

Artificial turf courses and no bunkers. 8,000-yard layouts

# Welcome to Golf



LEO MICHAEL

that take eight hours to play. The Tiger Tour.

# in the Year

# 2025

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD

**T**he first time I visited the world renowned Shar'n Love, the award-winning psychic had never heard of Tiger Woods. Shar'n is a slightly strange redhead who uses tarot cards, handwriting and numerology to predict the future — with apparently little idea of what's going on in the present.

Claiming to prefer the fresh air to an indoor facility, Shar'n sets up about 100 yards from the infamous basketball courts on the bizarre Venice Beach, Calif., boardwalk. I sat down for our first session hoping to find out what was up with the world of golf, circa 2025. Since she knew nothing about the game, the session led to few clues. For our second meeting, I brought Shar'n copies of *Golfdom* and *GolfDigest* in hopes of shaking loose a few prophetic thoughts.

While I watched the strange folks of Venice

cruise the boardwalk, Shar'n massaged a recent issue of *Golfdom* and closed her eyes.

"Is there a designer of some kind named Reese?" she asked.

I informed her there was a savvy golf course architect named Rees Jones.

"Yes, that's her. There are championships being played at her courses, Rees Run, Rees Creek, no, this one is at Rees Valley," Shar'n said. "I also see a photo of you; it's your column. You have very little hair. Many wrinkles. You are complaining that, uh, the Federal Express U.S. Open should not be played on the Rees Jones Trail, particularly since all of the courses use, what is it here, repurposed turf. Do you understand?"

Most of it. But I asked her if there was anything she could tell me about repurposed turf.

Shar'n held up a hand — her nice way of

*Continued on page 34*



*Continued from page 33*  
telling me to shut up. While she searched for more visions, I contemplated getting my name on a grain of rice or perhaps an L.A. Lakers Henna tattoo, two options on the Venice Beach vendor scene.

"I see an advertisement," Shar'n said. "It says that *Golfdom* is proud to show off the new line of Hoover repurposed turf sweepers."

"Do you mean the Hoover that manufacturers vacuum cleaners?" I asked.

Her eyes closed, she nodded yes as she continued to shuffle pages.

"Hoover has repurposed turf sweepers in three sizes, each with different capabilities, starting in the low \$400,000 range," Shar'n said. "One features a 40-yard wide blade that can sweep 18 holes of repurposed turf in less than 40 minutes. It promises to only lift three carpet fibers per sweeping. Its baskets process the waste and lifted fibers into new pieces of repurposed turf for your nursery. Do you understand?"

Astroturf, of course. It's inevitable. So many courses already look synthetic, why not go all the way?

"Do you have a date on this, Shar'n?" I asked.

"January 2025. I see another article with your photograph. You are complaining about the letters you received. In the previous month's column, you explained how a thing called the bunker made golf courses more interesting. Do you understand?"

"Yep, I'm still moaning about the death of the bunker," I mumbled.

"It seems the bunker is eliminated when artificial turf is installed," Shar'n said, reading my column. "They flattened the bunkers out when installing the repurposed turf and took the sand away. It was too dangerous for the people playing GolfCarPolo. Do you understand?"

"Uh, no, but please continue," I said.

"Apparently, GolfCarPolo is quite a popular way to play golf," she said. "There is a picture I see. You play without ever stepping out of a cart. They can play in under five hours that way. Cars have special seats that turn and allow the golfer to swing, designed to prevent exercise or getting out of the vehicle."

"What else?" I asked.

"You say that the idea of exploding sand from real bunkers was too messy and too much trouble to sweep up," she said. "Golfers did not like sweeping the sand back into the bunkers. So they filled in the bunkers. Do you understand?"

"I guess sweeping replaced raking as one of those things that was a little too much to ask of golfers," I said. "Too much exercise, eh?"

Shar'n massaged the *Golfdom* again and informed me that exercise was no longer "cool" in 2025. She said there were ads in *Golfdom* for weight-loss drugs, stress-reduction pills and different forms of heart-strengthening medication that were all created to replace exercise. The drugs helped fuel the biotechnology economy. By eliminating exercise time, the drugs allow people more time to shop.

"I think I've heard enough," I said. "How about we go to one of the other magazines?"

Shar'n took the *Golf Digest* and started flipping pages with her left hand while rubbing her tarot cards with her right hand.

"I see a listing of courses," she said.



"The magazine calls it its year-end summary of the, uh, I can almost see the text. It's the summation of the, uh, the real-time Internet ranking that readers vote on — America's Greatest 1,000 Courses. The list is updated hourly, but I see here that the magazine is printing the year-end tally along with reader comments. Do you understand?"

"Unfortunately I do," I said. "Can you tell me what some of the criteria are that they use to judge the courses?" I wondered how many categories had been added over the years.

"I see more than 40 categories listed as criteria and just as many for bonus points," Shar'n replied.

"Just give me the highlights for bonus points," I said. "I'd like to know how the editors finagled the rankings in 2025."

"Hmmm ... bonus points. Ah yes, I see many items listed," she said. "Smoke-free courses get five bonus points. Courses with grass and trees get bonus points for

tradition. Courses that let you drive your own golf car instead of the automated driving system get individual-rights points. Course designs that guide players without forcing them to think get points on a weighted scale determined by the editors. And there are bonus points for designs that install the new underground lower-lumbar preservation systems."

"Huh?"


"It says these special systems take your ball after it goes into the cup, replaces it if damaged or worn, charges your Visa for a new ball and then sends either ball to the next tee to be teed up when you arrive. Do you understand?"


"No. And I don't want to. Can you see which course is ranked No. 1?" I asked.


Shar'n let out a sigh. She was just getting a good look at the bonus points page, when her vision could see the Top 1,000 list.


"Pine Valley GC in New Jersey," she

*Continued on page 36*









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*Continued from page 35*

said. "Cypress Point is No. 2 and Pebble Beach comes in third."

"Nice to see some things never change," I said. "Anything else you can tell me?"

"There is a short article here about, uh, The Men's Only GC at Augusta National. Does that sound right? The text says the fourth-ranked course and former home to The Masters received special exempt bonus points from the editors. They installed a new Hootie Johnson Memorial Waterfall on the 18th hole. Apparently, they also installed a similar memorial at the new All-New Augusta National GC. That is where they moved The Masters five years ago. The new fountain sends water 100 feet into the air. The editors said the course earned special bonus points because this is what Bobby Jones would have wanted."

"Can you see any of the yardages next to the courses?" I asked.

**"Do you know of a Tiger Woods? He is listed as the designer of the all-new Augusta National along with a Hootie Johnson."**

"Hmm ...." Shar'n opened her eyes. She was distracted by the guy who strolls Venice Beach with his electric guitar. He's on roller skates and wraps himself in a white turban and wears shin guards,

playing Jimmy Hendrix riffs for tips. Once he and his guitar passed, Shar'n regains her concentration.

"Augusta National is 8,295 yards and a par 68," she said. "Pebble Beach is par 68 also. The architect of Pebble Beach is listed as Jack Nicklaus."

"Really? Nice to see revisionist history isn't just a present-day fad," I said.

"Do you know of a Tiger Woods?" she asked. "He is listed as the designer of the all-new Augusta National along with a Hootie Johnson."

"How touching," I answered. "What else can you see about Tiger?"

Shar'n perused the pages of a recent *Golf Digest* with her eyes shut. As she flipped the pages, I noticed Tiger was on about every one. Five minutes later she finally came up with something.

"There seems to be an organization named after him," she said. "It's a tour business. Does that sound possible? Cruise ships, perhaps?"



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"No, it would be a golf tournament circuit," I said. "Nothing to do with tourism. Well, not literally anyway."

"Tour, tour, I can't see, wait ... it's Tour Tiger. It's played by major championship winners over 30 who are tired of playing against the 450-yard driving 15-year-olds. It seems there is a PGA Tour for players 30 and under. While the Tour Tiger plays a foursome wherever it goes, first prize is \$10 million each week. Tiger, someone named Ernie, another one named Sergio and a rather ashen young man who's not particularly charismatic. I can't get his name ...

"David Duval?" I asked.

Shar'n didn't respond.

My time was almost up. I placed another copy of *Golfdom* in front of her. Eyes shut, her massaging commenced.

"What is the NGF?" she finally asked.

"The National Golf Foundation," I said.

She said: "The organization states that

a recent survey says that golfers want more affordable courses. They say that growth in the golf business should be in the number of players added to the game, not in the number of yards added to courses. They say the game needs more courses played on grass. They want to return golf to natural settings. Do you understand?"

"Yes. What else?"

"They are saying that most of the 10 million golfers left in the game and the five million a year giving up the game state in a poll that they would rather play in a natural setting in around three to four hours, instead of the normal eight-hour round. And they say that since the cost of installing repurposed turf and simulated trees is the same as 25 years of maintaining grass and bunkers, that golfers would prefer to play on real grass and even walk sometimes. Do you understand?"

"Oh, it all makes perfect sense," I said.

Shar'n looked at her watch. "Time's up."

She had a line of customers ready to take the wobbly fold-up beach chair and hear about their future. I paid her \$20, took my magazines and strolled the boardwalk.

That was golf in 2025. Artificial turf courses. Lazy fools playing golf from the seat of a golf car. Tiger has his own Tour, and there are 15-year-olds on the PGA Tour. There are two Augusta Nationals, and 8,000-yard layouts take eight hours to play. And real-time Internet rankings reward smoke-free courses and course with cups that steal your golf balls and add more debt to your Visas.

Maybe Venice Beach wasn't looking so strange, after all. ■

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