

# Maintaining Tour's most difficult hole

BY FRANK POLLARD

Spectacularly molded along the cliffs of the Pacific Ocean, Pebble Beach is a master challenge not only to the golfer but its groundskeepers as well.

The annual listing, "The Toughest Holes on the PGA Tour," based upon hole-by-hole shot-making statistics kept on each venue visited during the PGA schedule takes annual note that Pebble Beach tests, and even intimidates, the golfer.

The latest report lists Pebble Beach's 8th hole as the most difficult on the Tour and the 9th as the fourth toughest. Also making the top 100 are the 10th, 12th and 14th holes on

the links course where craggy cliffsides border fairways.

It's been often stated that the 8th hole at Pebble Beach begins a stretch of three consecutive par-fours (holes 8, 9 and 10) unmatched anywhere for their pure difficulty — and magnificence.

While golfers test their own mettle playing Pebble Beach, Larry Norman must daily face the challenge of keeping the course in top shape.

And Norman, the golf course superintendent, makes it clear that "maintenance practices are not geared to make holes easier or harder here at Pebble. We could draw the rough long, speed up the greens, narrow the fairways or make the greens excessively hard and fast. But that is not our intent and we would never do that.

"Our practices are simply to give the players — pros and amateurs alike — a very fair playing surface."

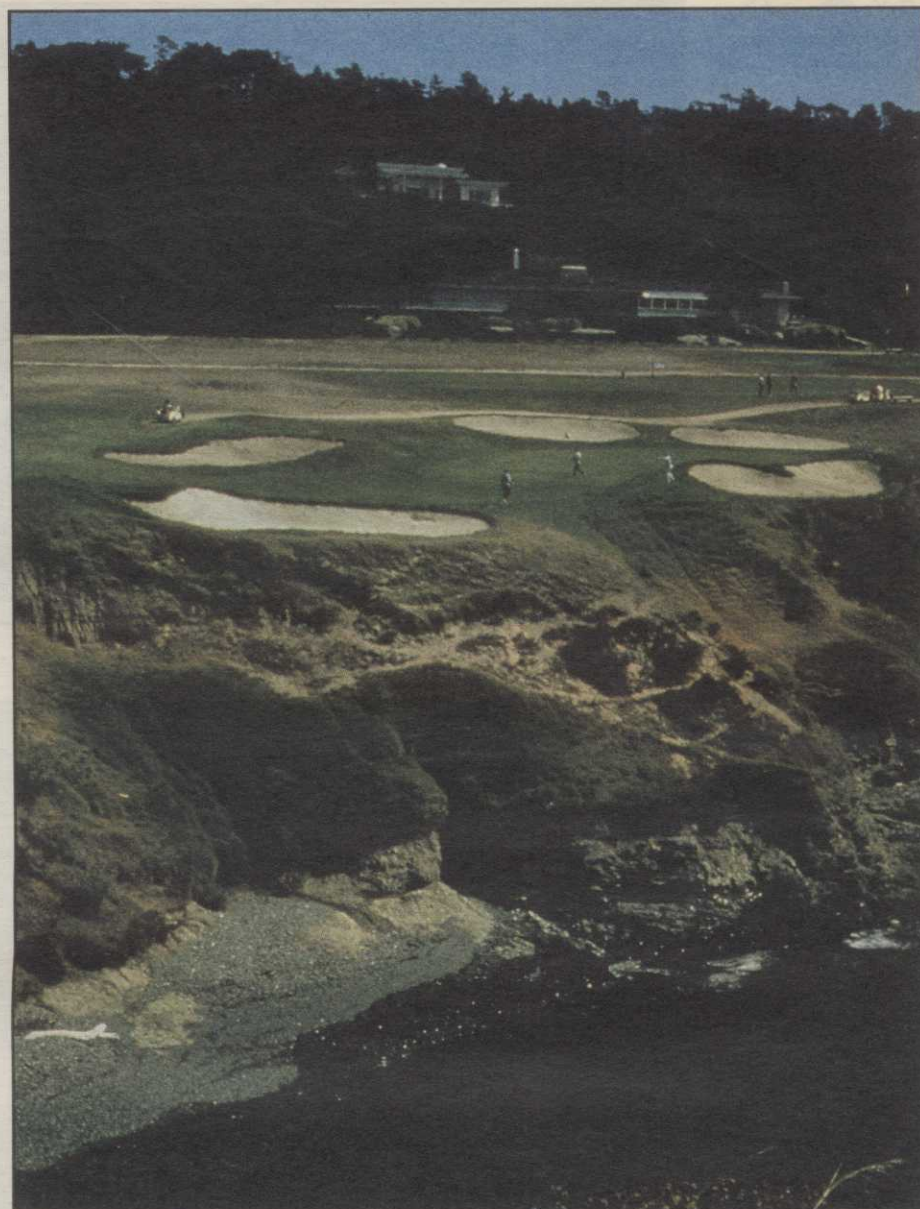
He adds: "The golf course speaks for itself. All the credit for those tough holes has to go to the course designers who maintained the natural setting, built small greens well protected by bunkers and mounds, and rewarded not only distance but extreme accuracy and short game skill."

What's interesting is that with the whims of the weather on the Monterey Peninsula, particularly in the winter months (rain, high winds and occasional sleet and snow) when the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am is held, one might believe that playing conditions were a major factor in the toughness of the holes.

Not so. When the latest statistics were amassed, the weather, according to the record, was "near perfect every day."

Says Norman: "This is a coastal bluff golf course and the winds do come up and are a factor in play, making Pebble Beach play up to its designed potential. The PGA Tour has its specifications and we do our best to meet those specifications. We set the course up agronomically the way they want it and maintain consistency of tees, greens and fairways throughout the course.

"In fact, we keep the course in the best



Pebble Beach's 8th hole: The toughest on the PGA Tour, and a challenge to maintain.

condition we can on a day-to-day basis, which is very nearly up to Tour standards."

Surprisingly, Pebble Beach is still a public golf course and people from all over the world come to walk in the footsteps of the greats past and present. And what more fun than to tackle some of the toughest holes in golf and put a par on the scorecard where even some of the pros couldn't.

## Hole number 8

The par-4 8th is 431 yards with a blind tee

shot to a flat cliff-top plateau with a cliff dropping off abruptly along the right side of the fairway. A good drive (one might want to use a 2-iron or 4-wood if they are long hitters to prevent driving through the fairway) places the golfer in a position to go for the green from the top of a cliff plunging some 150 feet into an oceanic chasm.

Jack Nicklaus calls it the greatest second shot in golf with a long to medium iron across the awesome water-filled chasm to a tiny green edging it and guarded by five large bunkers. The green is perhaps the fastest on the course and is inclined toward the sea. In strong winds coming off the sea, it is very nearly impossible to get on this green in two.

## Hole number 9

This hole has been called by many Tour professionals the toughest par-4 in golf. At 464 yards, the downhill fairway slopes in its length to the right toward the sea, with 30-foot cliffs over which a pushed tee shot will put the golfer on the beach or in the water, depending on the tide. Bunkers guard the high side of the fairway, leaving a tight landing area for the drive. A long, very difficult second shot must thread its way between a barranca with a formidable bunker and the cliff to a small green with cliffs adjacent to and behind it. Shots going through the green can easily make their way to the beach below.

Even while facing such stiff challenges, the golfer has to face the distraction of the magnificent views.

It's reported that a visiting Scottish golfer of some on-course prowess once stated he could not play Pebble Beach. "It's too dommed beautiful," he said. "I can't keep my mind on the game."

Frank Pollard is a freelance writer based in Hollister, Calif.

# Daylen

INCORPORATED

GOLF COURSE

CONSTRUCTION

2559 So. East Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93706  
(209) 233-3345  
FAX (209) 233-2086

Lic. No. 437564  
Dale L. Siemens  
President

For free information circle #165

## ELECTRONIC INDUSTRIAL CONTROLS, INC.

### EICON

Enable cost effective remote control  
for nearly any application.

Remotely control anything from your irrigation system, pump station, lighting, or machinery to your security system using a hand held 2 way radio for up to 42 stations per receiver. Receivers may be installed permanently or used as portable maintenance controllers and multiple receivers may be used on one site by utilizing our unique addressing feature.

Each hand held radio has 2 way voice communication capability and the operating frequency may be ordered to fit into an existing radio network if desired. An existing hand held radio can be adapted to be compatible with the receivers.



Stop by booth #3704 at the Golf Course show in Orlando to see the IBM central capability that has been added to the original EICON remote control systems.

7304 S. Alton Way, Suite M, Englewood, CO 80112 (303) 290-9159

For free information circle #167