

The Best Course: Cypress Point takes the honors

BY PETER BLAIS

Cypress Point was voted the best-designed course in the world in a recent Golf Course News survey of golf course architects.

The Pebble Beach course garnered nearly one-fourth of the first-place votes, edging runner-up Pinehurst No. 2 and third-place Pine Valley, according to the course designers responding to the poll.

The aesthetic blending of golf and nature was often cited by those selecting Cypress Point.

"It has the best use of natural assets," stated Michael Hurdzan of Hurdzan Design Group in Columbus, Ohio. "It also has the best

integration of golf and nature. It builds in climax through the holes. Little earthmoving was done, but lots of great, naturalistic fitting of golf holes into a site."

The Pebble Beach course, which opened in 1928, established early, globetrotting designer Alister Mackenzie's reputation as one of the world's premier designers. Mackenzie took advantage of the Pacific Ocean's pounding surf to design three water holes, including the 220-yard, par 3, 16th, perhaps the most-photographed hole in the country. But he developed some equally memorable holes among the trees and dunes, where

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— Scott Miller

deer frequently roam.

"(The) designer's use of one of the premier golf sites is unparalleled in the areas of routing, variety and strategic design. Most importantly, Mackenzie's design, to me, portrays the design philosophy of 'less is more,' which was a design axiom prevalent with the early designers," said Scott R. Miller, president of Scott Miller

Design Inc. in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Ironically, Mackenzie was not the first choice of the course's founders. Their preference was Seth Raynor, designer of nearby Monterey Peninsula Country Club. But Raynor died and the Brit replaced him. Arthur L. Davis, for one, was not disappointed with the results.

"Playability, natural beauty, drama, excitement, challenge. Pure golf. A golfer's paradise," enthused the president of Gainesville, Ga.'s Arthur L. Davis, Inc.

Mackenzie was fortunate to be blessed with talent and a beautiful

site at Cypress Point. Donald Ross had only his talent at hand at Pinehurst No. 2.

"Of the best courses, this (Pinehurst No. 2) is the best job with the least to work with," said Ronald E. Forse of Uniontown, Pa.'s Forse Design.

Ross shaped the central North Carolina countryside into a deceptive course that plays much tougher than it appears. An errant fairway shot leaves one with a difficult lie in rough or woods. Small, undulating greens (which were made of sand until 1936), require pinpoint approaches and a deft putting touch.

"This course makes each golfer hit every club in the bag. Each hole is challenging, yet fair. It is a classic course with no gimmicks," said Progolfs' Bruce Borland of the course Ross considered his best.

The only thing fair about Pine Valley is that it is equally unfair to everyone. Fairways and greens are overshadowed by the sandy wastelands that dominate the Clementon, N.J., course.

Pine Valley is often considered the most penal course in the country. That may be why it was just third among architects (who build for the pro and duffer) while a Golf Digest magazine panel that included many touring pros, recently voted it the world's best for the third straight year.

But George Crump and H.S. Colt's creation has its supporters among the architects' fraternity.

"(It's) aesthetic contrast and strategic values (are) unsurpassed," said Kyle D. Phillips of Robert Trent Jones II International in Palo Alto, Calif.

"It has been altered very little since first designed and yet it has still stood the test of time," added Kenneth E. Dye Jr. of Houston's Finger, Dyer, Spann Inc.

Pebble Beach Golf Links, Augusta National GC and Banff Springs GC in Alberta finished tied for fourth in the balloting. Shinnecock Hills GC in New York was seventh.

Among the comments for those four courses:

- Pebble Beach: "Because of the blend/match of great golf course design features with the natural beauty of the Monterey Peninsula and coastline." — Johnny Miller, Johnny Miller Design, Ltd./

- Augusta National: "Perfect balance and best use of land." — Arnold Palmer, Palmer Course Design Co.

- Banff Springs: "Created in one of the world's most spectacular settings, Banff Springs achieves the issue described above (a test for those who yearn to excel while also providing a comfortable round for those out to relax) perhaps more than any other course in history." — Geoffrey S. Cornish, Cornish & Silva, Inc.

- Shinnecock Hills: "Combines a great test of golf with a high level of aesthetics." — William R. Love, Ault, Clark & Assoc., Ltd.

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