the principle of cart-free golf at the resort, a decision made late in the completion of the first course but for which all visiting golfers have much to thank. It is, mercifully, a cart-free course and the only concession is a manned shuttle cart that operates up a hill between the 13th and 14th - the longest green to tee transition.

Such is the empathy in their design approaches, the opening two holes in the dunes could have been designed by Tom Doak. The first is a higgledy-piggledy short par 4, the second a downhill par 3 of obvious links provenance. The character of the course changes with the par 5 3rd, the first of the meadow holes, back dropped by pine trees.

Crenshaw and Coore cite the Sandbelt courses of the Melbourne area as an influence on the look of their course, and the bunkering that runs up the 4th hole is reminiscent of the bunkering at Kingston Heath or Royal Melbourne in the way the edges have been sculpted and the natural brush encouraged to grow within. The 5th is a short par 3 with a dramatic swale in the middle. The waste land in front of and the pines to each side perfectly frame the hole.

By the time you play the 6th and 7th you might find yourself beginning to admire the look of every one of the holes here. It is not unusual to see golfers interrupt their ritual, put thoughts of the next swing to one side, and exchange comments about the view from the tees. The prettiest sequence of holes begins with the 10th, at the deepest point within the forest. The



The 14th (above) is a score-breaker. Short at 325 yards and downhill, a over safe drive leaves you well below the pin with no view of the surface. A bolder tee-shot stays on higher ground to gain a view of the green's surface but risks the forest on the left. From either point the green is an elusive target, very thin, especially at the front and falling away on both sides with a dramatic drop on the right. Many less skilled golfers will find themselves shuttling from one side of the green to the other and this hole attracted debate like no other on all three courses with most judging the green to be too small at the front and to difficult to hit. Crenshaw himself had made a visit shortly before us and in the company of Jay Haas had played his course again and pronounced the 14th a fair hole. Not all would agree.

Controversy behind you, the course moves to an elegant finish. Back in the pine lined meadows, the 15th (pictured below), with the MacKenzie styled bunkers on the right and the natural heath invading the green from the left, is a very elegant par 4.



The 16th is a three shot bash up a steep hill. The 17th marks the transition back to the seaside, a beautiful downhill par three played against a backdrop of dunes. The 18th is a deceptively difficult uphill par 4 that finishes in front of the plate glass windows of the simple yet elegant clubhouse.

Individually these courses are establishing themselves amongst the best in the country, collectively they add up to the best golfing destination in America. This remarkable story is not yet over. Kesier is reported to be thinking of building more courses on other parts of the Oregon shoreline. Rest assured they will be "golf, as it should be played" FS

* "Dream Golf - The making of Bandon Dunes" by Stephen Goodwin, published by Algonquin Books

# "Golf Architecture" by Dr. Alistair MacKenzie, available from http://www.classicsofgolf.com

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| Location: | Bandon Dunes Resort, Oregon, USA. |
| Rates: | Greens fees: US$185/round high season (replay US$95) |
| | Caddies: US$50 per round plus US$25 tip |
| | Accommodation: US$140-US$260 a night pp high season |
| Best months to visit: | May to October (but note that the wind picks up from June onwards) |
| | Pacific Dunes #8/#13 (in US/World) |
| | Bandon Dunes #40/#69 |
| | Bandon Trails #47/#86 |
| | Golf Magazine, 2005 |
| First Shot Rating: | Golf 5/5; Service 5/5; Accommodation 4/5; Food 3/5; Other diversions 1/5 |
| More information: | http://www.bandondunesgolf.com |

## HAZARDS IN GOLF

### - Short grass as a Hazard, by Tom Doak

Hazards on golf courses exist in two dimensions -- physically on the ground, and in the player's mind. Of the two, I am convinced that the latter has far more effect on the play of the average golfer. Take a simple pond immediately in front of a tee -- how often would we top the ball if the hazard were not there? And how often do we, because we have worried about embarrassing ourselves?

The real objective of golf architecture is to make the course difficult for the better golfer without making it too difficult for the hacker. (In USGA parlance, this would be a course with a

high course rating but a low Slope Rating -- a very rare combination to find). As such, the ideal hazard would be one which scares the knowing, but of which the average golfer is not aware.

Imagine, for example, a hole guarded by three buried land mines. The first-time visitor would walk blindly through the course and, thanks to the laws of random chance, probably not trip one in ten tries; but the wise would have a hard

time taking one step for fear of their lives.

In golf architecture, tightly mowed grass is the nearest thing we have to a land mine. The average golfer sees acres of manicured grass and is encouraged to swing without fear. But the clever architect can utilize short grass in several ways to increase the difficulty of the course, and it will have the greatest effect on better players who recognize and fear the problems it will present.

How does short grass cross the line from player's aid to hazard? There are several forms:

1. The steep slope of a green -- epitomised by Augusta or Oakmont, whose greens are so fast that to get above the hole is automatically raising the possibility of three putts. Good players are thus compelled to try and play their approaches "below the hole," bringing frontal hazards more into play.

2. The open approach, featured on many British links. It allows the average golfer to try for the green from his maximum range, but sometimes creates indecision for the good player on whether to approach in the air or on the ground, whether playing a full approach or chipping after a short approach. In extreme cases, players are tempted into playing an extremely difficult running shot which they have not practiced to try and get close to the hole, when they would be much better off taking their medicine and playing their straightforward shot to the back of the green.

3. The mowed bank of a green, as at Pinehurst (No. 2) or Royal Dornoch. Instead of letting the banks away from a green grow shaggy, so the wayward ball stops quickly, mowing them at fairway height allows gravity to take the ball further away from the green, leaving an awkward shot back. In the most extreme examples, such as the 6th hole at Royal Dornoch, the player must then somehow get the next shot sturdily onto the green, or the ball will return to his feet via the same slope.

4. Steep banks in fairways, as at National Golf Links or High Pointe. The appearance is of a wide open target, but a ball not played to the correct spot will be carried away by the slopes to a less desirable spot, perhaps even a bunker which did not appear to be within reach from the tee.

5. Gentler contours of fairways, as at Muirfield in Scotland, which "collect" balls toward bunkers and increase their sphere of influence.

6. Acreages of fairway which tempt players to cut over other hazards, such as on the 5th hole at Royal Portrush. Frequently the carry is more difficult than it looks, or the reward for hitting the shot purely emotional in nature, as the second shot is not made particularly easier even if the drive is pulled off.

7. Banks on the approaches to greens, which allow shots from some positions to bounce straight onto the green, while turning shots from other positions towards trouble. The European designer Tom Simpson was a master of this design.

8. Even a fairway so wide and devoid of hazards that it lulls the player into not concentrating on his stroke, or fools him into not playing for a hidden advantage of position for the next shot.

Of all the courses I have seen around the world, only a few have taken advantage of the possibilities of short grass - probably because it requires a good budget to manicure extra acres of fairways. But consider the list: the Old Course at St. Andrews, Augusta National, Pinehurst #2, Royal Dornoch, Muirfield, and Ballybunion at the front. With so many new courses lusting after this sort of status, you'd think a few would try to implement this technique FS

(FIRST SHOT: this article appears by kind permission of Tom Doak.)

## THE MISSION HILLS 10 - Ranked in their order of merit, by Alex Jenkins

While no single individual can be credited with golf's Great Leap Forward on the Chinese mainland, David Chu, an entrepreneur who made his fortune by investing in China under Deng Xiaoping's 'open door' policy, is undoubtedly the man responsible for making the rest of the golfing world sit up and take note. In the early 80s, at about the same time Arnold Palmer was wading through fish ponds and rice paddies while trying to figure out how he was going to route the country's first course at Chung Shan Hot Spring, Chu played his first ever round of golf at an exclusive club near Toronto and was instantly hooked. Rightly noting that golf would appeal to China's emergent consumer class, Chu returned to the Middle Kingdom and set about the task of creating a fully-fledged golfing community outside the special economic zone of Shenzhen, close to the border with Hong Kong. It was to be called Mission Hills.

Fast forward twenty-odd years and the club has grown to become the world's largest with ten courses all designed by some of the most illustrious personalities in the sport. While it's difficult to gauge how much influence these 'designers' actually had on the courses that bare their names - the unheralded American duo of Lee Schmidt and Brian Curley are the principal architects behind nine of the ten courses – it's fair to say that the resort, by sheer size alone, is one of the most impressive in the region.

Since surpassing Pinehurst's eight courses in 2004, the Mission Hills marketing machine has gone into overdrive and it's almost impossible to miss the never-ending cycle of advertisements on both screen and in print proclaiming the club as "The World's Number One." In truth, Mission Hills is not Pinehurst. Nor is it Pebble Beach, St. Andrews, Royal Melbourne. Neither is it the superb Bandon Dunes that you can also read about in this issue. The Norman Course is the nearest the club gets to world class, a couple of disappointing courses and a handful of worthy courses that wouldn't attract much attention were they to be found in Florida or North Carolina.

FIRST SHOT Course Rating Key (0-10)

10 - One of the World's top echelon of courses. Dean of everlasting golfing memories.

9 - Memorable, worth making a lengthy trip to play. A sliver short of the very best but fantastic golf nonetheless.

8 - Excellent golf course, well designed, well