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The Platinum List

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Platinum GOLF

Your picks for top golf courses are championship-caliber — just witness how many are hosting tournaments this year. BY THOMAS BEDELL

For golf this year, round numbers are nice. It has been 115 years since the first U.S. Open and 150 years since the first Open Championship. Both are returning this year to be played at our two first-place picks — **PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS** for the U.S. Open (for the fifth time) and **THE OLD COURSE AT ST ANDREWS** for The Open Championship. The latter event will roam over the ancient links for the 28th time. Of course, 28 isn't a round number, but *Celebrated Living* readers certainly played some interesting numbers games with this year's Platinum List votes.

They vaulted the **HARBOUR TOWN GOLF LINKS** from seventh to third

place, for example, The Sea Pines Resort perhaps receiving a boost from the resort's new Heron Point by Pete Dye course.

Arnold Palmer's **BAY HILL CLUB** made an even more impressive ten-spot leap following the reopening of the Championship course in September after a tweaking under the watchful eye of Palmer himself.

The 2009 U.S. Open course made the biggest move of all: **BETHPAGE BLACK** jumped a dozen spots, from 20th to eighth, albeit in a three-way tie, with **COG HILL #4** and **MONARCH BEACH GOLF LINKS** (which also moved up 10 spots), for the hotly contested slot. This is a tribute not only to the fierce loyalties

of *CL* readers but also to geographic diversity, as the courses are within striking distance of three of our great metropolises — New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, respectively.

The Tour pros and eventual winner Lucas Glover had to trudge around a rain-soaked and muddy Bethpage Black at last year's Open, but according to Bethpage State Park director Dave Catalano, "We've recovered very nicely, with the assistance of the USGA."

Cog Hill is the venue for the BMW Championship in early September, and this year's defending champ is Tiger Woods. And the host course of the HP Byron Nelson Championship,

Golf Courses

Top 20 U.S.

- 1. Pebble Beach Golf Links, California**
(800) 654-9300, pebblebeach.com
- 2. Torrey Pines (South Course), La Jolla, California**
(800) 985-4653,
torreypinesgolfcourse.com
- 3. Harbour Town Golf Links, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina**
(866) 561-8802, seapines.com
- 4. Mauna Kea Golf Course, Kohala Coast, Hawaii** (808) 882-5405,
princerortshawaii.com
- 5. Bay Hill Club, Orlando, Florida**
(888) 422-9445, bayhill.com
- 6. Fazio Canyons at Barton Creek, Austin, Texas**
(866) 572-7369, bartoncreek.com
- 7. Spyglass Hill Golf Course, Pebble Beach, California**
(800) 654-9300, pebblebeach.com
- 8. Bethpage Black, Farmingdale, New York (tie)**
(516) 249-0707,
nysparks.state.ny.us/golf-courses/
11/course-information.aspx
- 8. Cog Hill #4, Lemont, Illinois (tie)**
(866) 264-4455, coghillgolf.com
- 8. Monarch Beach Golf Links, Dana Point, California (tie)**
(949) 240-8247, stregismb.com
- 11. The Plantation Course, Maui, Hawaii**
(800) 527-2582, kapaluamaui.com
- 12. The Challenge at Manele, Lanai, Hawaii**
(808) 565-2000,
fourseasons.com/manelebay
- 13. Blackwolf Run (River Course), Kohler, Wisconsin (tie)**
(800) 344-2838, destinationkohler.com
- 13. TPC Four Seasons Las Colinas, Irving, Texas (tie)**
(972) 717-2499,
fourseasons.com/dallas
- 15. Pinehurst No. 2, North Carolina**
(800) 487-4653, pinehurst.com
- 16. The Ocean Course, Kiawah Island, South Carolina**
(800) 576-1570, kiawahresort.com
- 17. Bandon Dunes, Bandon, Oregon (tie)**
(888) 345-6008,
bandondunesgolf.com
- 17. Whistling Straits (Straits Course), Mosel, Wisconsin (tie)**
(800) 344-2838,
destinationkohler.com
- 19. Troon North (Monument), Scottsdale, Arizona**
(888) 876-6687, troonnorthgolf.com
- 20. Prince Course, Kauai, Hawaii**
(800) 826-1105, princeville.com



Pebble Beach Golf Links

OUR SEASONS LAS COLINAS, is in its year on the list. (Note: The Hall of Fame, next to the Pro Shop, is missed for its trove of Byron Nelson memorabilia.) Our other try is the FAZIO CANYONS AT BARTON CREEK.

PRINCE COURSE regained its spot after a year's rest, perhaps readers' chances to enjoy the new St. Regis Resort, which debuted in 2011. The MAUNA KEA GOLF COURSE, THE OCEAN COURSE at Kapalua Resort, and THE CHALLENGE AT MANELE round out the contingent.

Like the windswept WHISTLING STRAITS (tied with it), is BANDON DUNES.



Prince Course, Kauai

Golf Courses

Top 20 International

- 1. St Andrews (The Old Course), Scotland** 011-44-1334-466666, standrews.org.uk
- 2. The Castle Course, Scotland** 011-44-1334-466666, standrews.org.uk
- 3. Ocean Course, Cabo San Lucas, Mexico** (877) 703-4394, cabodelsol.com
- 4. Ballybunion (Old Course), Ireland** 011-353-68-27146, ballybuniongolfclub.ie
- 5. The Fairmont Banff Springs Golf Course, Canada** (403) 762-6801, fairmont.com/banffsprings
- 6. Gleneagles (The King's Course), Scotland** (866) 881-9525, gleneagles.com
- 7. Fairmont Chateau Whistler Golf Club, Canada** (800) 606-8244, fairmont.com/whistler
- 8. La Cana Golf Course, Dominican Republic** (888) 442-2262, puntacana.com
- 9. Kauri Cliffs, New Zealand** 011-64-9-407-0010, kauricliffs.com
- 10. The Green Monkey, Barbados (tie)** (246) 444-2500, sandylane.com
- 10. The K Club (Palmer Course), Ireland (tie)** 011-353-1601-7200, kclub.com
- 12. Carnoustie Golf Links (Championship Course), Scotland (tie)** 011-44-1241-802270, carnoustiegolflinks.co.uk
- 12. Port Royal Golf Course, Bermuda (tie)** (441) 234-0974, portroyalgolf.bm
- 14. Cape Kidnappers, New Zealand (tie)** 011-64-6-875-1900, capekidnappers.com
- 14. Muirfield, Scotland (tie)** 011-44-1620-842123, www.muirfield.org.uk
- 16. Old Head Golf Links, Ireland** 011-353-21-4778444, oldhead.com
- 17. Dundonald Links, Scotland** 011-44-1294-314000, dundonaldlinks.com
- 18. Turnberry (Ailsa Course), Scotland** 011-44-1655-334032, turnberry.co.uk
- 19. New South Wales Golf Club, Australia (tie)** 011-61-2-9661-4455, nswgolfclub.com.au
- 19. Ocean Club Golf Course, Bahamas (tie)** (242) 363-6682, oneandonlyresorts.com

DUNES, the first course at the resort of the same name. But the big news at the Oregon golfing shrine is the June opening of the fourth course, Old Macdonald, Tom Doak and Jim Urbina's tribute to the grand old man of American golf, Charles Blair Macdonald. Old Mac was not only the first classic U.S. course designer but also a USGA founder.

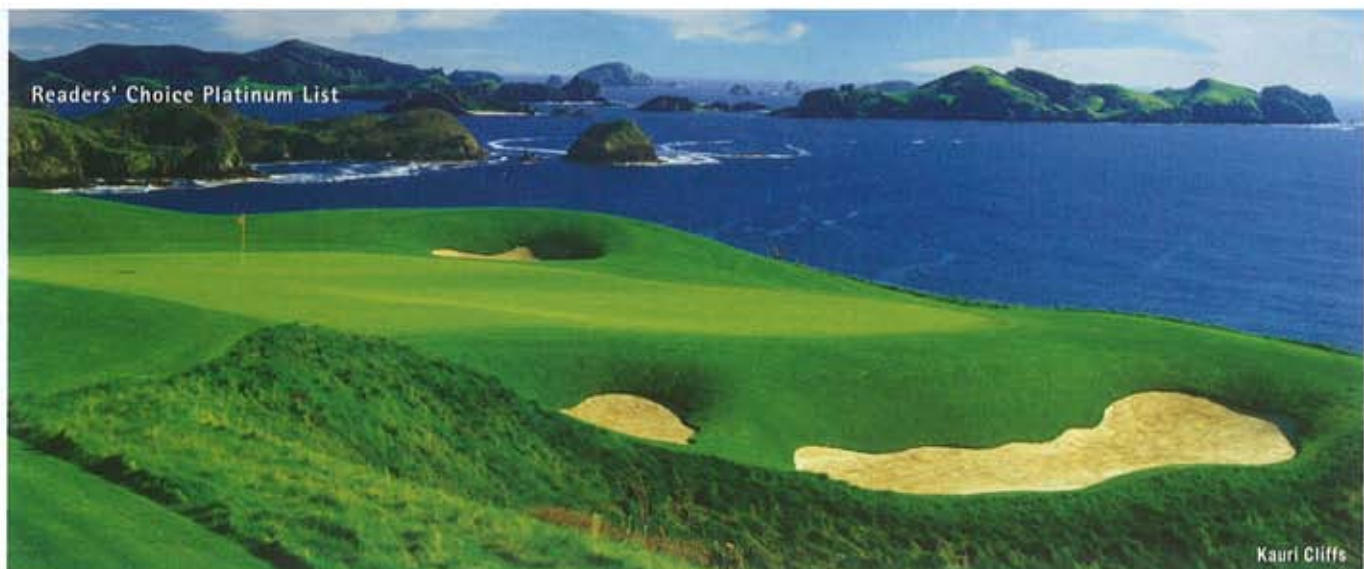
The USGA is pulling off a twofer in 2014 when the men's and women's U.S. Open tournaments will be played on consecutive weeks on **PINEHURST NO. 2**. The design team of Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw will soon begin work on the Donald Ross masterpiece to restore aesthetic and strategic elements that have eroded over time.

The Kohler Co. is also seeing double: Both its **RIVER COURSE** at Blackwolf Run and **STRAITS COURSE** at Whistling Straits are repeat honorees. In addition, Kohler is serving as the host and host/hotel of two majors this year: The PGA Championship will be held at the Straits Course in August, while the Old Course Hotel (owned by Kohler) will be in the thick of the competition for the Claret Jug at St. Andrews in July.

THE OCEAN COURSE at Kiawah Island Golf Resort will be the 2012 PGA Championship site, and designer Pete Dye is already tweaking the course in anticipation. ►

The Castle Course





Kauri Cliffs

Golf Courses

Editors' Mentions

UNITED STATES

Cascades Course at The Homestead, Hot Springs, Virginia

(866) 354-4653, thehomestead.com

Cougar Canyon Golf Links, Trinidad, Colorado

(877) 547-7455, cougarcanyonresort.com

Shadow Creek, Las Vegas

(866) 260-0069, shadowcreek.com

Longaberger Golf Club, Nashport, Ohio

(740) 763-1100, longabergergolfclub.com

INTERNATIONAL

Cruden Bay, Scotland

011-44-1779-812285, www.crudenbaygolfclub.co.uk

Waterville Golf Links, Ireland

011-353-66-947-4102, watervillegolfclub.ie

Moonah Links (Open Course), Australia

011-61-3-5988-6666, nationalgolf.com.au

Royal Zoute Golf Club, Belgium

011-32-50-60-12-27, zoute.be

Greening Up

Hosting any professional tournament is a whopping undertaking, but when that tournament is a major, the stakes rise. At Pebble Beach, work began right after its last U.S. Open in 2000. Since then, every hole but the 12th has been tinkered with in some way, including an overall course-lengthening to 7,040 yards.

In Scotland, **THE OLD COURSE** has a busy tournament schedule each year but still buffs up more when The Open comes to town. This year, the course will close on June 19 for final preparations. A new championship tee to one of the most famous holes in golf, number 17, will stretch it about 35 yards, to 490 in total. Considering that the Road Hole has remained the same length for more than 100 years, this is big news for the home of golf. **THE CASTLE COURSE** is still news, too, being the seventh layout in The Links Trust portfolio and entering just its second full season. Yet it held firmly onto second place again in this year's list.

The peripatetic nature of *CL* readers shouldn't surprise us, but the inclusion of two relatively new courses in New Zealand — **KAURI CLIFFS** and **CAPE KIDNAPPERS** — attests to their zeal in seeking out what's new in golf.

Elsewhere in the Southern Hemisphere, the **NEW SOUTH WALES GOLF CLUB** in Sydney, Australia, made its debut in the readers' top 20. We suggest, by way of an Editors' Mention, that while in Oz readers try the **MOONAH COURSE** at The National Golf Club on the Mornington Peninsula, surely one of native son Greg Norman's finest efforts.

There was other spirited movement on the International List: **GLENEAGLES** rose from 11th to sixth, while **THE GREEN MONKEY** course at Sandy Lane in Barbados swung from 15th to 10th. In only its second year in the rankings, **PORT ROYAL GOLF COURSE** in Bermuda moved from 16th into a tie for 12th with **CARNOUSTIE GOLF LINKS**.

Two Scottish gems that had fallen off the list in 2009 are back in readers' good graces. **MUIRFIELD**, the home of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, will host The Open Championship again in 2013. It was **TURNBERRY**'s turn last year, when Tom Watson had a near-win two months shy of his 60th birthday. It was not to be, but Watson alluded to something beyond winning — the spirituality of the course: "There was something out there. I still believe that. It helped me along. It's Turnberry."

Readers recognize the feeling, a feeling that returns when teeing it up once again, wherever one may be in the world. Because as Watson also put it at the time, "Golf is for life; you are never too young to start and never too old to play." ■



Moonah Links