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The Old Course Stirs Old Emotions

Every golfer dreams of playing St. Andrews as it is..... and as it was. If renovations were proposed to any other golf course, passionate opposition may exist, but as the birthplace of golf, change to St. Andrews is worthy of debate and reflection.

Golf evolved because St. Andrews is both arbitrary and capricious, simultaneously confounding and engaging, favoring no one and challenging everyone. St. Andrews is the result of God and nature, and as architects, we chase its genius. In fact, the golf industry is indebted to its existence.



The proposed changes to St. Andrews are an appropriate lightning rod that exposes the complexity of today's golf industry. Renovations to this iconic venue evoke passionate value judgments to the very issues we are confronted as architects. Length, maintenance, challenge, construction cost, the environment, history, and tournament capacity are but a few of the issues we must confront everyday, on a variety of projects, both large and small.

If St. Andrews were a building, it would be safeguarded in Historic Trust. But it is not a building: it is a living and breathing entity that provides recreation and enjoyment on a daily basis. This course belongs in historic trust, but not as a relic, but as a temple for participation, to be used and appreciated by average golfers and the professional alike.

As sacred and hallowed ground I personally believe it should be left untouched. St. Andrews golf course wants to change the golf course as a reaction to the ability of the

modern golfer and they have every right to do so. Therefore, I hope changes will be accomplished carefully and judiciously.

So the real issue is not if St. Andrews should be renovated, but why. The changes proposed are a direct reaction to the modern game, equipment advances and score relative to par. If technology has mitigated the strategic challenge at the St. Andrews, the birthplace of golf, then shouldn't we simultaneously examine the capacity and boundaries of modern equipment? If that can be accomplished, then reconstruction is unnecessary. That, I am afraid, will not occur soon.

The beauty of golf is bigger than 'protecting par'. Golf was invented and prospered because of match play. The uniqueness and charm of St. Andrews was fused in match play, not stroke play and the attraction of match play still thrives at St. Andrews. 

