2004 TEN BEST NEW INTERNATIONAL COURSES

BARNBOUGLE DUNES GOLF LINKS, BRIDPORT, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

Tucked away on Tasmania’s north coast, Barnbougle may be the course that proves a great track can thrive anywhere, even behind God’s back. The front nine, parted through forty-foot sand dunes, eventually gives way to holes among lower, wrinkled dunes beside the Bass Strait. The 120-yard seventeenth, “Little Devil,” is destined to become iconic.


BUSHMAN SANDS CLUB, ALICEDEALE, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Alicedale—a once-forgotten and decaying railway town—is now a trendy getaway with a four-star hotel, a fully stocked game reserve and a course cut through the bushveld along a mountain ridge, with several holes routed near the apex of the New Year and Bushmans Rivers. Ten holes are now open, with the final eight scheduled for completion in March. Like all Gary Player courses, it is fun but exacting.


DUNDONALD, IVRY, SCOTLAND

On sandy ground set back from the Firth of Clyde in Argyll, a scene’s throw from the Royal Troon, Kyle Phillips has given birth to a classic links on the site of an old course abandoned to military use in World War II. Low dunes frame rippled fairways trimmed by heather, gorse and tall heathers that mark wetlands. Deep, revetted bunkers defend the large, sandy contoured greens. On a typically windy day, it’s a challenge to rival the finest courses in the neighborhood—unless you’re saying something.


EAGLES NEST GOLF CLUB, MAPLE, ONTARIO, CANADA

An old sand and gravel extraction site, Eagles Nest has been transformed by the accomplished Canadian architect Doug Carrick into a compelling links-style track, its sand scars shaped to resemble eroded dunes. Thirty minutes north of downtown Toronto, it’s marked by huge plateau greens, fescue-covered hills and sandy wastelands dotted with grass islands. This strategic gem’s ninety-one sand-walled bunkers are a tip of the hat to the Auld Sod.


GUNNAMATIA GOLF COURSE, ST. ANDREWS BEACH, RYE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

“Gunnamatia is the easiest golf course I’ve ever built,” says Tom Doak of this genuine Links ninety minutes south of Melbourne. Its holes, set in large hollows below sandy ridges, offer no water views, but this brilliant layout offers that shortcoming with natural blowouts, elevated tees and punch bowl greens. Deak moved roughly 10,000 cubic yards of earth, an absolute pittance, in creating the course that Alister Mackenzie, Doak’s patron saint, would have built here were he still alive.


NORMAN COURSE, MISSION HILLS GOLF CLUB, SHENZHEN, GUANGDONG, CHINA

Dubbed the “Tournament Course,” the tenth layout to open at what is now the world’s largest golf complex is already acclaimed as one of the most challenging in Asia. Its front nine meanders through a series of small valleys; the back nine is walled in by steep slopes. Dense forest and eighty-five yard bunkers swallow stray shots. Located an hour north of Hong Kong.


NORTH WEST COURSE, KYTJAJO GOLF, HELSINKI, FINLAND

On the heels of the triumph of his parkland-style South East course at this 11,000-acre complex built by a Finnish timber and mining baron, Tom McIlroy returns with a rugged yet refined layout cut through firs and pines high above the shores of a pristine lake. It’s a beautifully sculpted work, with rolling fairways leading to tightly bunkered greens. Kytja is a mere hour’s drive from St. Petersburg—the Russian one.


PLUS: CAPE KIDNAPPERS (see page 113).