

# the cut

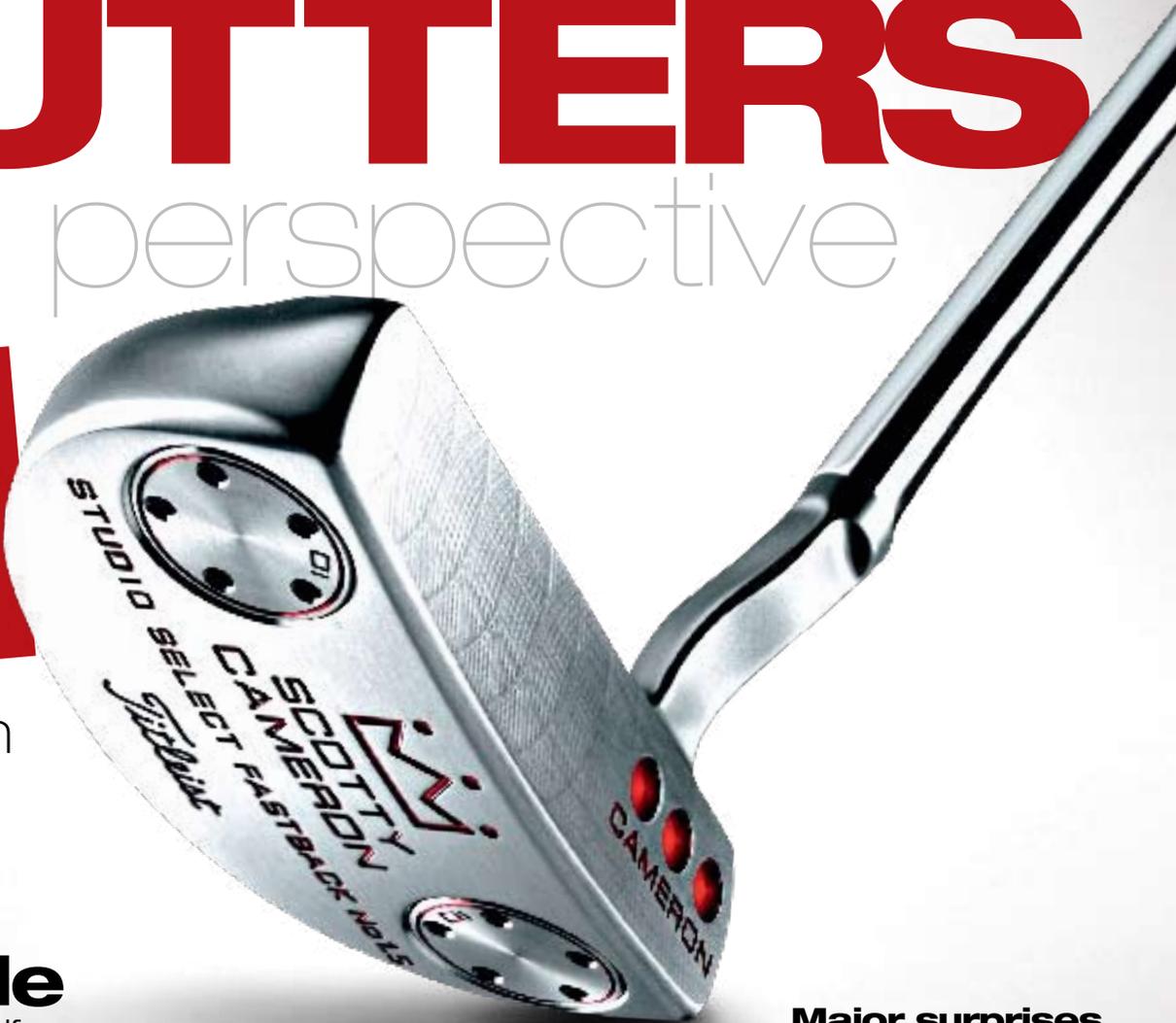
## improve your game

# PUTTERS

in perspective

# 21

putters  
put through  
their paces



### Indulge your wild side

How to play links golf

**Major surprises**  
Open Championship • US Open

### DESTINATIONS

**Coastal courses compared**  
Cape Kidnappers vs Pebble Beach

### Northland beckons

Golf, beaches and a few beers...  
two mates hit the road

## Rescue remedies

Difficult lie? In the rough? Under trees?  
Expert advice to help you rescue your round

the cut  
improve your game

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2010

# 35

PAGES OF EXPERT TUITION  
EQUIPMENT & STYLE

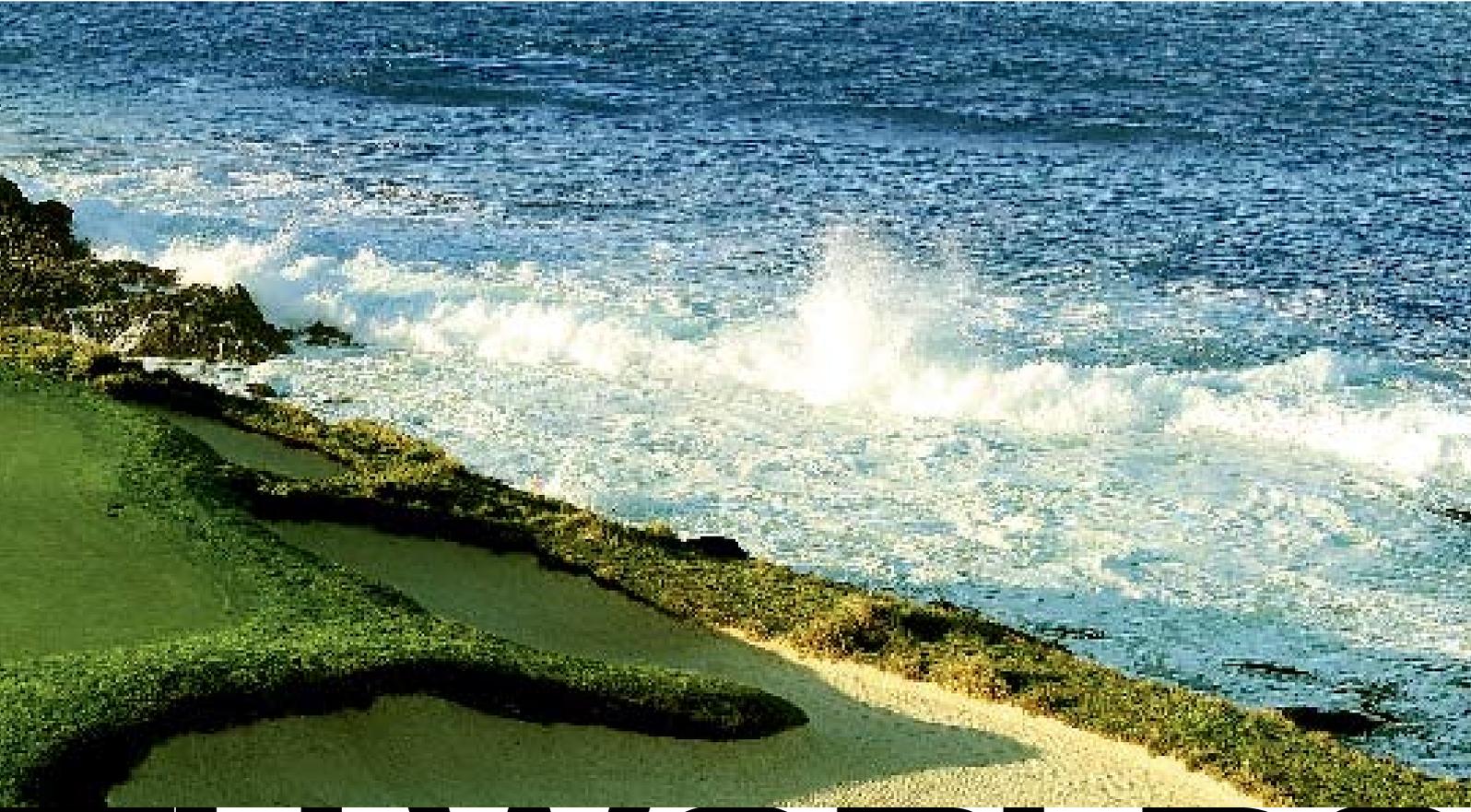


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# BEST OF BO





# TH WORLD'S



This year's US Open was played at the punishing Pebble Beach course. How does it rate against its New Zealand equivalent Cape Kidnappers? American golf writer Robert Kaufman offers his assessment

From the air, the sprawl of Pebble Beach is clearly visible.



From shore to shore, the world's largest water hazard is all that separates what might be considered two of the most coveted parcels of real estate on a golf edition of Monopoly – Cape Kidnappers on the eastern tip of New Zealand's North Island and Pebble Beach Golf Links on the western edge of California's Monterey Peninsula coastline. There's nothing but seemingly endless water and horizons in between.

With these two trophy courses lying 24,000km apart in separate hemispheres – roughly equidistant from the equator – either could justifiably make the claim as the greatest meeting between land and sea; albeit, one has a higher bird's eye view. Cape Kidnappers is perched atop 500ft dramatic cliffs that plunge into the Pacific Ocean, whereas at the nearly sea-level Pebble Beach golfers may be tempted to take a detour down a slight embankment on several holes to play an errant shot from the beach.

This geological difference could have been what prompted PGA Tour player Brandt Snedeker, who has played both courses, to refer to the dramatic setting of Cape Kidnappers as "Pebble Beach on steroids".

Based on my experience playing both, I can attest that for anyone stepping onto either first tee the natural rush of adrenalin is the only chemical inducement necessary. On the other hand, whatever

you consider your 'A' game to be, it is highly recommended you bring it because no matter what game enhancement strategy is employed to get pumped up for these experiences they are both demanding venues from the perspectives of playability, climate and aesthetics.

From an historical context, the inaugural tee shot was struck at Pebble Beach in 1919 – 85 years before the fairways opened at Cape Kidnappers in 2004 – and since 1999 the American club boasts an ownership group that includes Arnold Palmer and Clint Eastwood. It has been a Top 10 golf course in just about every golf magazine on the planet and it has hosted five US Opens (1972, 1982, 1992, 2000 and 2010, and it will play host again for the 2019 championship), the 1977 PGA Championship and for 64 consecutive years the biggest pro-am on the PGA Tour. Just to make sure I was aware of these legendary shadows I'd be following, I received a welcome note prior to my round forewarning: "Enjoy your round and remember who's been there before you."

For those who place stock in world rankings, Cape Kidnappers played catch up as fast as Tiger Woods' swing speed after embedding itself into the golfing landscape when it placed No 4 on *Golf Magazine's* Greatest Courses in the Last 50 Years and No 13 on *Golf Digest's* latest Top 100 Golf Courses in the World (outside the US).

Although it will never match Pebble Beach on major championships, it does benefit from the worldwide television exposure received during the annual Kiwi Challenge contested by four PGA Tour players invited to compete for a \$1 million first-place cheque.

Regardless of where they rate with these typically political accolades, the two courses had diverse beginnings. Amazingly, Pebble Beach Golf Links was configured by amateur golfers Jack Neville and Douglas Grant, who not only had no previous course design experience but apparently did not charge a fee to the resort's founder Samuel FB Morse whose primary directive was to have as many holes as possible along the coastline. Incorporating a figure-eight design, the designers obliged Morse with eight holes, principally along the craggy headlands overlooking Stillwater Cove and Carmel Bay, and the final 18-hole layout was built at



the staggering cost of \$NZ106,000!

“It was all there in plain sight, very little clearing was necessary,” said Neville in a 1972 interview, six years before his death. “Nature had intended it to be nothing else. All we did was cut away a few trees, install a few sprinklers and sow a little seed.”

Contrast that feat with the modern-day economics of golf course construction, let alone the sensitivity of planting it on protected coastlines. At Cape Kidnappers, the architect credited with leading the minimalist movement in course design, Tom Doak, was given that task – for a fee, naturally.

With the spare-no-expense backing of hedge fund billionaire Julian Robertson, known as the Wizard of Wall Street in the 1990s, Doak carved out a piece of Robertson’s 6000-acre

sheep and cattle farm at Hawke’s Bay to design a 6510m, par-71 masterpiece.

The visionary owner, who had already built New Zealand’s other spectacular ocean view, cliff-hanging course Kauri Cliffs, said in purchasing this land, it was like “buying Pebble Beach for the price of a modest New York City apartment”. With slightly more space to work with, all Doak had to do was decorate Robertson’s playground. Considering the topography, not much earth carving was necessary.

“The greatest compliment we can receive is for someone to look at our work and say ‘well, they had a great site so they didn’t really have to do very much, the course was laying there already’. The truest test of ability is to make the work look easy,” said Doak.

The respective architects may

**In purchasing this land it was like buying Pebble Beach for the price of a modest New York City apartment**

have considered their work fairly straightforward but it doesn’t necessarily translate to playing them at the level your game may be accustomed to. Having conquered both – or, perhaps, the other way around – it becomes readily apparent that for all their notoriety each starts out rather benign before really hitting their stride.

With Pebble Beach so ingrained in our minds through television and video games, by the time you actually play there almost every hole is preceded by recalling a memorable tee shot, chip or putt from the likes of Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and countless other top pros. At precisely 2pm on the day my playing partner Andrew, a Kiwi transplant, and I began to play, anyone around the globe tuned into the live video cam overlooking the

The eighth hole at Pebble Beach.



The fifth hole at Cape Kidnappers.



first tee box would have witnessed at least the start of one of the most celebrated international matches never to be seen, unless you count the sea otters darting in and out of the kelp beds or the flocks of pelican flying in formation overhead.

Disregarding individual scores, the highlight reel at Pebble Beach includes arguably the greatest stretch of golf holes on earth, numbers four to 10, with starring roles by one of the most photographed par-3s in the world at the tiny downhill No 7 and Jack Nicklaus' favourite par-4 in golf, the eighth. After completing the comparatively moderate inland holes 11 to 16, the grand finale at the last two on the ocean play a major part in easing the pain of shelling out the \$NZ699 green fee. On the crescent-shaped homeward hole, Andrew certainly paid the price when he may have been affected by the magnetic force of his homeland, hooking his tee shot so far left it wound up at the bottom of Davey Jones' locker.

On the opposite side of the Pacific, this American was almost penalised even before passing through

the entry gate preceding the five-mile uphill drive to Cape Kidnappers. In a country where the sheep outnumber the humans 10 to one, it was my misfortune to encounter a blockade of the woolly creatures on the two-lane country road, causing me to nearly miss my tee time.

Upon arrival, a jaw-dropping experience awaited, from the spectacular ocean views at every hole to the finger-like fairways as narrow as bowling alleys bordered by sheer cliffs that swallow gutter balls. However, much like Pebble Beach, the visual distractions easily make up for any errant shots. Although, at Cape Kidnappers, they are a lot less costly when you factor in the price-per-shot with a green fee that, even in high season (October-May) is nearly half the tab of its cross-Pacific rival.

One other discernable economic distinction, as well as visual, is that except for the clubhouse and 26 luxury suites at the Farm at Cape Kidnappers, real estate is non-existent on the golf course. At Pebble Beach, although they don't

**When all is said and done, the only question you'll be asking is, "Where am I going to play next to top this?"**

really factor into play, a number of multi-million dollar palatial mansions bordering a handful of fairways may have first-time observers asking, "I wonder who lives there?" At Cape Kidnappers, besides the golfers the only noticeable sign of life is the largest colony of gannets in the world (20,000 of them).

Whether you're travelling far or near to play Pebble Beach or Cape Kidnappers, neither affords any boundaries for frugality, so just suck it up and pay the tab.

Tom Watson, the only player to have competed in all five US Opens at Pebble Beach (including winning in 1982) is on record as stating, "Pebble Beach is the closest thing to perfection in a golf course." And about Cape Kidnappers, Tom Doak says, "This is seaside golf at its best."

Whatever description you buy into, considering either course's position in the golfing universe, both are highly-prized notches on any globetrotting golfer's scorecard. And when all is said and done, the only question you'll be asking is, "Where am I going to play next to top this?" ●