The Ryder Cup, the Country Club and Carnoustie

With the British Open at Carnoustie in Scotland in the recent past, and looking ahead to the Ryder Cup at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass., where he would captain the U.S. team in September, Ben Crenshaw was asked to compare the two designs.

"I opted not to play in the British Open this year," he said. "But I have played Carnoustie, and I think the Ryder Cup is a totally different proposition. Carnoustie was a very difficult course before this year. The setup [for the Open] was amazing. It was unbelievable to watch it on TV. A links course like that, to me, should have a little more room to play. My gosh. So far as the shot values, Carnoustie remains one of the toughest courses in the world. The Country Club is a totally different proposition. Bill Flynn and Howard Toommie were two wonderful architects. It is very natural and they have beautifully depicted shot values on that terrain. Their bunkering is wonderful — the positions, the things you are required to do with the ball, the contouring. You feel you are playing against New England terrain. Carnoustie has always been a harsher test of golf. There are some very difficult holes at The Country Club, but they have their hands full playing that golf course."

So, if all these people were alive today, who would Crenshaw hire to design a course?

"I can never put Ross or Tillinghast over Mackenzie or Macdonald," he said. "Can you do a composite?"

But Coore said how would hire Mackenzie. "He was so artistic," he said. "And on top of that he got some of the most fantastic pieces of land — Cypress Point, Royal Melbourne, Crystal Dunes... To get extraordianry sites like that and to work them as he did, along with Perry Maxwell and the others who worked with him, is incredible. And they not only work for golf, but from an artistic standpoint are as inspiring as any courses."

Q&A: Crenshaw & Coore

Continued from previous page

meaning keen and fast — the distance has so much effect that the shot values are a little bit lost and the defense is reduced. That's sad.

GCN: Have you been asked to design any Tour-type courses?

Coore: We have had the opportunity, but circumstances did not permit it. But designing those types of courses probably is not our strength. If someone asked us to design just a very difficult golf course, we would encourage them to speak to someone else. Our courses are more based on detail and strategy that requires play and the correct club selection. We try to do courses that are challenges for the best, but we try to accomplish that with the detail work, like placement of greens and bunkers. We give people options of playing around hazards. In most instances you have to risk the hazards in order to get the best shot to the green and score well.

GCN: Do you own and own Dick Youngscap intend to add 18 holes to Sand Hills?

Coore: There's always talk. But I don't know that it will ever happen. People think we can just drop holes anywhere out there, but there's more to it than that. It's the old adage: Sometimes less is more."

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