FOREWORD

As golf course designers, we accept that whether our newest project compares favorably with Sand Hills or Pine Valley is an entirely subjective exercise. We have to be confident enough in our beliefs to not worry too much about what course raters think.

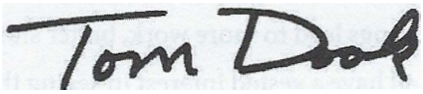
At the same time, good rankings lead to more work, better sites, and higher design fees. So, we all have a vested interest in seeing the rankings of courses done impartially.

Part of the argument is, "Great for whom?" What makes a course great is personal to each golfer, and it can be influenced by all kinds of things: from the beauty of the site, to the routing and the shaping of the bunkers and greens, to the conditioning, to the weather, to even whether you lost a ball in the rough on the third hole. (When I ask a golfer what he thinks of one of my courses, and he tells me what he shot, my internal hearing aid switches to "mute.") The most enjoyable courses for amateur golfers are often pushovers for Tour players, and the most challenging courses for Tour players are five hours of torture for the seventeen-handicap player, even from the forward tees. How does a ranking balance

those different points of view? The answer depends on the people you ask, and how you ask them.

Jon Cummings and I have an affinity for the subject and for each other because we've both seen how the sausage of golf course rankings is made, and we both believe it could be done better—even if we don't entirely agree on how. I have no idea how many other people are as fascinated by the topic as Jon and I are, but for those who are, you will find here many of the gruesome details of how the rankings are done.

I saw many courses for the first time just before they were ranked, and trying to figure out for myself what made them special—or not—shaped my ideas on design. I hope Jon's book will cause you to trust your opinion more, and magazine rankings a little less.



Tom Doak
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