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PLANET**

APRIL 23, 2007

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Tee off afresh



Welcome to a new golfing season and a supplement full of features and news, from the latest gear to eco-golf. The Masters demonstrated that tough golf courses, slick greens, a cold wind and the physiology of golf can still have a big effect on scoring and showed it is not all about technology.

FOREWORD BY PAUL GIBBONS, CHAIRMAN OF LEADERBOARD

For us mere mortals, the latest hi-tech equipment available is awesome. In a recent four-ball match, one partner played so well with a new square-headed driver that all the others bought one immediately after coming off the course. Amazingly, more people play golf in the UK than football – largely because golf is a sport for all ages.

As well as a generation of trendy young “punk” golfers, the sport is especially popular with silver surfers and their elders. The golf boom has meant more courses being developed around the world – there are more than 4.2 million golfers and 7,000 courses in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, according to KPMG’s

Hamleys for geezers

Ryder Cup hero David Howell will be one of the many visitors when the London Golf Show returns to ExCeL in the city’s Docklands for its third outing on April 26-29. And if the previous two shows are any benchmark he will certainly find plenty to keep him entertained. The 2006 show was hailed by the rock musician Rick Wakeman as “like Hamleys for geezers”.



latest analysis of the game, 45 per cent of which are in the UK and Ireland. Choosing to stay closer to home and play at one of these 2,723 clubs is environmentally friendly as it cuts out travel. Read more on how to be a “green golfer” and how clubs are doing their part in preserving our planet on page 11. At Leaderboard, one of our main priorities has been investing in drainage of the golf course. The work we’ve carried out at our four clubs has paid dividends, each having come out of the wet winter about three weeks ahead of where they were this time last year. Our private on-course reservoirs are full and ready to provide lush conditions all summer long without affecting domestic and commercial water supplies.

More people play golf in the UK than play football

In England membership numbers are growing slowly but it’s worth reminding people of the communal benefits of being a member. We must make new members feel important to the foundation of the club and demonstrate the value of joining up. At Leaderboard we are driving all categories of membership, from juniors – ensuring they get involved in coaching – to traditional and corporate membership. One of the best ways of checking if a membership is buoyant is to view the number of member guest rounds played. We call this “pride in membership”, because if the members weren’t happy they wouldn’t bring along a guest. On the playing side, the European Seniors Tour is increasing in popularity, with higher crowds watching the legendary names of golf’s old – though not that old – guard.

Inside we salute three of Europe’s greatest golfers – Seve Ballesteros, Nick Faldo and Bernhard Langer – who all celebrate 50th birthdays this year and become eligible to play on the European Seniors Tour. And we must not forget women. The Ladies English Open is hosted once again at Chart Hills, in Kent – a fabulous course, and a personal favourite of mine, designed by Faldo. These two tours really are worth a visit. They are relaxed, friendly and somehow easier to learn from. Enjoy your golf. Enjoy the scenery and most importantly enjoy yourself.

There will be a 30-bay driving range where you can try the latest equipment from major manufacturers such as Nike, Wilson, Cleveland, PING and Srixon, before having it custom-fitted at the American golf store, voted the No.1 UK retailer by readers of both Today’s Golfer and Golf Punk magazines.

From shades to shoes, there’s the chance to check out the latest in on-course design at the fashion show, and to win more than £7,000-worth of golf gear in the Ultimate Golf Prize and a round with Sam Torrance in just two of the many free draws and competitions taking place during the four days.

Exciting

The floating green has been revamped to provide an even more exciting experience; there’s an opportunity to test your skills head-to-head with celebrities on the chipping green; a challenge to sink a 100ft putt, and dazzling displays of trickery from participants in the World Golf Trickshot Championship.

BBC London 94.9 will be broadcasting live from Europe’s largest consumer golf show. One of its presenters, Danny Kelly, broadcast his show live from the 2006 event – and clearly had a great time.

He said: “There are amazing things here from buggies to simulators. I love gadgets and have been round and tried everything. It’s a brilliant event.”



Sparks will be the benefiting charity for the third consecutive year, with the previous two shows yielding more than £35,000 for the children’s medical charity. Adult tickets cost £15 on the door or £10 in advance. Up to two under-16s may go free with every paying adult.

For ticket information visit www.londongolfshow.com or call Ticketmaster on 0870 1451205



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Bring on the new gear

From nanoscience carbon graphite composite construction to shock absorbing gels, descriptions of the latest golf equipment can make it sound like the player is on a mission to outer space rather than going to the clubhouse. As golf has grown more competitive, players have wanted equipment that performs better.

Below, are some of the products that should, in theory, help you avoid those hook and slice shots and finish a round under par. We let seven amateur golfers (pictured right) read about the products, then hit the course and put them to the test...



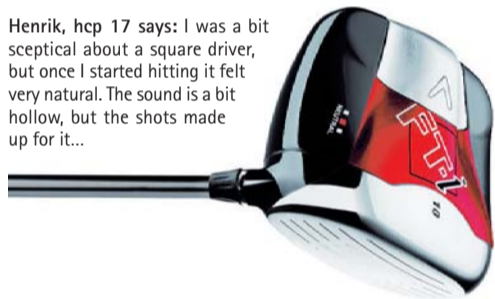
Callaway's X Series is about giving serious golfers forgiveness for the ultimate in confidence. The new X-20 irons deliver in every way by offering technology, innovation and playability that will take your game to a new level. RRP £699/9 irons, www.callawaygolf.com

CH, hcp 22, says – I need these. I haven't played for years, but am starting again and want to lower my handicap quickly.

Lars, hcp 11, says – Nice... I have never been disappointed with any Callaway irons, and these are no exception. Very forgiving and nicely weighted.

It might be a square in the predominantly round world of golf but the **Callaway Fusion FT-i square-headed driver** has an extraordinarily high moment of inertia, or resistance to twisting on both its horizontal and vertical axes. This makes the club naturally want to hit straight shots and, in this case, travel far, too. Described by Callaway as the "most potent weapon available in golf", its engineers have moved discretionary weight to where it's needed most, precisely positioning all the effective weight to the extreme corners of the clubhead in a revolutionary geometric design. RRP £399, www.callawaygolf.com

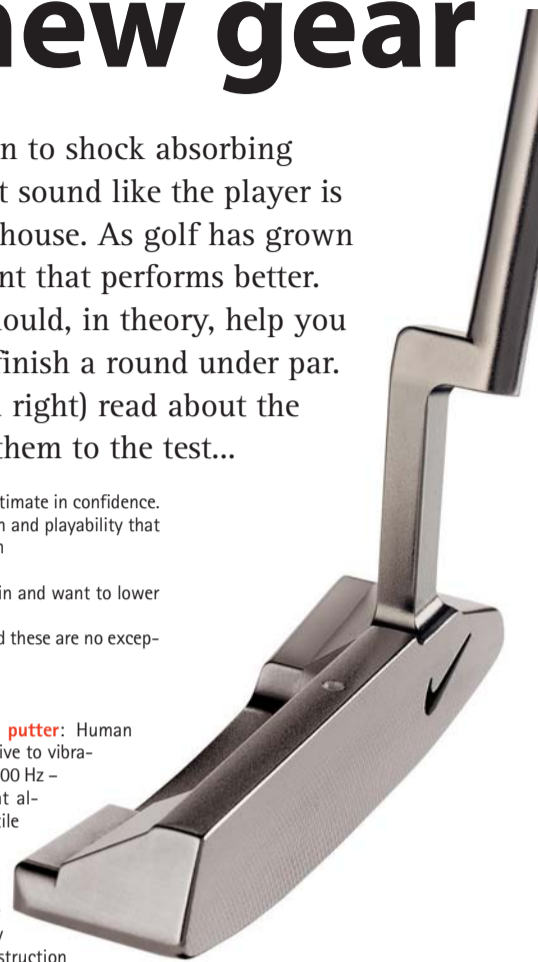
Henrik, hcp 17 says: I was a bit sceptical about a square driver, but once I started hitting it felt very natural. The sound is a bit hollow, but the shots made up for it...



The NIKE Unitized putter: Human hands are most sensitive to vibrations from 100 Hz to 300 Hz – an optimal range that allows for the most tactile feedback. Traditional bonded putters generate a dominant vibration far outside the optimal sensitivity range. Unitized construction creates a powerful and sustained response within the optimal range for pure feedback. Better feedback means better distance control. RRP £189, www.nikegolf.com

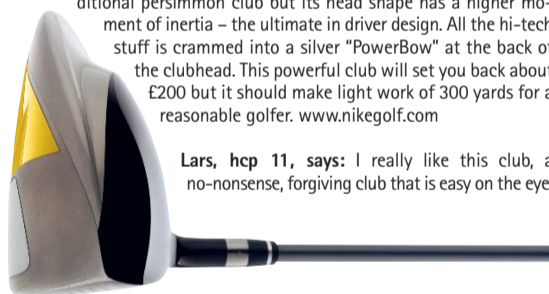
Christine, hcp 23, says: I don't know a thing about vibration feedback, but I like the feel of this.

Henrik, hcp 3, says: Nice feel. Smooth and heavy enough to allow for control.



Nike's SasQuatch Sumo is voted best traditional driver by testers in this month's Today's Golfer magazine. The Sumo may look like a traditional persimmon club but its head shape has a higher moment of inertia – the ultimate in driver design. All the hi-tech stuff is crammed into a silver "PowerBow" at the back of the clubhead. This powerful club will set you back about £200 but it should make light work of 300 yards for a reasonable golfer. www.nikegolf.com

Lars, hcp 11, says: I really like this club, a no-nonsense, forgiving club that is easy on the eye.



HXTOUR

The soft, thin urethane cover keeps spin low and speed high off the driver to maximise distance whilst providing the soft feel and control expected around the greens from a high performance golf ball. A new manufacturing technique results in six deeper depressions in the aerodynamic pattern – Sub-HEX design – creating a thinner, more consistent cover and a precisely centred core for more stability, consistency and a tour-type trajectory. RRP £40, www.callawaygolf.com



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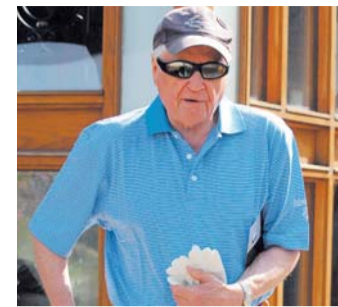
The 460cc **PING Rapture driver** features a visible, web-shaped titanium crown injected with lightweight composite. By using the composite in the low stress areas of the crown, PING engineers re-positioned 20 grams of mass inside the club for higher launch and lower spin. The fully-machined variable thickness face increases ball speed for a hotter club face response. Available in 9, 10.5 and 12 degree lofts. UK RRP £329 (graphite only), www.pingeurope.com

Henrik, hcp 17, says: I want this club.

Frithjof

Age 69
Hcp 22

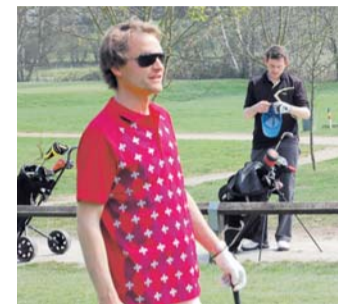
Wearing: Ashworth Polo from the Clubhouse collection RRP £44 and Ping Heritage trousers RRP £46



CH

Age 33
Hcp 22

Wearing: Cross Quest Polo, RRP £45 and Ecco World Class shoes (see page 6), RRP £250



Lars

Age 61
Hcp 11

Wearing: Ashworth EZ-Tech Rainbow Engineer Polo RRP £46 and Ashworth trousers RRP £50



Charlotte

Age 59
Hcp 23

Wearing: Cross Pure Argyle top and Bunker Mentality visor, RRP £20



Christine

Age 34
Hcp 23

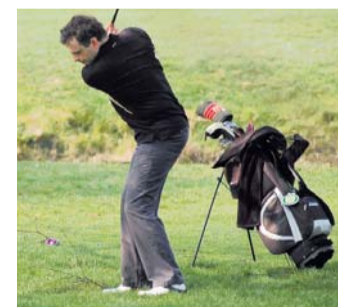
Wearing: Bunker Mentality Queen of the Green t-shirt, RRP £45 & Ecco New Classic Wing Buckle shoes (see page 6), RRP £90



Henrik

Age 33
Hcp 17

Wearing: Ping Spike polo, RRP and Ecco Flexor Hydromax shoes, RRP £120



Swing the Ping

Manufactured from 100 per cent titanium, the large-headed **PING Rapture Fairway Woods** offer exceptional forgiveness. A 6-4 titanium face is machined to produce a thin, highly-responsive face for maximum distance. An internal weight pad positioned directly below the centre of gravity increases the launch angle and reduces spin to produce high, penetrating shot characteristics.

Available in 3, 5 and 7 woods. RRP £239 w/graphite shaft, www.pingeurope.com

Henrik, hcp 3 says: I love the 3 wood. I like the look of it – today's clubheads are sometimes too extreme for my taste. The feel? Very nice!

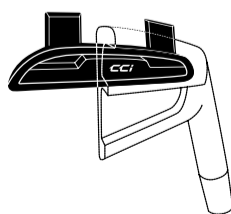
Lars, hcp 11, says: Great! It's even better than my G5s...



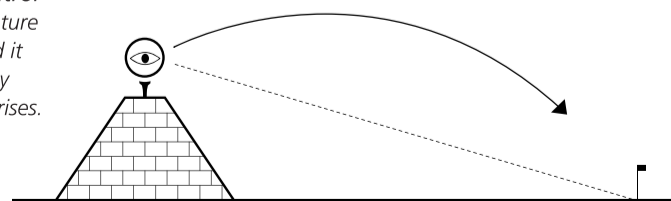
**A THIS IS GONNA FEEL SO PREDICTABLE.
BUT YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT.**

What we're about to tell you should come as no surprise. After all, it's coming from the guys with the most winning irons on Tour in '05 and '06. But here's the news: The new Nike CCI irons are our most predictable irons yet. And, yes, as you may have guessed, they've got some new tricks. The kind of tricks you probably expect from us. Like new ways to command your ball and control your distance. We've given the long irons added forgiveness through individually tuned tungsten weight inserts, and given the shorter irons more shot-directing feel with an added polymer. And the precision CNC milled face ensures a bull's-eye hit, shot after shot. Just visualise where you want the ball to go and (shocker!) it lands there. So expected. So predictable. So much for surprises.

B Composite Cavity Insert
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C Predictable Control
See your ball's future destination. Send it there without any unwelcome surprises.



The latest look



These cool t-shirts from **Bunker Mentality** are great for people who are passionate about golf but who approach the game with a slightly different mentality to the ageing club captain. The brand reflects a golf lifestyle that is at home on and off the course, not compromising golf etiquette but full on with its own style.
www.bunker-mentality.com



Although golf is still a predominately male sport in the UK, you can always rely on **Ashworth** to design a superb collection for ladies. Check out their new designs at www.ashwortheurope.com



To celebrate the 10th anniversary of Tiger Woods winning his first major championship at The Masters in 1997, Nike Golf is introducing limited edition **SP 8 TW Tour footwear** with a distinctive "TW 10" logo laser etched on the heel. The shoes, which Woods wore for the first time at Augusta earlier this month, feature Nike Golf's Power Platform that comprises four vital technologies, including the Nike Power Channel; Forefoot Flex Channel; Medial (Inside) Push Plate and the Lateral (Outside) Stability Plate. RRP £140
www.nikegolf.com



ECCO says:
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www.eccogolf.com

Fit for the fairway

Because of its absence of running, John McEnroe once questioned whether golf is really a sport. In a similar vein Mark Twain famously described it as "a good walk spoiled".

But with most modern 18-hole golf courses occupying as much as 150 acres (60 ha) of land, the average distance covered by a golfer playing a round is about five miles, sometimes a lot more.

Play twice a week and factor in the several hours of fresh air, carrying of bags, pulling carts and using muscles neglected in desk-based jobs and golf probably accrues the exact amount of exercise required to stave off strokes, heart attacks and arthritis.

If golf was once seen as a game played by old men in woolly jumpers, the likes of David Duval, Tiger Woods and Vijay Singh ended that when they started the whole golf fitness trend. These guys, along with the leading exponents of the women's game, are models of good physical health.

Today's golfers are much stronger and more athletic than they were 20 years ago. For them spending three days a week with a personal trainer in



the gym is all part of the top-flight game. From Ernie Els' Guide to Golf Fitness to yoga for golf DVDs and spa treatments that claim to improve your swing, golf fitness is a massive industry in itself.

But with more people taking to the fairways has come an "alarming increase" in golf injuries according to

sports scientists. In a round of golf most amateur players will swing a club up to 150 times. In a typical swing the spine can rotate at speeds of 500 degrees per second. Poor warm-up routines and careless technique can cause damage to the lower back, elbows and shoulders. One of the best ways to prevent spinal injury

is through Pilates-style exercises that strengthen core stability.

Finally, regardless of how fit you are, playing under par could depend on how things are at home. Sports psychologists from the Universities of Exeter in Devon and Wales, Bangor, have revealed that the emotional support a golfer receives off the course is directly linked to the quality of his or her performance on it.

Support

The research showed that that the performances of those with higher levels of emotional support and happy homes were better by up to 24 per cent.

"The day-to-day quality of their relationships has far more of a bearing on golfers' games than I had anticipated," said Dr Tim Rees of Exeter University. To date the effect of a seething golf widow on her partner's game has yet to be calculated.

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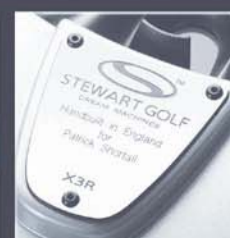
Unlike most trolleys on the market, the X3R has been designed **specifically** to be remotely controlled, giving it supreme stability and composure on the golf course.

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▲ Pictured left to right: Nick Faldo, Sandy Lyle, Ian Woosnam, Bernhard Langer and Seve Ballesteros

Meet golf's famous five

Seve Ballesteros, Nick Faldo, Bernhard Langer, Sandy Lyle and Ian Woosnam – the 'Big Five' who elevated European golf to dizzy new heights in the 1980s and early 1990s – are almost ready to work their magic once again by launching a new golden era on the European Seniors Tour.

Seve Ballesteros, the swashbuckling Spaniard who blazed a path across the landscape of international golf and into the hearts of galleries the world over, became the first of the quintet to reach seniors eligibility when he celebrated his 50th birthday on the Monday following the recent Masters Tournament.

And Faldo, The 2008 Ryder Cup Captain, is not far behind.

England's greatest golfer turns 50 on July 18 and is expected to make his seniors debut the following week in The Senior Open Championship, presented by Aberdeen Asset Management, at Muirfield in Scotland – scene of two of his three Open Championship victories.

The chance of watching these two giants of European golf going head-to-head once again in the pursuit of

tournament titles is certain to capture the imagination of the golfing public, and in turn, should launch a new era in seniors golf.

The good old days

Following closely behind on the new conveyor belt of Major Champions is Langer, who turns 50 on August 27, while Lyle and Woosnam both reach seniors eligibility in 2008. With another Major winner in Nick Price having already turned 50, the future of the European Seniors Tour, and seniors golf in general, has never looked rosier.

Key to the senior tour's attraction is a public desire to hang on to the stars who first drew across-the-board attention. Even at 50 and 60, these golfers can still play great golf and, more uniquely, they make peo-

ple reminisce. They make people utter those time-honoured words: The good old days.

No one at Royal Lytham & St Annes on that July day in 1979, or the millions watching on TV at home, will forget the sight of a 22 year old Seve making birdie from a temporary car park near the 16th, en route to his first Open Championship title.

The record books show that Ballesteros finished three strokes ahead of Jack Nicklaus and Ben Crenshaw, but what the bare statistics do not convey is the true significance of that win. It was the first by a European in The Open since Tony Jacklin ten years earlier and was the catalyst for a remarkably successful period for European golf in the Major Championships and The Ryder Cup.

Seve would go on to win two more Opens (1984 and 1988) and the Masters in 1980 and 1983, and for a glorious period it appeared as though the Green Jacket was glued to European shoulders. Langer triumphed at Augusta in 1985 and 1993 and Faldo captured his three Masters titles in 1989, 1990 and 1996 and Lyle and Woosnam triumphed in 1988 and 1991 respectively.

The success continued at home with The Open Championship, Lyle winning in 1985 and Faldo registering another hat-trick (1987, 1990, 1992). Between them, Ballesteros, Faldo, Langer, Lyle and Woosnam have won 264 professional tournaments across the globe as well as being pivotal figures in the revival of Europe's fortunes in The Ryder Cup.

And now the 'Fab Five' are fast approaching their second careers and with that comes a chance to see these hugely talented sportsmen on the European Seniors Tour. Form, as they say, is temporary, but class is most definitely permanent.

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European Seniors Tour: Striving for the future



The Oxford English Dictionary, that esteemed body of correctness, defines an era as 'a period marked by the prevalence of some particular state of things'. Apply this definition to the previous 15 years of the European Seniors Tour and two distinct eras reveal themselves: the late 1990s dominated by Tommy Horton; and the rise to prominence of Carl Mason and Sam Torrance in the new century.

BY STEVEN FRANKLIN

Mason topped the Order of Merit in 2003 and 2004 and has finished runner-up in both the following years. The reason he has not been able to close on Horton's record haul of five Order of Merit wins is simple: the form of one Samuel Robert Torrance OBE.

In the space of 36 events spanning three and a half years on the European Seniors Tour, the 2002 winning Ryder Cup Captain has collected eight tournament victories and has finished inside the top ten a further 19 times.

Three of the wins came in 2005 when Torrance collected his first John Jacobs Trophy, courtesy of finishing €20,307 (£13,717) ahead of Mason. In 2006, he won four times and was confirmed as the 2006 Number One with record earnings of €347,525 (£232,250) – €79,072 (£52,843) clear of Mason.

"Winning back-to-back Order of Merits is a tremendous achievement and something Carl knows all about. It is something I strived for all year. I played in nearly every event and showed how much I wanted this," said Torrance.

"Tommy's record of five is something else to strive for and I would love to do it. It will be a challenge to

win it again, especially as we have a number of good players reaching 50, but I think I will be up for it. My swing will last forever and I still have a strong will to win, so it's a question of my body holding up."

Three of European golf's greatest players – Spain's Seve Ballesteros, England's Nick Faldo and Germany's Bernhard Langer, who between them have won a total of 13 Major Championships – all celebrate their 50th birthdays in 2007 and become eligible to play on the European Seniors Tour, while Torrance is also aware of the emerging challenge from within the current ranks, evidenced by the number of first-time winners last year.

Gordon J Brand of England, Guillermo Encina of Chile, Juan Quiros of Spain, American Loren Roberts, José Rivero of Spain and Japan's Katsuyoshi Tomori – six men who also underline the international nature of the Tour – all experienced the joy of securing their maiden titles in 2006.

In fact it was Rivero, a member of Europe's Ryder Cup-winning Teams in 1985 and 1987, who got the season off to an enthralling start by defeating England's David J Russell

◀ England's Gordon J Brand started the new European Seniors Tour season in exactly the same manner as he finished the last – as a winner, after capturing the DGM Barbados Open title by a stroke from Doug Johnson of the United States.

Brand was crowned as the last champion of 2006 after staging a final day comeback in Bahrain. It was a similar story at Royal Westmoreland as the former Ryder Cup player entered his name as the first winner on a 2007 schedule which will comprise a minimum of 19 events.

at the fourth hole of a sudden-death play-off to capture the DGM Barbados Open at Royal Westmoreland Golf Club, Barbados, after both men had finished the 54 holes locked at nine under par 207.

Torrance also got into the winning act early on, closing with a faultless five under par 67 to capture the Sharp Italian Seniors Open by four strokes from Eamonn Darcy, who was runner-up for a second successive year.

Beaten in a play-off by Frenchman Gery Watine at Circolo Golf Venezia in 2005, this time around the Irishman faded in regulation play and a final round 71 left him four adrift of Torrance's winning aggregate of 11 under par 205.

The following week saw 25 members of the European Seniors Tour cross the Atlantic for the 67th US Senior PGA Championship, played in difficult windy conditions at Oak Tree Golf Club, Edmond, Oklahoma, USA. Rivero, Tomori and Torrance all featured prominently and, indeed, Tomori finished in seventh place after an impressive final round 67, before Jay Haas went on to defeat fellow American Brad Bryant in a play-off to secure the first prize.

/// Three of European golf's greatest players – Spain's Seve Ballesteros, England's Nick Faldo and Germany's Bernhard Langer – celebrate their 50th birthdays in 2007 ///

Torrance transported his form straight back across the Atlantic Ocean to capture the AIB Irish Seniors Open, in association with Greenstar and Fáilte Ireland, following a four-man play-off at the Sheraton Fota Island Golf Resort and Spa in Cork.

Having won the Irish Open on The European Tour in 1981 and 1995, the Scot claimed the Seniors version in some style by hitting his 150 yard approach to within 14 feet of the flag on the second extra hole and converting the eagle putt to defeat American Jerry Bruner, who could only manage a birdie four.

Earlier, Australia's Stewart Ginn and Encina had dropped out on the first extra hole after failing to match the birdies carded by the other two. The four had all finished the tournament locked at six under par 207.

Encina quickly made amends by producing a brilliant final round of



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six under par 66 to seal his maiden Seniors title at the Irvine Whitlock Seniors Classic. The smooth-swinging South American compiled a seven under par total of 209 to finish three clear of New Zealand's Simon Owen and Americans Rex Caldwell and Alan Tapie at La Moye Golf Club, Jersey.

The Tour then moved to Wales for the lucrative FIRSTPLUS Wales Seniors Open at the Vale Hotel, Golf and Spa Resort near Cardiff and ultimately it was Rivero who coped best with the tricky, sun-baked Wales National Course. The Spaniard started the final round six shots back but a birdie at the 54th hole saw him finish on four under par 212 and snatch a dramatic one shot victory over Quiros, Russell, Torrance and Watine.

However, the best come-from-behind victory of the season came from Giuseppe Cali, who made up a seven stroke deficit in the final round of the Bendinat London Seniors Masters at The London Golf Club, Kent, England.

The Italian carded a five under par 67 to tie Delroy Cambridge on six under par 210, before defeating the Jamaican at the fifth play-off hole on the Jack Nicklaus-designed Heritage Course.

England's Mark James produced three successive under par rounds at the tough Prairie Dunes Country Club in Hutchinson, Kansas, USA, the following week to go into the final round of the US Senior Open with a chance of victory. However, The 1999 Ryder Cup Captain could only manage a 75 on Sunday to finish in 14th place, as Allen Doyle of the United States retained the title with a four round total of eight under 272.

Next up was the Tour's biggest event of the season and another Major Championship, The Senior British Open Championship, presented by Aberdeen Asset Management.

The spectacular Westin Turnberry Resort in Scotland hosted the world's best senior golfers and after four days of memorable competition – during which the legendary Gary Player beat his age with a first round 69 and Eduardo Romero, one of four Argentine members of the European Seniors Tour, reeled off a scintillating seven under par 63 – Loren Roberts captured the €231,225 (£157,799) first prize and the replica Claret Jug after defeating Romero at the first play-off hole.

Roberts and Romero had finished the four rounds tied at six under par 274, one ahead of American Dick Mast with his fellow countryman



▲ The magnificent Wentworth Club in Surrey is home to the European Seniors Tour

Craig Stadler, the 1982 Masters Tournament Champion, in fourth place.

The runners-up finish boosted Romero's confidence and the following week he hit top spot with a successful defence of the Wentworth Senior Masters at Wentworth Club, Surrey, England, where he closed with a round of 70 for a winning nine under par total of 207, two better than Horacio Carbonetti of Argentina and Torrance in second place.

///The best come-from-behind victory of the season came from Giuseppe Cali, who made up a seven stroke deficit in the final round of the Bendinat London Seniors Masters///

From England the players flew to Switzerland for the ever popular Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open at Golf Club Bad Ragaz, where Quiros registered his maiden victory in only his seventh start on the European Seniors Tour. The Spaniard, aided by the altitude of the Alps, produced the

lowest 18 hole score of the year with a nine under par second round 61 en route to a 14 under par total 196 and a two stroke win over Mason.

The following week, Tomori joined the club of first-time winners with victory at Helsingør Golf Club, Denmark, in the Scandinavian Senior Open, following in the footsteps of Seiji Ebihara, Noboru Sugai and Dragon Taki by becoming the fourth Japanese winner in the history of the European Seniors Tour.

Tomori closed with a brilliant 66 to complete a winning 54 hole total of 14 under par 199, two clear of Rivero and Darcy, the latter registering his seventh runners-up finish as his search for that elusive first win continued.

Back-to-back triumphs then followed for Torrance in the PGA Seniors Championship at The Stoke By Nayland Golf Club, Suffolk, England, where he finished three ahead of Argentine Luis Carbonetti on 20 under par 268, and the Charles Church Scottish Seniors Open at the Marriott Dalmahoy Hotel & Country Club, Midlothian, Scotland, where his three under par total of 213 beat fellow Scot Bill Longmuir by a shot.

Torrance made up seven shots in 36 holes on Dalmahoy's revamped East Course to capture his fourth title of the season and the 40th of his professional career: yet another landmark in a truly memorable season for the man from Largs.

The rest of the year was defined by

the performances of Carl Mason, who turned around an indifferent season by winning the European Senior Masters on the Duke's Course, Woburn Golf Club, Bedfordshire, England, The Midas Group English Seniors Open at St Mellion International, Saltash, Cornwall, England, and the Estoril Senior Open of Portugal at Quinta da Marinha Oitavos Golfe, Portugal.

"The victory in the European Senior Masters changed my year and I became much more confident," said the 53 year old, whose three round total of seven under 209 was two better than Horacio Carbonetti in second place. "Throughout my career I have always wanted to win at one of the great courses like Woburn."

At St Mellion, Mason carded a battling final round 71 to hold off a charging Ginn, the Australian closing with a 67 to finish one adrift of the Englishman's four under par total of 212. Mason's win completed a unique hat-trick in the event following his triumphs at Hillside Golf Club in 2003 and Formby Hall Golf Club in 2004. It also thrust Mason into contention for the Order of Merit, a position he improved the following week with a runner-up finish behind Brand in the OKI Castellón Open de España Senior at Sergio Garcia's home course of Club de Campo del Mediterráneo, Spain.

Brand closed with a level par 72 to hold off a star-studded field, which



included two-time Open Champion Greg Norman, to secure his maiden Seniors title with a winning total of 13 under par 203.

The in-form Mason was back on top in the Estoril Seniors Open of Portugal the following week, where he collected his third title in four events thanks to a brilliant final day display in atrocious weather conditions.

After entering the back nine trailing by a stroke, Mason produced three birdies in torrential rain to win by four from Torrance and Ginn, the latter achieving his eighth top ten of the year. Mason finished with a level par 71 for a winning aggregate of nine under par 204 and his 14th title in less than four years on the European Seniors Tour.

Then it was off to Riffa Views in Bahrain for the traditional climax, the Arcapita Seniors Tour Championship, open to the leading 42 players on the Order of Merit. Des Smyth flew over from America to defend the title, but Gordon J Brand came through the field with a superb six under par last round 66 then beat Adan Sowa, the overnight leader, at the third extra hole. Brand's win lifted him to fourth place in The European Seniors Tour Order of Merit with €196,002 which meant that the final top four – Torrance, Mason, Rivero and Brand – had between them earned €1,045,353.

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MASON DELIGHTED AS ENGLISH SENIORS OPEN RETURNS TO ST MELLION

Carl Mason will be afforded the opportunity to extend his remarkable love affair with the English Seniors Open and also the Nicklaus Course at St Mellion International Hotel Golf & Country Club after Crown Golf, Europe's largest golf owner/operator, announced that it will continue to promote the event in 2007.

The 2007 English Seniors Open will be played over 54 holes at St Mellion International Hotel Golf & Country Club, Saltash, near Plymouth, Cornwall, from August 17-19, with a minimum prize fund of £150,000.

Among the new players eligible to compete in this year's event is The 2008 European Ryder Cup Captain Nick Faldo, winner of six Major Championships and a total of 39 professional titles worldwide.

Mason, meanwhile, won the first two editions of the English Seniors Open in 2003 and 2004 (at Hillside GC and Formby Hall GC respectively) before extending his perfect record with a one stroke triumph over Stewart Ginn at St Mellion last year.

By finishing with a winning 54 hole total of four under par 212, the Englishman became the first golfer to successfully win the same European Seniors Tour event three times in succession.

"Capturing the English Seniors Open for a third time in a row secured a little piece of history for myself and, as an Englishman, I am hugely proud of that achievement," commented Mason, the winner of 14 tournaments and two Order of Merit titles during a hugely successful Seniors career.

JERSEY SENIORS CLASSIC RETURNS TO TV SCREENS

The States of Jersey Government has entered into partnership with the European Seniors Tour to secure TV coverage for the Jersey Seniors Classic – a move that will showcase the island to golf enthusiasts across the globe.

The 2007 Jersey Seniors Classic, which will be played over the picturesque links at La Moye Golf Club from June 8-10, will be the 17th event on the 2007 European Seniors Tour to benefit from a worldwide TV highlights package.

This is a significant new development for the Jersey Seniors Classic and came about thanks to a powerful public sector partnership between the Tour and the Jersey Economic Development Department and Jersey Tourism.

In welcoming the deal, Mike King, the Chief Executive Officer of Jersey Tourism, said: "This support is a key element in our strategy to further develop the island as a destination for UK and European golfers. I'm sure that the professionals, spectators and the worldwide TV audience will appreciate the quality of this world-class course and its location on Jersey's spectacular west coast."

TONY JACKLIN TO LAUNCH COMEBACK AT BENDINAT LONDON SENIORS MASTERS

The Bendinat Group, which recently agreed to extend its title sponsorship of the London Seniors Masters for a third year, received an unexpected return on its investment with the announcement that Tony Jacklin, Europe's most successful Ryder Cup Captain, will make his golfing comeback in the event at The London Golf Club in Kent from June 22-24.

The inclusion in the field of the two-time Major Champion is guaranteed to generate considerable interest amongst spectators eager to see one of Britain's greatest golfers in competitive action for the first time since The Open Championship at St Andrews in 2005.

Jacklin's last appearance on the European Seniors Tour was some three years earlier and the 62 year old is looking forward to making his comeback in this year's Bendinat London Seniors Masters, where he is expected to line-up against another former Ryder Cup Captain in Sam Torrance and Italian Ryder Cup golfer Costantino Rocca.

Speaking from his home in Florida, Jacklin said: "I recall opening The London Golf Club with Jack Nicklaus and Seve Ballesteros so it will be lovely to go back there and play the course in a competitive format for the Bendinat London Seniors Masters. I always look forward to returning to England as it is my home and very dear to my heart. I plan to come over for three tournaments this year – The Open, The Senior Open and London."

The Bendinat Group, which has a luxury property portfolio focusing on the magnificent Bendinat Estate in Majorca, is a keen supporter of golf both in Majorca at its own exclusive club, the Real Golf de Bendinat and in England through The London Golf Club, which the Group acquired in 2003.

European Seniors Tour 2007 Tournament Schedule

| | Date | Event | Venue/Country |
|------|----------------|--|---|
| FEB | 28 - 2 (Fri) | DGM Barbados Open | Royal Westmoreland Resort, Barbados |
| MAY | 11 - 13 | The Gloria Classic | Gloria Golf Resort, Belek, Turkey |
| | 18 - 20 | Sharp Italian Seniors Open | Circolo Golf Venezia, Italy |
| | 24 - 27 | U.S. Senior PGA Championship | Kiawah Island Resort, USA |
| JUNE | 1 - 3 | AIB Irish Seniors Open in association with Greenstar & Fáilte Ireland | PGA National Ireland, Ireland |
| | 8 - 10 | Jersey Seniors Classic | La Moye G.C., Jersey |
| | 15 - 17 | Ryder Cup Wales Seniors Open | Conwy (Caernarvonshire) G.C., Wales |
| | 22 - 24 | Bendinat London Seniors Masters | The London G.C., Ash, Kent, England |
| JULY | 5 - 8 | US Senior Open* | Whistling Straits, USA |
| | 12 - 14 (Sat) | Open de France Senior de Divonne | Golf du Domaine de Divonne, France |
| | 26 - 29 | The Senior Open Championship presented by Aberdeen Asset Management | Muirfield, Scotland |
| AUG | 3 - 5 | Wentworth Senior Masters | Edinburgh Course, Wentworth Club, England |
| | 10 - 12 | Bad Ragaz PGA Seniors Open | Golf Club Bad Ragaz, Switzerland |
| | 17 - 19 | English Seniors Open | St Mellion International Hotel Golf & Country Club, England |
| | 31 - 2 | European Senior Masters | Dukes Course, Woburn G.C., England |
| SEPT | 6 - 9 | 51st PGA Seniors Championship | The Stoke-by-Nayland G.C., England |
| | 20 - 22 (Sat) | Scandinavian Senior Open | Royal Copenhagen G.C., Denmark |
| | 28 - 30 | Charles Church Scottish Seniors Open | Marriott Dalmahoy Hotel & Country Club, Scotland |
| OCT | 19 - 21 | OKI Castellón Open de España Senior | Club de Campo del Mediterráneo, Spain |
| NOV | 8 - 10 (Sat) | Seniors Tour Championship | TBC |
| | 15 - 16 (Fri) | Qualifying School - Stage 1 | Pinheiros Altos Golf Club, Portugal |
| | 15 - 16 (Fri) | Qualifying School - Stage 1 | Quinta de Cima Golf, Algarve, Portugal |
| | 19 - 22 (Thur) | Qualifying School - Finals | Pinta Course, Pestana Golf Resort, Portugal |

N.B: Dates and events are subject to confirmation

ESTS07V1

The 2007 European Seniors Tour Order of Merit starts with the DGM Barbados Open (February 28 - March 2 2007) and concludes with the Seniors Tour Championship (November 8 - 10 2007)

All European Seniors Tour Approved Tournaments count towards the Order of Merit

*Money won does not count towards the European Seniors Tour Order of Merit

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Drive the green

With climate change firmly fixed as the key issue of the century ahead, scarcely an industry exists that's not trying hard to reduce its carbon footprint. The business of golf is no exception.

Golf courses, long criticised by environmentalists as a wasteful and destructive use of land, have been quietly cleaning up their act in recent years.

Today's so-called eco-golf courses employ fewer pesticides, apply chemicals sparingly on weeds or use non-toxic methods such as weed-resistant grass. Computerised sprinkler systems are commonly used to minimise water waste.

Courses are increasingly being built not with chunky fairways but with large natural buffer zones designed to be havens for wild animals and plants. Some courses have even incorporated separate nature trails within their boundaries.

A golf course in Croatia has stopped cutting fairways with lawnmowers, relying instead on a herd of deer to keep down the grass. The course on Veli Brijun island, off the Istria peninsula's western coast, claims to be "the world's first free-range eco-friendly golf course."

Players disinclined to walk a round but still wishing to boost their

"green" credentials are encouraged to use electric or solar-powered golf carts. Bio-degradable tees made from cornstarch are now available and there's even a bio-degradable golf ball on the market that dissolves into fish food if a wayward shot ends in the water.

Golf's drive to be more environmentally-friendly is important given that in many developed countries golf courses cover almost as much land as national parks – in the US, for example, there are more than 16,000 golf courses covering 1.5 million acres.

While acknowledging that golf course designers are doing a better job of managing pollution and water use, many environmentalists say developers are overstating advances in course construction.

Campaigners argue that golf courses are the domain of a few denying the land to the people, replacing land for housing, replacing farms, and draining water from more needy ecologies. Some conservationists even fear that the "envi-

ronmentally friendly" tag will be used to justify building golf courses in ecologically sensitive zones.

According to a report published in 2004 by the World Wide Fund for Nature, each of an estimated 200 courses built around the Mediterranean consumes the same amount of fresh water as a town of 12,000 people.

In the UK, annual water shortages and hosepipe bans have been giving club managers headaches in recent years. Some clubs in the South, such as The London Club in Kent, have found metered water very expensive to buy. In one month alone last summer it spent £50,000 on water. To combat potential hosepipe bans many clubs are introducing water storage tanks and creating their own reservoirs, while others are seeking licences for water extraction from bore holes.

Last year the R&A, British golf's governing body, called for more "sustainable" courses that work with and not against their natural surroundings. It seems an uphill climb for greenkeepers to match many players' expectations of sculpted emerald courses such as Augusta. But the R&A believes that the sustainable approach can bring about better playing surfaces for more of the year, lower costs and a cleaner environmental footprint.

The Government's Waste and Resources Action Programme has found that bunker "sand" created from recycled glass, and shredded tyre-rubber used as a top-dressing have both had good results.



For more information on the R&A's guidelines: www.bestcourseforgolf.org

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) runs a Golf Environment Competition offering a cash prize to be used

on environmental projects www.bigga.org.uk.

Golf Environment Europe is an independent organisation aiming to promote environmental sustainability in golf: www.golfenvironmenteurope.org

TOP TIPS FOR GREENER GOLF

- Walk the course instead of using a golf cart.
- If you do use a golf cart, keep to the designated path and urge your golf course to replace its carts with electric-powered ones.
- If your course doesn't have its own recycling programme, encourage them to start one.
- Accept the natural limitations and variations of turf-grass plants – for example, be willing to play on brown grass during periods of low rainfall. The natural characteristics of links and heathland courses are for them to be brown, dry and hard-running in the summer.
- Reduce "golf-miles" by staying and playing in your own country.
- Pick an eco-golf club: Hankley Common, Ipswich and Thorpeness golf clubs have all won prizes for environmental action.

Fresh ideas for corporate golf

It's busy times for Nick Faldo who celebrates his 50th birthday this year. The Ryder Cup captain has launched Faldo Events, an events organisation and management company tailored specifically to the golf market and the latest initiative in his business portfolio.

The 49-year-old former Masters champion hopes to channel the knowledge that he has gained over 30 years as a professional golfer into creating and implementing an innovative events programme. One intention is to launch The Nick Faldo Invitational in 2008.

Faldo and his team will act as a bridge between the corporate sector and the golf industry. He said: "We've put together an experienced team at Faldo Events and their individual expertise, coupled with my own knowledge of the industry, will mean that we can offer our clients a professional and considered service. I'm confident that the experiences that we can offer through Faldo Events will be original, exciting and entirely tailored to each client's individual goals."

One such initiative to make corporate golf a more "interesting proposition" is an alliance with K2 Performance Systems, sports performance experts who work with high-profile stars. "At our events, the client will learn clear, punchy tips from a golf-themed 'seminar' in the morning which he or she can apply at a later date in the office. This makes the event doubly attractive to cor-



porate clients," says Oliver Dury, a partner in Faldo Events.

Faldo also has desire to be involved in a Seniors Tour event in the near future. "It would be a showcase event. Nick's profile and credibility elevates us above the competition. What he's achieved in the game gives our team a tremendous platform," says Ben Lambourne, a partner in Faldo Events.

For more information on Faldo Events: 020 7348 6180; www.nickfaldo.com or e-mail: events@nickfaldo.com

Legal eagles

Onside Law was set up in 2004 by lawyers from the global sports management company IMG and the City legal firm Clifford Chance. Oliver Hunt, a founding partner, was formerly IMG's golf lawyer for five years and advised the likes of Tiger Woods, Colin Montgomerie, Pdraig Harrington and Retief Goosen.

"The key difference working for golf stars [as opposed to ordinary clients] is industry knowledge, knowing what sponsors will and won't accept," says Hunt. "The same issues arise advising on a Tiger deal as on the contract of an up-and-coming player, except there are more noughts and the bargaining position is different."

The position for Ryder Cup captains and any newly crowned Major winner is slightly different, however. "Having advised each of the last three European Ryder Cup captains (as well as Nick Faldo, the current captain), the intricacies of players' commercial arrangements go up a notch. As well as the players' individual arrangements you have to consider the Ryder Cup's arrangements and there is far more press scrutiny. Likewise a new Major winner's commercial life is turned upside down – in a good way – in the aftermath of victory."

Onside Law advises clients throughout the golf industry, including both equipment and clothing manufacturers such as Lyle & Scott and Srixon, golf academies and teaching institutions such as Young Masters Golf, as well as many other industry businesses from golf putter inventors to golf course management companies.

Hunt is also responsible for all of Nick Faldo's legal affairs and has recently advised on his high profile CBS and Maybach deals and his latest events business venture. Other clients include Justin Rose, who finished in a tie for fifth place at the recent US Masters.

"Given our unique experience in the field, we feel that we are the leading law firm in the industry," says Hunt.

For more information: www.onsidelaw.co.uk

Tee-time at midnight

In Shetland, northern Scotland, there is a midsummer golf tournament which takes place every year during summer solstice. It tees off at midnight.



Because Scotland enjoys extensive daylight hours over the summer months – from late May until early September it starts to get light at 5am and does not get dark until 10pm – there's no shortage of golf-

ing time. But it's not just the amount of time you get to play golf north of the border. In Scotland a round is never less than interesting, and sometimes downright spiritual.

"Scotland is the spiritual home of golf," says Mark McCardie, the product manager for golf at Visit Scotland, the promotional arm of Scotland's national tourism association. "There are over 550 courses, varying from links to parkland, to suit all types of players." More than 400 courses are within an hour of an airport.

//Scotland has the finest and most famous links courses in the world – Turnberry, St Andrews, Royal Troon and Muirfield//

The world's first seaside links courses were developed in Scotland, where golf originated 600 years ago. The word comes from the Scots language and refers to an area of coastal sand dunes "linking" the sea and farmland. Scotland has the finest and most famous links courses in the world – Turnberry, St Andrews, Royal Troon and Muirfield – and Visit Scotland produces a guide to the Great Scottish Links Courses.

For another historic theme to a golf break there are six Scottish golf trails exploring the legacy of James Braid, one of golf's greatest course designers. The trails have been

established as a tribute to his immense contribution to the game as both champion golfer and golf course pioneer.

According to McCardie, a recent survey found that the average green fee in Scotland is under £40. "It's very reasonable considering that includes Open qualifying courses and those designed by some of the world's leading golf architects."

If you prefer spectating, the Ladies' Scottish Open is making a return after an 11-year absence at the Carrick this September and, before that on July 19-22, Carnoustie plays host to its seventh Open Championship.

Carnoustie has a reputation as probably the most demanding course in the world and has driven some of the game's greatest players to distraction. Work has already begun to remove trees from the rear of the 6th green to give the hole more of a links feel and some changes are being mooted for the 17th. An ambitious scheme to revamp Carnoustie's bunkers has also been instigated, as has an intensive aeration programme designed specifically to produce classic firm, fast playing conditions.

If the tournament provides as thrilling a final day as the three-way play-off at the last Open Championship held there in 1999 it'll be one to remember.

For more information:
www.visitscotland.com

For Open Championship tickets:
www.randa.org/bibitopentickets or
www.opengolf.com

Golf getaways

We've picked seven of the world's best courses – four for a cost-effective weekend break and three for a blow-the-budget long-haul week away.

Ballybunion, Co.Kerry, Ireland ▶

With courses such as Old Head, Fota Island, Tralee and Lahinch, South-west Ireland has some of the most scenic links golf in the world. Ballybunion's clifftop holes are flanked by sandy dunes and the Atlantic and rates among the best of them. Little has changed on this course in the past 100 years yet it is consistently rated by pros in the world's Top Ten.

Ballybunion: 00353 68 27146;
www.ballybuniongolfclub.ie
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Evian Masters Golf Club, Evian-les-Bains, France

A scenic par-72 championship course set in a wooded park of 150 acres at the foot of the Alps overlooking Lake Geneva. The Evian Royal Open is a three-day competition from June 28 to July 1, where you can measure your performance against the world's leading female golfers.

For more information on golf packages and stays at the Evian Royal Palace 33 (0)4 50 26 85 00
www.en.evianroyalresort.com

Crans-sur-Sierre, Switzerland

This seasonal course on a Swiss mountain is home to the European Masters every year. It is laid out on what in winter are ski slopes at 5,000ft. The alpine scenery is breathtaking and the air so fresh that the ball travels further, apparently.

027 481 2168; www.golfcrans.ch
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Valderrama, Andalucia, Spain

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www.valderrama.com
EasyJet 0905 821 0905,
www.easyjet.com flies to Malaga

Pinehurst Number Two, North Carolina, USA

Donald Ross's masterpiece and host of the 2005 US Open has more holes (144) than a Swiss cheese and some of the most challenging greens in the world including a par four with a green that looks like an upturned saucer. The resort has excellent spa facilities and you can go kayaking on Lake Pinewood.

www.pinehurstgolf.com
Seven-night packages to Pinehurst in August cost from £2,000 pp, including flights, half-board at the Carolina Hotel, car hire and four rounds of golf. Eagle Golf Tours 01273 749 661,
www.eaglegolftours.com.

Fancourt, South Africa

As well as fine parkland layouts, the Fancourt hotel and country club has a splendid Gary Player designed links course added in 2000 with a nod to great British seaside courses. It lies in the heart of the lush Garden Route

with a mountain range backdrop and is South Africa's premier golf resort.

www.fancourt.co.za
Seven-night packages in August from £1,249pp, based on two sharing, include accommodation at Fancourt, flights and unlimited rounds. Lotus Super Travel 020 7208 7068,
www.supertravel.co.uk.

Royal Melbourne West Course, Australia

Partly mapped out by the Scottish golfing architect Dr Alister Mackenzie in 1926 and generally acknowledged as the finest course in Oz. Its

three naturally rolling courses have hosted the Open Championships on numerous occasions and all the fun of the city of Melbourne is nearby. Large greens and wide fairways are part of what make Royal Melbourne so compelling, giving all types of golfers plenty of options from the tee.

www.royalmelbourne.com.au
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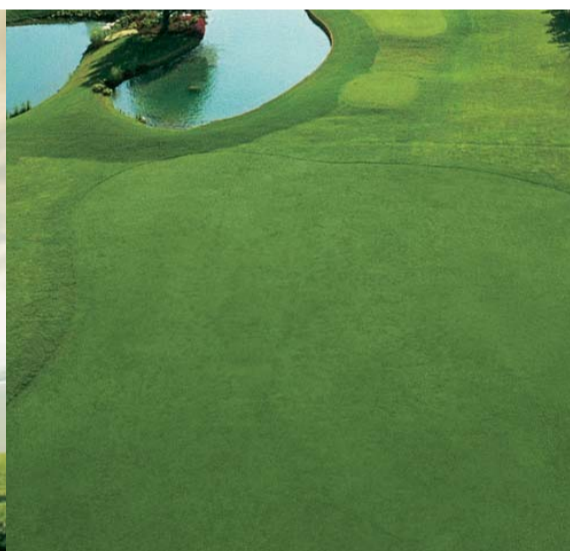
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Golf's arms race

The world of golf is being stretched to new limits. From Fife to California, courses are being lengthened in a bid to keep pace with super-fit players using designer clubs to hit balls further than ever before.

Such alterations have caused brows to furrow in traditionally conservative clubhouses. It seems that golf has reached a threshold and questions are being asked. Do fans really want to see their sport go down the power-game route that has stultified tennis? And is it time to apply new limits to its high-tech equipment?

Certainly players had to ponder hard which clubs to select for this year's Masters at Augusta National in Georgia. In 2006 the course underwent several changes with six holes – Nos 1, 4, 7, 11, 15 and 17 – moved back anywhere from 10 to 40 yards, increasing the legendary course's yardage from 7,290 yards to

7,445. In addition to the lengthening process, trees were added to the fairways on Nos. 1, 7 and 11.

Although Zach Johnson collected the green jacket this year – Johnson's average driving distance in the tournament was 265 yards, which put him 57th of the 60 players who survived the halfway cut – in recent years it's been the big hitters in the 300-yard plus brigade, such as Tiger Woods, that have fared well at Augusta.

"I don't hit it far, I can't overpower a course, but I think I am mentally tough. And I had a game plan that I stuck to," said Johnson after being helped into a green jacket by last year's winner Phil Mickelson.

Lee Westwood criticised the course for "asking questions to which there are no answers", but Johnson found them by tackling the course with skill and guile. Westwood also said the course was organised so that only a handful of players could win. He did not say who, but his list is unlikely to have included Johnson.

One result of the Masters was to explode the myths that Tiger Woods is invincible, and that you need to be a power hitter to win at Augusta.

Changes are afoot in the UK, too. In preparation for its hosting of the Open Championship in 2007, Carnoustie in Angus, Scotland, is due to undergo its own surgery. In line with other Majors' hosts, the third hole has been redesigned into a more challenging dog-leg, bunkers have been added to the 6th, and mounding to the right-hand side of the 17th. The tee at the 18th may be lengthened, too, making the course about 7,400 yards.

"These changes have been made to encourage variety on the tee shot," says Graeme Duncan, the general manager at Carnoustie. "My instinct is that this is not a course you over-power. If it's a wet summer then a big hitter has an advantage, otherwise a straight hitter such as Zach Johnson could do well."

Change is not new to golf. David Rickman, the director of rules at the Royal & Ancient Golf Club (R&A), golf's governing authority outside the US, says the game has been evolving successfully over 400 years and, despite technological advances of equipment, it remains a challenging sport.

Unlike many other ball sports where the dimensions of the field of play are fixed, Rickman sees golf as an organic process. He points to documentary evidence expressing concern about big hitters in the 1920s. But there is no doubt that the pace of change has quickened over the past decade.

"The future is about striking a balance between healthy technological advances in equipment – which may facilitate the game for the 60 million golfers worldwide – and recognising that elite players are hitting the ball a long way.

"Making changes to courses is an attempt, in the face of stronger, fitter and arguably better coached golfers, to preserve the strategic challenge of



ALL'S WELL THAT'S BARWELL

"If a group wanted to go to Timbuktu I'd find the hotel and golf course and we'd arrange it," says Terry Mancini, ex-Arsenal and Republic of Ireland football star, and the head of corporate sporting events at Barwell Leisure.

Established in 1970, Barwell Leisure has gained an international reputation for quality travel solutions and innovative tour operating and corporate events. Having pioneered trips to the award-winning La Manga Club Resort, Spain, the company has since added to its portfolio the Humber Valley Resort in Newfoundland, Canada, and luxury resorts in Mauritius, Dubai and South Africa.

"People are looking for somewhere warm with a quality hotel, a first-class golf course and post-match entertainment that goes on late into the night," says Mancini, who has been organising events at Barwell for 15 years.

From the players' handicaps and score cards to the tee-times and team shirts, every detail of the tournament is looked after. Mancini has taken the England World Cup squad away in 1998 and 2002 as well as most of the Premiership teams. "They all like a bit of golf," he says, "even the useless ones."

He is now running three Footballers' Golf Classics a year, each with about 40 corporate teams playing alongside big name former footballers such as Matt Le Tissier and Liam Brady. The next one is at La Manga Club in early June.

"The competition brings everyone together and creates conversation. We're sold out so we must be doing something right."

For more information: www.barwell.co.uk



▲ Holes 17 (top) and 13 (above) at the magnificent Carnoustie Golf Links

the game. That is what they've done at Augusta," says Rickman.

Amid this current culture of "athlete" golfers pumping iron and the thwack of titanium on a tungsten-core golf ball, there are those who feel golf is in danger of being spoiled by the likes of 460cc square-headed drivers with foolproof sweet spots and balls that can add 20-30 yards to a top players game off the tee.

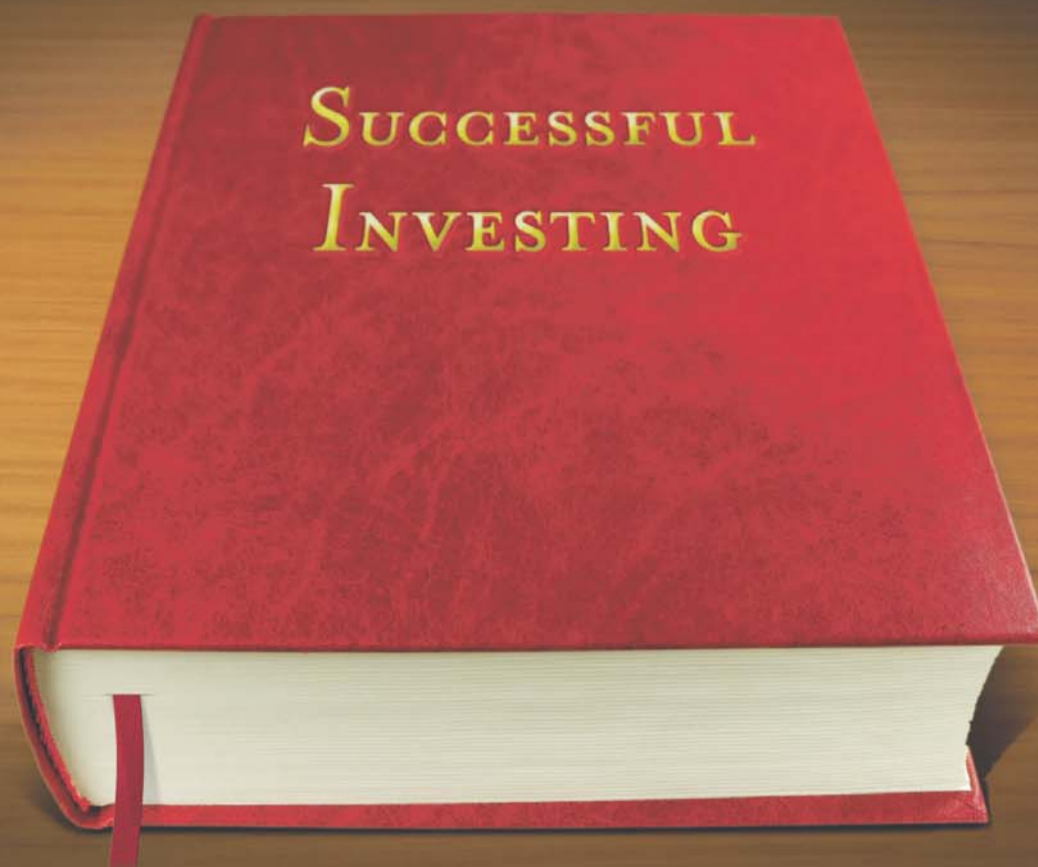
Although there may be some truth in this regarding golf's most gifted players, at grassroots level players are still struggling regardless of the clubs they play with. This makes it increasingly difficult for the R&A to hold on to its ideal of "one set of rules for all".

But despite their space-age appearance, arguably the least significant of the main factors changing the face of golf is its clubs. The latest clubs are as much about accuracy as distance according to experts. With cavity backs, utility clubs and a belly putter

you're guaranteed a degree of success but miss out on the real thrill and respect of the club pro argue the traditionalists. One Scottish club-maker has recently tested a club with a diamond-face insert which, because of its hardness, propels the ball at a great speed with minimum effort.

Players won't be selecting such luxury clubs from their bags at Carnoustie this July, which will no doubt prove to be the latest testing ground for the power hitters versus the rest. The leading contenders will need to be as ingenious as they are prodigious from the tee to succeed on the largely unplayed new holes.

Golf hasn't radically reinvented itself and found its equivalent of cricket's highly successful Twenty20 game yet, but far from becoming a boring game like serve-and-smash tennis, golf during its current period of transition should offer some gripping sports viewing.



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