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ISSUE

October 2011
\$4.99 CANADA \$5.99



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No. 1 Worst Tour Venue

To its credit, the PGA Tour has weeded out most of the awful venues in recent years. So let's just finish the job and stick a knife in **Torrey Pines' North Course**, long-time co-host to the San Diego event. The much shorter sibling (by nearly 700 yards) to the South, this 1957 Billy Bell Jr. design boasts bland bunkers, vapid greens and an utterly forgettable back nine. The Farmers Insurance Open should be played entirely on Torrey South.

No. 1 Opening Hole

Best first salvo goes to **Machrihanish** (\$49-\$101 USD; 011-44-1586-810213, machgolf.com), Old Tom Morris's gem in southwestern Scotland. The 436-yard par 4 demands a bite-off-as-much-as-you-can-chew tee shot over a corner of the Atlantic, where the Sound of Jura meets the Irish Sea. Phew! I haven't encountered an opening scene this dramatic since *Inglourious Basterds*.



FOREST DUNES A sleeper pick in Michigan.

No. 1 Underrated Course

Over the years, the public **Forest Dunes** (\$85-\$155; 989-275-0700, forestdunesgolf.com) in Roscommon, Mich., has attracted plenty of supporters and awards, but it's never smashed the "must-play" barrier it so deserves—because of its middle-of-nowhere location (about 40 miles south of Gaylord, where Treetops is located), and because there's so much competition in Northern Michigan. But



LOWNA TUCKER

WHAT'S FOR DESERT? The Saguaro course at Scottsdale's We-Ko-Pa is a treat.

No. 1 Course to Play Solo

A solitary stroll on a great layout is one of life's overlooked pleasures. My most memorable solitary game was at San Francisco Golf Club, which provided an entire afternoon of sweet seclusion, graced only by silence, trees on the perimeter and clusters of gorgeous Tillinghast bunkers. As for public offerings, my top choice is **We-Ko-Pa's Saguaro course** (\$75-\$175; 480-836-9000, wekopa.com) in Fort McDowell, Arizona. Late in the day, this is desert bliss. The walkable Coore-Crenshaw creation is a romp across rolling terrain on tribal land, with no homes smudging the dazzling mountain scenery. Late in the day, accompanied only by snacking rabbits, Saguaro cacti, and hawks circling overhead, the effect is peaceful and sublime.

the Tom Weiskopf design that he considers among his best is flawlessly maintained and melds memorable aesthetics, from the mature trees of the Huron National Forest to natural exposed sand dunes to Weiskopf's artful bunker shaping.

No. 1 Overrated Course

Though it's seen more face-lifts than Bruce Jenner and Joan Rivers combined, I still don't get what the fuss is about over **Medinah No. 3**. The Chicago-area course is the site of two recent PGAs (both won by Tiger) and will host the 2012 Ryder Cup. It's an old, long, wooded brute, which used to be the benchmark of great major championship courses. But haven't the New Minimalists taught us that variety and options make for the best golf? I love the history and the Moorish clubhouse, but the uninspiring terrain and massively macho course leave me cold.



LOVE ON THE ROCKS The Boulders says "romance."

No. 1 Couples Trip

Mrs. Travelin' Joe and I can't get enough of **Boulders Resort**, the golf-resort equivalent of a Barry White album. Aptly located in Carefree, Ariz., north of Scottsdale, its adobe-style casitas melt into the desert landscape, which is highlighted by prehistoric rocks that lend the property its name. With memorable golf, a superb spa, and plenty of sunshine—plus a short drive to Scottsdale's shopping districts—lovebirds can't go wrong. Bonus: Rooms come with a fireplace. Crank up the AC, then light the fire. ■