first out at Malone Golf Club, more of which in a future issue. But this article starts with my afternoon game at Scrabo east of Belfast, which had been brought to my attention by Irish golf journalist Kevin Markham's photos of the eye-catching tower that forms the backdrop to the difficult opening hole.

Scrabo Tower came on my radar when I was still eight miles away but the tee on the par-3 2nd is then right at the foot of it, with the 2nd green and 3rd tee offering stirring views out over Strangford Lough.

The last thing I needed after an early start and 18 holes at Malone was a hilly course, but at Scrabo you drop down from, and back up to, the higher ground enough times for tired legs to feel it. The huge drop via the 13th and 14th from the 12th green near the clubhouse may be memorable but does mean one final climb to regain lost ground. Despite this, I loved my game here and would recommend it if you're looking for a lesser-known course in the Belfast area.

● Down by the lough

My next port of call was Royal Belfast on the shores of Belfast Lough, which I had played before. The elegant clubhouse is a special place and I enjoyed chatting to the staff and letting them talk me into the 'Nine-hole fry' breakfast despite my futile protestations.

Since my previous game, a major bunker renovation had sparked an incredible transformation. The whole course now sets up much better visually, and there's more to come, with much significant work taking place on the front nine when I visited.

The 1st is a tough test, while the 4th is a very attractive short par 3 at the high point. From here, you sweep down towards the lough on the par-5 5th, then right down to its shores from the 8th green to the tee of the uphill par-3 11th that I remembered vividly on account of its semi-blindness. There is much to enjoy on the final run for home, including the very attractive and well-bunkered par 5 at 16.

Close by lies the splendid Culloden Estate and Spa, where, as the owner of a property called Clock House, I was delighted to be shown to the Clock Tower Suite – home from home! I arrived in time to make full use of the pool and spa before a cracking dinner in the Cultra Inn, effectively the hotel's very own pub within the grounds.

● Rory's old stomping ground

The following morning, it was finally time to see where Northern Ireland's finest honed his game as a child. People had told me you needed one leg shorter than the other at Holywood, but while it is, indeed, on the side of a hill, I coped fine with two legs of equal length.

I liked the course, which offers early chances via three short par 4s, before the drop-hole par-3 4th ups the stakes. The back nine on higher ground perhaps edges it, with several strong holes plus the extraordinary long par-4 12th with its blind approach. I was thrilled to par it, but in soft conditions it took a flushed 3-wood and good two-putt from long range. I expect Rory hits wedge into this green!

There is, of course, an area in the clubhouse devoted to Rory, but what I liked was that it wasn't overdone. They're rightly proud of all he has achieved, but, ultimately, it is just a normal members' club.

Before boarding the overnight ferry home, I was pleased to finally get to visit Titanic Belfast, an excellent experience, and one that is fascinating, thought-provoking and moving in equal measure.

Scrabo

Par 71, 6,254 yards
GF: £35wd, £40we

Royal Belfast

Par 70, 6,185 yards
GF: £80-£200wd;
£105-£250we

Holywood

Par 70, 6,015 yards
GF: £60

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Some holes at Royal Belfast play right by Belfast Lough

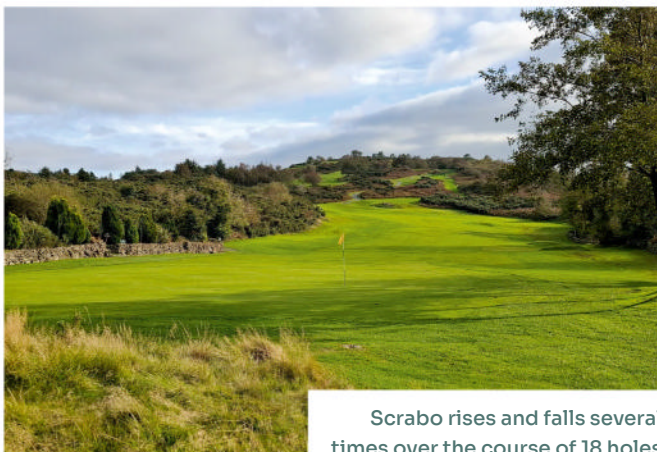


“I WAS THRILLED TO PAR HOLYWOOD’S 12TH BUT IT TOOK A 3-WOOD AND GOOD LONG-RANGE TWO-PUTT. I EXPECT RORY HITS WEDGE!”

JEREMY ELLWOOD



Culloden Estate and Spa is an ideal base for Royal Belfast and Holywood



Scrabo rises and falls several times over the course of 18 holes



A rare chance to handle some of Rory's Major trophies at Holywood

Grand

As Royal Dornoch's new clubhouse opens, Jeremy Ellwood talks to general



The new clubhouse
just ahead of its
scheduled opening
in December 2025

Photography **Matthew Harris/Golf Picture Agency, Royal Dornoch Golf Club, Getty Images**

plans

manager **Neil Hampton** about the club's ambitious future goals

W

hen I heard about Royal Dornoch's extensive (and expensive) plans for a new clubhouse two years ago, I wasn't surprised, as the existing one, though homely in a way, had exceeded its sell-by date for a club whose stock has risen markedly over the last half century.

Influential visitors like Ben Crenshaw and Tom Watson helped spread the word far and wide, particularly in America, about just how good this Highland links masterpiece in the home town of revered course designer, Donald Ross, really was.

But as the project neared completion in late 2025, you would have thought that would have been it for Royal Dornoch for the foreseeable future, especially as it came with a price tag just shy of £14 million. But nothing, it seems, could be further from the truth.

In May 2025, I received a press release detailing multi-million-pound plans for a third course to join the Championship links and Struie course, which grew to a full 18 in 1999, along with a par-3 course, driving range, short-game and putting facilities plus further

The 10th green on the Championship links at Dornoch with the par-4 7th hole top-left

► modifications to the Struie. Given that Dornoch is still just a modest-sized, fairly remote Highland town, I decided to fly up and find out more from the club's friendly general manager, Neil Hampton...

How long is it since Royal Dornoch was just a small Highlands golf club?

Just the 1970s. It's always been a great course but we didn't get a lot of people coming. The three things that really made a big difference were, first, the transportation links with the three bridges on the A9 – the Kessock Bridge in Inverness, the Cromarty Bridge and Dornoch Firth Bridge. It used to be two-and-a-half hours from Dornoch to Inverness; now it's 50 minutes.

Then, in 1979, Ben Crenshaw came here and in 1981 Tom Watson, and both went away and talked very passionately and enthusiastically about how good Royal Dornoch was. Finally, for me, golf on TV really got going because we got colour and suddenly there was more golf on TV and The Open started getting more air time.

Is the new clubhouse on budget?

Yes. It was meant to start pre-Covid and as a result of this delay, we've actually changed a few things, mostly to make the interior much better.



Neil Hampton has been general manager at Royal Dornoch for 15

Are any of the local members afraid that the club is going to lose its character?

That's very much what we've addressed now with the interior. We had people say, 'We don't want to lose the atmosphere, we don't want it to feel like just a new building – it has to feel like a club.' The interior designers we took on for the second go made a much better job of it. We have a video downstairs that shows what some of the interiors look like now, and people are saying, 'Yes, that's much more us.'

Having spent £14 million, most people would have thought that would be it for now, but apparently not?

Apparently not, no! We've been very good at looking after our cash. We had to borrow from the banks and it turns out that our business trading is very good and we're not going to use all the money we borrowed, so the bank said, 'That's fine – we'll still give you all the money and you can use it for something else.'

That said, we always wanted to do what we are going to do next anyway, but in mid-2023, when we knew the clubhouse was going to go ahead, we did a survey asking the members what they would like to see next. The two things that came out neck and neck and very much ahead of everything else were practice facilities and a better Struie course.

How did you decide on an architect for the project?

We went out to six different architects, who we chose, then three others read about it in the press and asked if they could have a go, so nine different architects gave us their ideas. We gave them a plan of all the land we've got control of and said, 'Let's think about 50 years from now. We've got all this land – what potential golf facilities can we put in here that people will use?'

They all came and presented to us – two did it remotely – but King Collins Dormer (KCD) were a long way ahead of everyone else with their blue-sky thinking. We had nine on our club panel – a nice variety of people – and all nine unanimously said, 'That's the one.'

How did it go from improving the Struie to a third golf course?

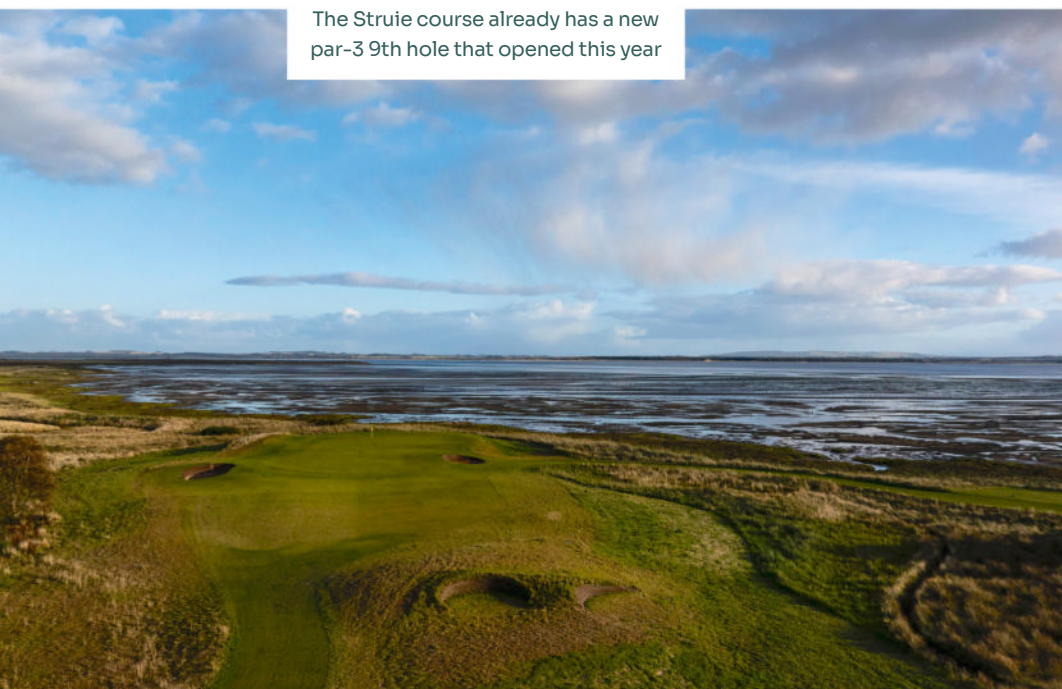
People don't realise we have another 300 acres or so of land that we don't use and let out for grazing. If you get to the 10th at the far end of the Struie and look back towards town, everything between the Struie and the town is ours. Not all the architects saw the potential of that land, whereas KCD did.

There were two others who had put a golf course in that area but not to the same standard. KCD had the whole package of using a piece of land that was not currently used for golf, seeing something in it that could make a very attractive and playable course as well as using the other land in a more novel way to create par-3 courses, driving ranges, short-game areas – all these things.

What are the proposed changes to the Struie course?

What was the 7th hole running along the road with the 14th coming the other way, that's where you would start and finish, with

The Struie course already has a new par-3 9th hole that opened this year



everything else going out from that point. The Struie and new course will start and finish in the same place, while the existing 2nd, 3rd and 15th to 17th holes on the Struie are where the driving range will be.

Will the Struie have to go down to nine holes for a while?

No, the commitment we've made to the members is that whatever happens, there will always be 18 holes available. We have a number of Struie members who are going to be Struie members for a long time because the upgrade process to full membership is very slow, so we have said there will always be 18 holes to play.

We have to work out what we're going to do first – build the brand new course or upgrade the Struie holes? Do we keep the holes in play that are already there but add in the new Struie holes that KCD want to put in and bring them into play so we can build the driving range, and then the new course comes after that? Many people have different ideas about what is best and what should come first.

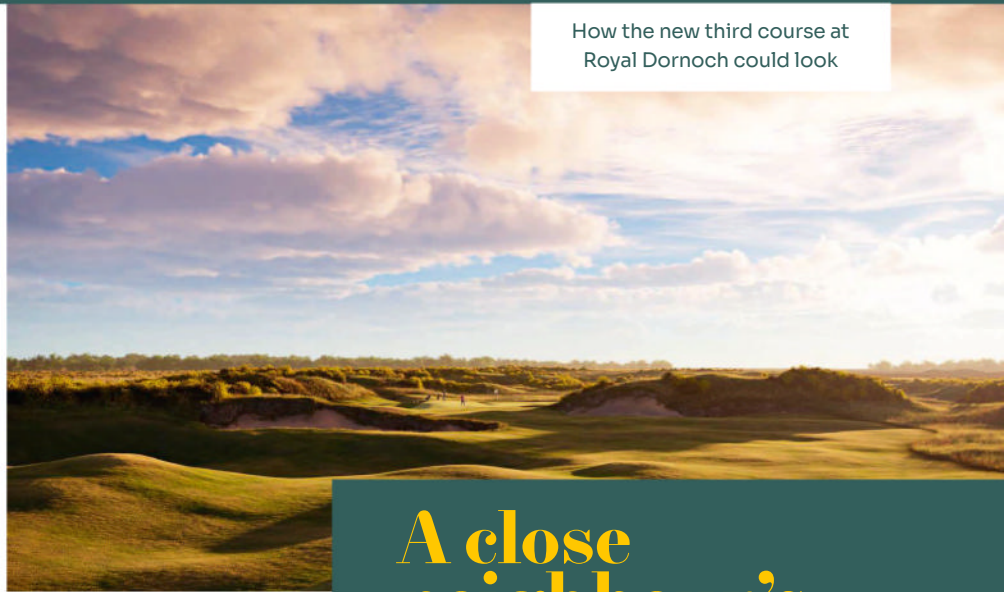
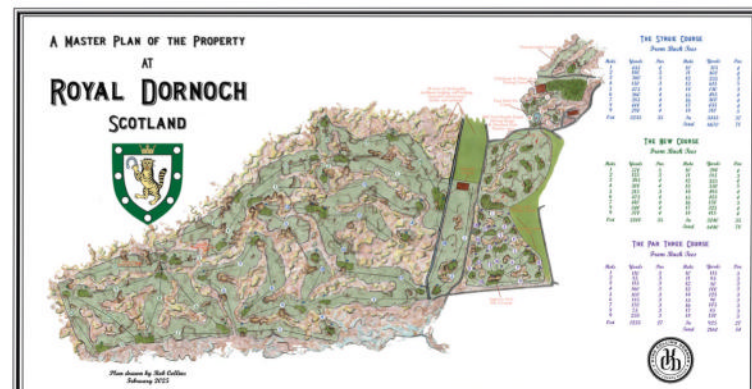
What is the timescale for completion?

There is no timescale. It's a question of, 'This is what we are going to do and it will take as long as it takes.' It all depends on finance because whatever is used for golf at the moment, we can just rejig that, but the piece of land where the new course would go is virgin land so we need to get planning permission from what we understand. We don't see any obstacles and the advice we have been given is that there shouldn't be.

We understand the process will take about a year, which would take us to next summer and we can then decide which one comes first. We can work out how much it's going to cost and, from that, when we are going to start.

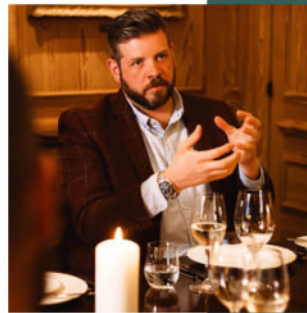
Do you hope to see it all through as manager?

In 2027, we're going to be 150 years old so we've got some nice celebrations planned for that. And in 2028, we've been given the Curtis Cup. At the end of 2028, I'd like to think we'd got these new facilities started – maybe some finished – and that we've done the 150th celebrations and the Curtis Cup. I've said to a lot of people that is when I think I'd like to take a step back.



How the new third course at Royal Dornoch could look

A close neighbour's perspective



Phil Scott, managing director of the Links House hotel right next door to Royal Dornoch shares his thoughts on the new clubhouse and future plans

"It's great. It provides more incentive for people to come and use Dornoch in the north of Scotland as a destination for golf. As much as I'm an advocate for hospitality up here, I think I'm becoming more of an advocate for golf and feel I want to put my efforts in to that as well.

"I've not been inside the clubhouse yet, but I think they've done a great job and it's going to be a statement piece that is a legacy for the club and a great place for people to come and spend time. I think it's possibly a new chapter for the club or a new volume in its encyclopaedia.

"As for our occupancy rates here, I think they'll probably stay the same with the new clubhouse, but if or when the other courses come on line [Coul Links is another proposed new course in the area] that's when there will most definitely be a difference. There are only so many tee-times available for visitors, but when that new course is ready and people are coming to play the Championship course and staying an extra night to play that new course, they're going to be staying in Dornoch. A rising tide raises all ships. That's the way it has to be looked at.

"I'd love to see Coul Links happen and let's not forget Royal Dornoch still needs planning permission for its third course. If they could position that as another championship course, which I believe Coul Links would also be, that's when we provide an opportunity for people to have a destination of golf in the north Highlands.

"People often say to me that Dornoch is like a small St Andrews. No, we're Dornoch. We have our own charm, own product, own delivery, own feeling. And it's like catching air – it's intangible."

King Collins
Dormer's
plans for the
new course
and more



Clubs to move home in the modern era

All five of these long-established clubs have relocated to pastures new since 1970

● Moor Allerton

GF: 18 holes: £50wd, £65we

It would take a great deal for a club with the design pedigree of Alister MacKenzie to move home, but such was the demand for golf and better facilities at the time that this is exactly what Moor Allerton in Yorkshire decided to do in the mid-1960s. Leading architect Robert Trent Jones Snr was

engaged to design what would be his first course in England, an expansive 27-hole layout at Blackmoor Farm, three miles east.

There are three loops of nine, each surprisingly different from its Top 100 close neighbours at Alwoodley and Moortown. The architect's trademark bold statements are present throughout, with dramatic bunkering, large undulating greens and plenty of water.

Not long for a par 5, the 14th hole is still very tough with water in play every inch of the way from the tee to its well-protected green





● Kirkby Lonsdale

GF: 18 holes: £50wd, £60we

Founded in 1906 and enjoying a nine-hole course until 1991, Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria then moved to its current scenic home and a full 18 holes a couple of miles from the town. This gently undulating moorland/parkland hybrid is beautifully located by the River Lune in the lea of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. For all but the very longest hitters, the four par 5s are genuine three-shotters, as are one or two of the par 4s! The signature hole is the picturesque par-3 17th, which plays over the babbling Barbon Beck. This is an idyllically peaceful place for a game of golf.

● Dun Laoghaire

GF: 18 holes: €95 Mon-Thu, €125 Fri-Sun

A short drive to the south of its namesake Dublin port, the 27 holes at Dun Laoghaire are blessed with a beautiful, modern parkland setting that is far removed from the club's original links roots. Sensibly cashing in on the housing boom, the club relocated to its brand new Martin Hawtree design in 2007. Each nine has its own and different challenges, with strong and very visual bunkering throughout. The elevated nature of the Upper nine leads to panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and Wicklow Hills, with water a feature on the Middle and Lower loops.



● Sedbergh

GF: 18 holes: £36

Sedbergh is a pretty Cumbrian town that's home to a public school and a delightful nine-hole course. The club dates back to 1896 when golf took place on common land known as The Riggs, but the club made the short move to its new home and first professionally designed course in 1991. Each hole is a new and engaging adventure, with the par-3 2nd over the Dee and the long hole that follows out to the viaduct two of many highlights. Sedbergh offers exceptional value for money and is one of the most attractive and appealing nine-holers in the country.



● St Ives (Hunts)

GF: 18 holes: £45wd, £65we

St Ives in Cambridgeshire, which spent its first 87 years playing over a nine-hole course by the Great Ouse, celebrated its centenary in 2023. When the chance to sell for housing arose in the mid-2000s, the club purchased a farm to the east of town and hired Cameron Sinclair to design effectively an inland links, which opened in 2010. Running over an easy-walking tract of land with several testing but attractive water features, there is an excellent sting in the tail on 18, a par 5 with water to the left on the approach.





Bill Elliott

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

● OPINION

Tiger Woods? I've never doubted he's the most significant golfer of my lifetime and yours. And your dad's and grandad's. Indeed, he is the most significant sportsman since Muhammad Ali strutted across the world stage. Both men of colour broke through barriers and blew up misconceptions. Each changed so much for others while so loudly blowing their own trumpets.

Woods' 1997 Masters win was the most memorable, most significant, most emotional and most thrilling Major victory I've ever witnessed. At 21 years of age in Augusta, Georgia – a location central to all preceding thoughts – he changed the face of golf, both literally and metaphorically. And, of course, his own life.

I've been privileged to enjoy a grandstand seat at almost all his great wins and although I was taught early never to be a 'fan with a typewriter' it was impossible not to warm to him. He was different to anyone we'd seen before. The colour of his skin marked him out in a sport overwhelmingly populated by white faces but it was the game he played, the skill, the power, the self-belief and the understandable arrogance as he strode further and faster than anyone else did or had done.

His smile lit up golf courses, his interaction with fans, the high-fives, the fist pumps, the way he drew the crowd into his extraordinary world. Only Seve comes close to Woods' relationship with the fans, who were drawn to watch him on whatever course he played, while TV audiences doubled if he was involved. He was phenomenal. No-one has ever played golf the way he did in those early years. Ernie Els, for example, who won four Majors would probably have doubled that number but for Woods. Ernie told me he'd tried everything to

beat Tiger but basically given up the battle: "I've tried going toe to toe with him, tried ignoring him, tried everything, but if he plays his best game then we all lose."

Then the smiley, people-pleasing Woods was gone almost as swiftly as he'd charmed us. He was burned by a journalist who spent many days with him, then repeated some of the dirty jokes Tiger had told him in his article. Woods was angry and embarrassed that his mother would read it and retreated from any meaningful media interaction. Whether understandable or not, his press conferences became dull, monosyllabic at times, revealing little or nothing of interest.

He never did one-on-ones, but in 1999 I blagged my way on to the practice ground at Pinehurst, exaggerated my British accent and secured 20 minutes with him. He was both engaged and friendly. The one question I wanted to ask was my last one – should players be paid for the Ryder Cup? He thought for a moment, then said, "Yes, but it should be allocated to the charity of their choice." How much? He thought again and said "maybe \$200,000 or \$250,000". The story was written and six weeks later the PGA of America announced that Ryder Cup players would be paid. That's raw power right there. Tiger Woods, at that point, was golf.

Meanwhile, he won more Majors and public interest grew to the point where he was resentful, often surly, a superstar being devoured by his stardom. It got worse in 2009 when the scandal involving many women erupted. His marriage ended as more sordid accounts were published and key sponsors cancelled contracts.

Could he survive this tsunami of public and private disapproval? Remarkably, yes. Americans love winners above all else and he was their winner. It took a few years but his welcome back to the biggest events was incredible. Whatever anyone else thought, he was 'forgiven' by swathes of golf fans.

In 2019 he pocketed his 15th Major, again at The Masters. So, 22 years after that first Augusta success, he completed the circle. We were all amazed. Tiger wasn't. It was what it was – as he monotonously might say – and what it was was beyond great. We'll never see his like again.

“No-one has ever
played golf the way
Tiger Woods did in
those early years”



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