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**A GAMBLE  
WITH UPSIDE**

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**YOUR GUIDE  
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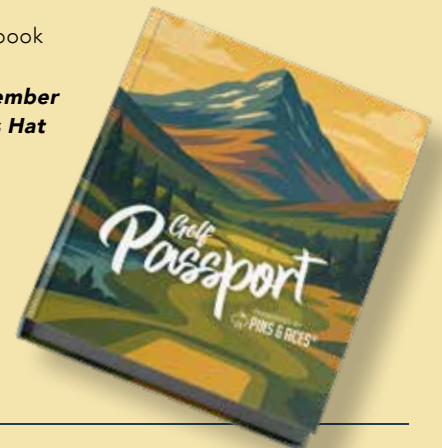
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PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK

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This winter, trade snow for sun and discover adventure in Scottsdale, Arizona. Hike stunning desert trails, tee off on world-class golf courses, and unwind beneath endless blue skies. From vibrant cultural attractions and cuisine to serene spas and sunsets, Scottsdale transforms winter into a warm, unforgettable escape filled with energy and style.

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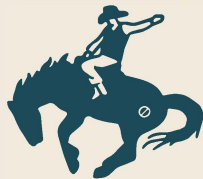
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# ESCAPE, PLAY, REPEAT

Our annual winter edition is always fun to put together; who doesn't like to fantasize about taking warm-weather golf trips as they stare out at a driveway that needs to be shoveled?

This edition we focus on long-time favorites for Colorado golfers who like to get away from the snow: Scottsdale, Ariz., and the Mexican resorts of Cabo San Lucas and Puerto Vallarta.

For Colorado golfers, the connection to Scottsdale couldn't be stronger. So many people from Colorado visit or live part-time there that the two golfing communities almost act as one. Our digital content reminds us of that every time we publish. Almost without exception, every story we publish on ColoradoAvidGolfer.Com receives its top readership from Colorado. The location for the second-largest number of readers for our digital content - by a sizeable lead over everywhere else in the world - is readers from the Phoenix area, including Scottsdale.

Our Scottsdale article this month rounds up the latest on the year-round options. Summers there are obviously the hottest part of the year, but even that time provides opportunity. Winters are their high-season, of course, but Fall remains an under-appreciated time to get lower rates and still great weather.

Our roundup of golf in Mexico is also meant to keep our readers up-to-date on the latest of a very popular place that Colorado golfers have visited for decades. Golf resorts in Cabo San Lucas continue to add more courses and more hotels to what is already a golf mecca. While some - like Tiger Woods' Diamante course El Cardonal - are open only to residents of the surrounding community,

many excellent courses are available and more are coming. In Puerto Vallarta, just over the Sea of Cortez, the scale is different. Options include some great resort courses away from downtown, as well as older traditional layouts right in the city.

Our dining correspondent, John Lehndorff of Boulder, adds to the information. He catches up with Denver restaurateur Alex Seidel who spends so much time golfing in Cabo that he says his friends think he's retired. (He is not). Seidel helps readers find some of the best off-resort eateries in Cabo, and Lehndorff lines up still more from Puerto Vallarta.

While perhaps not a great winter destination, Gamble Sands gets an overdue visit from us. Writer Tom Mackin paid a visit and lays out why when the weather is accommodating this Washington state destination should be on your radar.

And among courses worth visiting, but closer to home, we got an early peek at Colorado's newest course, Bella Ridge, near Johnstown. This course is the third in the state to be designed by Art Schaupeter and the other two - Colorado TPC and Highland Meadows Golf Course - are long considered excellent stops. Bella Ridge opened for preview play this fall and will be open full-time beginning this spring.

So depending upon the local winter we have here, Colorado golf may again prove to be a 12 month experience. But if not, I hope you find some easy armchair travel in these pages to help you get ready for a fantastic 2026.

Jim Bebbington//  
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# PEOPLE OF THE CGA: KELLY GREEN

BY KAYLA KERNS



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THE COLORADO GOLF ASSOCIATION

Kelly Green (formerly Kelly Heffer) is a Colorado native who played varsity golf at Cherry Creek High School, graduating in 1993. She attended both the University of Arizona and the University of Colorado Boulder on a full golf scholarship, earning her degree from CU in 1997, followed by an MBA from Colorado State University in 2004.

Kelly served as President and Chairman of the Board at Birko Corporation, her third-generation family-owned food safety company, which was sold in 2021. She now holds the title of Chairman Emeritus of Birko – A Diversy Company.

Kelly won the 1996 Colorado Women's Match Play Championship and the 1994 Colorado Women's First Data Corp Open, and she has qualified for seven USGA Championships. She is a member of Cherry Hills Country Club.

**KK:** Tell me about the story behind Birko and how you got to where you are with the company.

**KG:** My grandparents started our family business, Birko Corporation, from their garage in 1953. The company began by serving Colorado's meat-packing industry, supporting beef and protein processors with food safety expertise and utilization of Birko chemistries to add value to their offal products such as hide curing (used for leather) tripe washing, tallow splitting that goes into petroleum-based products, and stamping ink used for USDA approval of all meat.

When I joined the business after college, the beef industry was rapidly consolidating and many of our core customers were disappearing. I helped pivot Birko toward new markets, including produce and

craft brewing, where food safety also requires specialized chemistry and sanitation expertise. Birko flourished as the food industry developed a demand for ready-to-eat products across all sectors of protein, produce, and beverage.

We were based in Henderson, Colorado, with more than 100 employees across the US in 2021. When the company was founded in 1953, my Grandfather was a chemist and the inspiration behind our company's science-driven focus. My Grandmother was the heartbeat of our culture that put employees and customers first. During the pandemic, our products were essential to keep meat processing and food plants open and compliant with USDA regulations, which was a high-pressure but rewarding time. I am certain my Grandparents would be proud that the company they started has become a critical component to our food supply today.

**KK:** When were you introduced to the game and who taught you?

**KG:** I was introduced to golf at a very young age by my Mom and Dad, who were members at Cherry Hills in the early 1980s. My first instructor was Danny Harvanek, who taught many juniors in Colorado and made learning the game fun.

I remember chipping golf balls into upside-down umbrellas to help us learn loft and control—whoever got the most in the umbrella won a milkshake. I was often the only girl in the group, but he created such an encouraging environment that it made me fall in love with the game.

**KK:** What has been your favorite CGA tournament?

**KG:** My favorite is the Colorado Women's Match Play Championship. I won the title in 1996 at Lone Tree, 13 & 12, which is one of my proudest competitive moments. I continue to compete in this event because of the great competition, but also the camaraderie it fosters for collegiate, mid-amateurs and senior women players.

For example, this past year I was paired with a DU golfer, Kaitlin Zingler. Playing three rounds of golf together in the Pod format allowed us to build a great friendship. She was curious about my career and how golf played a role in my success as a businessperson.

Fast forward, I introduced her to a few people in my business network, and she now has a finance internship lined up for next summer. That was in-

credibly rewarding — golf can open doors far beyond competition.

**KK:** You recently qualified for your first U.S. Senior Women's Open. How was that experience?

**KG:** Earlier this year I was talking with friends about my golf goals, and I said my "BHAG" — my Big Hairy Audacious Goal — was to qualify for the U.S. Senior Women's Open. I had missed qualifying for two U.S. Women's Opens in college by one shot each time, so I knew it would push me out of my comfort zone.

During the qualifier, I had to wait for scores to come in and thought I was going to miss by one again — the ultimate three-peat — but instead I went into a playoff and won. Achieving this goal reinforced why it's important to set uncomfortable goals and never ever give up on your dreams.

I ran into Leta Lindley, my former teammate at U of A who was the defending champion and connected with other players from my college days like Jill McGill, Wendy Ward and Annika Sörenstam. It felt surreal to be on that stage.

Times have changed but some things stay the same! In a U.S. Open, the players are not allowed to use a range finder in competition. It took me a few practice rounds to remember how to read an old-fashioned yardage book!

The nerves were unlike anything else I've ever felt. There's nothing like the pressure of competitive golf at that level. I didn't make the cut, but I absolutely want to try again. It was the most rewarding and memorable golf experience of my life — even compared to my other USGA championships.

**KK:** If you could give advice to younger generations or your younger self, what would it be?

**KG:** Very few players will go on to play professionally, but golf is still one of the most powerful tools you can carry in life. Golf has not just opened doors for me; it has kicked open the door in life. Golf teaches discipline, integrity, perseverance, and how to handle every kind of condition life throws at you. My golf mentor from 1992, Clayton Cole, always told me, "There will be many days you miss the fairway or green in regulation. Use your imagination to still make par." That applies far beyond the golf course. You're going to make bogeys in life — mistakes happen. What matters is holding your head high, learning from it, and being proud of yourself anyway. 🍷

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KEITH SCHNEIDER // PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN MARCY-VEGA

## Five Inducted into Hall of Fame

The Colorado Golf Hall of Fame recently inducted five new members and honored several players and golf course operation leaders for excellent service to the game.

The five new inductees are:

**Rollie Cahalane** – The Wyoming native served as an elite golf course superintendent at both Columbine Country Club and the Inverness Golf Club and launched a family tradition of excellent golf superintendent work. After his work at Columbine, in 1981 began 20 years as superintendent of the Inverness Golf Club. The Rocky Mountain Golf Course Superintendents Association elected him president, and three of his sons – Dave, Kevin and Craig – followed him into careers as golf course superintendents. Cahalane retired in 2001 and he died in 2012.

**Robert Polk** – Polk, former CEO and co-owner of Polk Majestic Travel Group, has carved a career on the course as one of the best senior tournament players in Colorado history. He is won 16 Colorado Golf Association titles - one Mid-Amateur championship (for players age 25 and older), five Senior Amateurs, two Senior Match Plays, two Super-Senior Amateurs, one Super-Senior Match Play and five Senior Four-Balls. Just this year, at age 70, Polk captured his latest CGA title, his first in the Super-Senior Match Play. Over the course of 15 seasons (2007-21), Polk

earned the CGA Senior Player of the Year Award four times, the most since now-Colorado Golf Hall of Famer John Olive captured the honor a record seven times from 1997-2005.

**Lance Johnson** – The longtime superintendent of golf for the city of Westminster, Johnson has played a leading role in the development of Westminster’s two stunning and challenging public courses Legacy Ridge Golf Course and Walnut Creek Golf Preserve. Walnut Creek is held in such high esteem that it is routinely used as the home course for local U.S. Open qualifiers for both the men and women, and hosts numerous high-level junior tournaments every summer.


Since becoming the City of Westminster’s Golf, Parks and Open Space Manager in 2015, Johnson oversees Westminster’s two golf courses as well as the city’s 63 parks, 3,800 acres of open space and Standley Lake Regional Park. Under his leadership, Westminster’s courses have hosted more than 120 CGA, USGA, PGA and AJGA events, as well as qualifiers for the Colorado Open and Korn Ferry Tour’s Ascendant tournament in Berthoud.

**Jon Lindstrom** – Lindstrom, a Lakewood Country Club member, is one of the most accomplished mid-amateur or senior amateur golfers in Colorado. In recent years, his proficiency has extended well beyond state borders as he’s been ranked as high as sixth among the world’s top amateurs 55

and older. He won the 2023 Trans-Mississippi Senior Championship and the 2024 Golfweek Senior Division National Championship. He also finished ninth at the British Senior Amateur in 2023. He’s competed in 18 USGA championships and has finished as low amateur four times at the Inspirato Colorado Senior Open, including finishing 2nd in a playoff in 2020.

**Tom Apple** – A PGA professional, Tom Apple served for 40 years as the PGA director of golf at the Vail valley’s first private facility, Country Club of the Rockies, where he remains an instructor after retiring last year.

Eighteen of his former assistants have gone on to become head professionals. Apple continues to host the Vail International Pro-Am, a tournament he started 38 years ago. with proceeds going back into the Vail community.

Also honored at the Hall of Fame’s annual induction dinner were Future Famers **Ashleigh Wilson**, **Miles Kuhl** and **Tyler Long**. **Duffy Solich** of Castle Pines Golf Club was honored as person of the year. Broadcaster **Verne Lundquist**, who lives part-time in Steamboat, was given a lifetime achievement award, as was former Castle Pines Golf Club General Manager **Keith Schneider**. **Mitch Savage**, the longtime superintendent of CommonGround Golf Course, was given a distinguished service award. 

# Colorado New Home for Golf Visionary

THE SPIRIT OF ADAMS GOLF IS ALIVE IN COLORADO SPRINGS

The founder of one of the iconic names of golf manufacturing from the 1990s and 2000s – Adams Golf – is alive and well living in Colorado Springs.

Barney Adams, 86, moved from Texas to Colorado Springs during his retirement and is now based there for much of the year living in the community around Kissing Camels Golf Course. He splits time between there and Indian Wells, CA., loves both places, and from there is continuing to try to keep his hand in manufacturing the latest golf equipment.

“We really like this area, it has a great feeling to it, people are nice,” he said. “We’re never going to leave Indian Wells (entirely), but this place just rates so well.”

Adams is the original serial entrepreneur of the golf manufacturing industry. He began his career working for Corning Glass as a field engineer. It is that work that shaped the rest of his career – putting him face-first into how Corning’s products were being used by its customers, and see-

ing how they performed. “What that does is get you focused on results; I wasn’t focused on the product,” he said.

As he moved through the 1960s and 1970s, he was always playing golf.

In the 1980s he joined Dave Pelz Golf, and when that company went bankrupt in 1988 Adams bought the assets and opened his own company under his family name in 1991.


They captured a perfect moment in the golf equipment world. Persimmon woods had only recently given way to metal drivers and fairway woods, and most players were upgrading their sets.

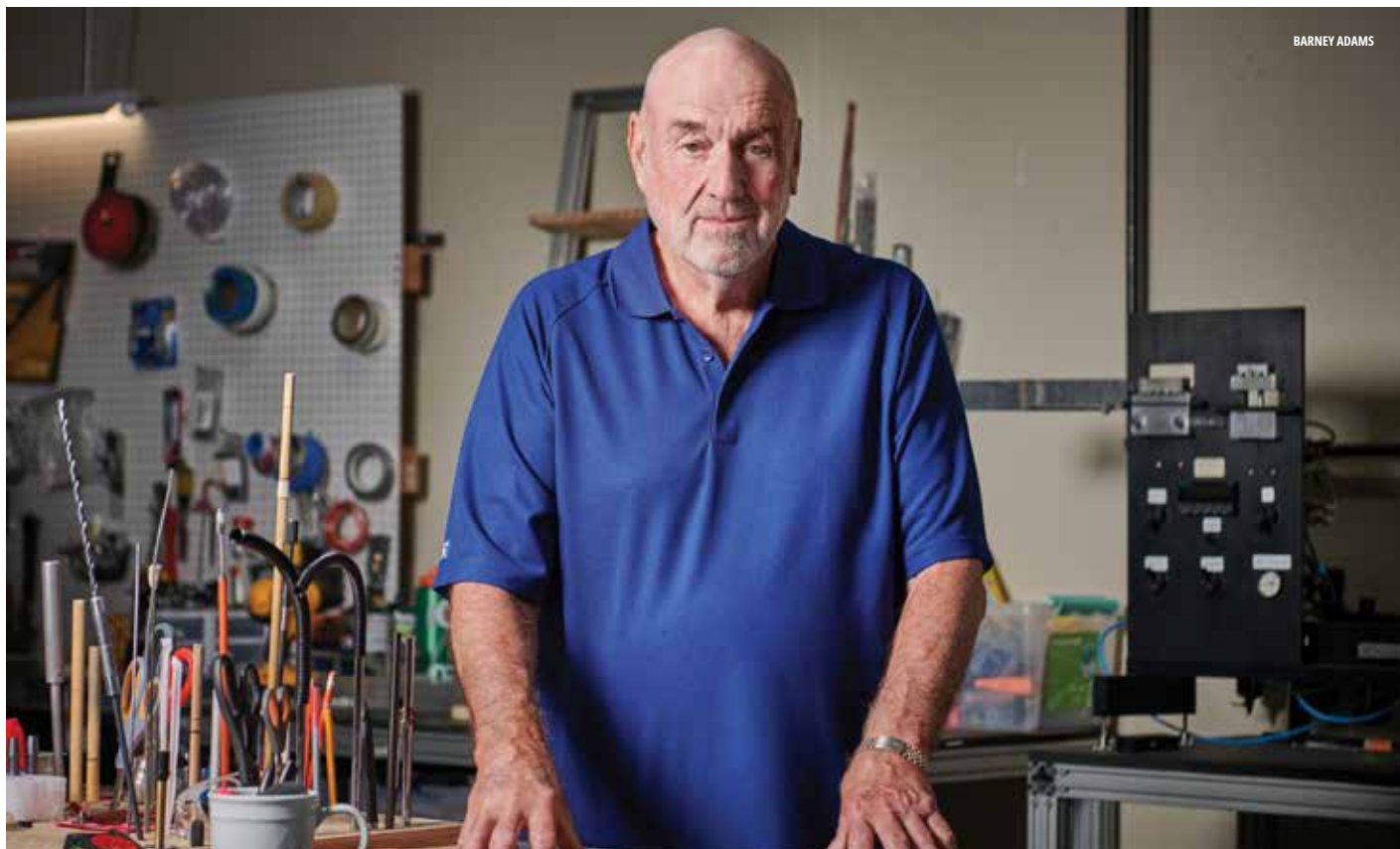
So Adams Golf launched their Tight Lies fairway wood. They marketed the product hard with television infomercials and celebrity endorsements, and by 1998 the company went public.

“People think golf equipment is the products; it’s not,” he said. “It’s about marketing.” Tight

Lies fairways woods continue to this day to be an iconic club, and some players who have them in their bags still have taken to social media to boast about the performance of their 30-year-old clubs. Adams stayed as chairman of the company until TaylorMade bought it out of the public market in 2012. The brand has come and gone from the TaylorMade lineup but in 2023 was used to launch a new line of irons and woods.

Adams continues to work in the golf industry, advising his daughter as she is operating a new family business seeking to market new golf club shafts which are designed to help keep club face’s square.

While the Adams brand is no longer under his family’s control, Adams launched the new company, Breakthrough Golf Technology, to continue to innovate. He started BGT in 2015, which markets a line of irons, wedges and woods but this year began marketing their new Paradox putter, which is based around their new carbon fiber putter shaft dubbed ‘Stability.’ 



BARNEY ADAMS



PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK

# Noteefy Changes the Game

GOLF'S NOTIFICATION REVOLUTION

When L.A. resident Jake Gordon read about a scandal of public tee times for L.A. courses being hoarded and resold, he saw that problem as an opportunity.

So, Gordon launched Noteefy, a golf software package offered to courses that helps them improve and streamline their tee time booking process. And for the consumer, the software offers something truly enticing – text message notifications for last-minute openings on their favorite courses.

This past summer Colorado courses including Broadlands Golf Course in Broomfield, Fossil Trace Golf Club and Applewood Golf Course in Golden signed up. Golfers at those courses were given the option to register for the service. If they did they could pick what times of day or what days they were interested in hearing about last-minute openings.

Then the pro shop would push out the notifications when cancellations came in. The opening went first come, first served.

"I realized pretty early that the game of golf was seeing a resurgence that wasn't a fad but had some real lasting power," Gordon said. "Tee

sheets are getting packed. (Players are) smashing the button on the website; flooding the pro shop. On the consumer side there was a ton of friction. On the pro shop side there was a ton of cancellations and no-shows. Our research shows about 20 percent of all tee times get cancelled."

While not all 20 percent go dormant, many do. And for every course, each tee time that goes unused is spoiled inventory – it's gone forever.

"There's a reasonable possibility they are leaving 10 to 15 percent of their top line on the table," he said.

The concept is already at play in other consumer products – like restaurant reservation via Open Table or airline flights from Expedia. 2025 was the first year to try it out locally for many courses.

At the city of Golden's Fossil Trace – one of the most popular public golf courses in the state – the head golf professional Adam Finch said they had been looking for a way to make the tee time booking experience much better for their regular players. They get besieged with tee time requests – from local residents and from around the country. Customers have had to manually monitor their website to see if anything came open because

they didn't have any systematic way to notify people of openings. "It's been a great partnership and we have received everything we needed from Noteefy," Finch said.

Noteefy is up to 900 courses in its first 2.5 years and they're hoping to service 1,500 courses by the end of next season. 📧



JAKE GORDON

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# Honoring Judy Bell's Legacy

THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF THE USGA DIED AT HER HOME IN COLORADO SPRINGS IN NOVEMBER

Judy Bell, a top amateur player who rose to become the first woman president of the USGA, died at her home in Colorado Springs in November.

Bell was a player, business owner and leader in the game of golf who helped the USGA bring on new initiatives.

On Nov. 11, 2001 – two months after the Sept. 11 attacks – she was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame for lifetime achievement. She used the occasion to put the game of golf into the broader context of the day.

"It's a big world out there and issues far greater than any issue we face in golf," she said. "What we believe in as people and golfers is central to the American way of life and is something we all share. I fully believe that this is a time when we must keep on keeping on."

"Judy Bell was more than a leader, she was a force of nature whose vision and compassion shaped the very soul of the game," said USGA CEO Mike Whan. "As one of LPGA/USGA Girls Golf's biggest supporters, Judy helped open doors for countless young girls to find their place, their confidence and their joy in golf. She broke barriers not for the sake of recognition,

but to make the game better and more welcoming for everyone. All of us at the USGA mourn her passing and celebrate the extraordinary life of a woman whose impact will continue to be felt for generations."

Bell played on two Curtis Cup teams - the bi-annual competition between the best women amateur golfers from the U.S. and Great Britain and Ireland - and worked as a volunteer on USGA committees and initiatives for more than 30 years. She was named to the World Golf Hall of Fame, the Colorado Golf Hall of Fame, and in 2016 received the USGA's highest award for service to the game, the Bob Jones Award.


A Kansas native, Bell played in the U.S. Women's Open and at 15 advanced to the semifinals of the U.S. Girls' Junior, according to the USGA. She won six times on the Florida women's amateur circuit, as well as winning the 1963 Women's Trans National and three Ladies Invitation titles at The Broadmoor resort in Colorado Springs. She was a three-time quarterfinalist in the U.S. Women's Amateur, advancing to the fifth round in 1959. She played on the 1960 and 1962 USA Curtis Cup Teams, which she considered among her greatest honors.

"My selection to two Curtis Cup teams remains

one of the most satisfying and meaningful accomplishments in my life," she once said.

She played in 38 USGA national championships, and her third round in the 1964 U.S. Women's Open at San Diego Country Club put her name in the record book. She fired 31-36—67 to establish what were then 9-and 18-hole championship scoring records.

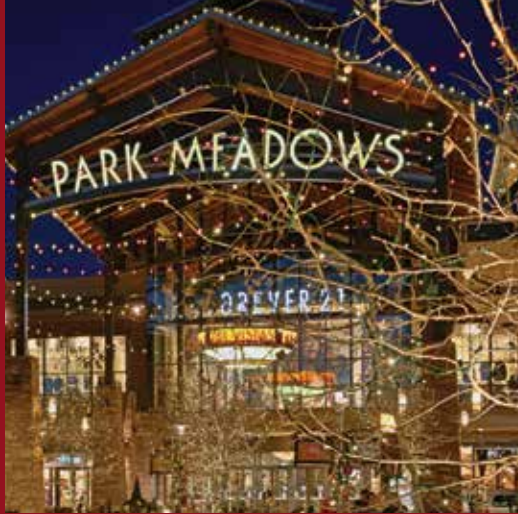
In 2015 the Colorado Golf Association named Bell its 'Woman of the Century' as part of its celebration of the first 100 years of the CGA. In 2016, when the USGA awarded Bell the Robert Jones Award, the organization praised her for championing a welcoming and accessible game for more than 60 years.

"Judy is a towering presence in golf and her contributions to shaping the USGA can be seen to this day," said Tom O'Toole Jr., then president of the USGA. "Her devotion to the game makes her a worthy recipient of our organization's most prestigious honor. From her earliest days as an accomplished player through her tenure as USGA president, Judy has been a staunch advocate and diplomat for the game. Those mantles were always delivered with her unique kindness and infectious personality. Judy is a real treasure!" 



JUDY BELL, RIGHT, BEGAN AS A STANDOUT JUNIOR PLAYER AND ROSE TO BE USGA PRESIDENT

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# Coastal Calm, Culinary Fire

LOOK BEYOND CABO AND PUERTO VALLARTA HOTELS, BARS  
AND BEACHES TO FIND IMMERSIVE FOOD ADVENTURES

BY JOHN LEHNDORFF

Everybody knows about Cabo San Lucas – the famous movie and rock stars, the breathtaking beaches and golf courses, and the tequila-infused night life.

Serious food-loving travelers to the southern end of Mexico's Baja California appreciate the region's signature fried-fish tacos and the 14 local Michelin-honored fine dining restaurants. They just want to escape the tourist resort bubble and plunge into real Mexican food, drink and culture.

The solution is to find guides that they can trust, and then follow their food advice.

Denver restaurateur Alex Seidel is a golf enthusiast who spends part of the year living in the small coastal town of Cerritos near Cabo San Lucas.

"A lot of people think that I'm down on the beach in Mexico and retired," Seidel says with a broad grin. "We're building a second home that's planted with banana, pomegranate and papaya trees. It's just a quiet little haven where I feel like I can breathe a little bit and turn the volume down."

Seidel was invited to cook in Cabo San Lucas in 2017. "I just fell in love the place. The chefs down were my guides, showing where to shop and eat." Seidel was named Best Chef: Southwest in 2018 by the James Beard Foundation for his Fruition Restaurant in Denver. He is now a partner in Mercantile dining & provision at Union Station and Denver International Airport, and owner of three, fast casual Chook Chicken locations, and Füdmill, a bakery and commissary.

"People are always asking me where to eat and drink when they are going to Cabo. I tell them to get outside of Cabo San Lucas," he says.

Cabo San Lucas is just the resort town at the tip of Baja California. "There are some great small towns nearby that are a lot less touristy, places like San Jose del Cabo and Todos Santos," Seidel says.

No matter whether you dine at a neighborhood taco shop or a celebrated ocean-side bistro, the menus all have one thing in common. Fresh fish and seafood star in dishes ranging from whole, fire-grilled fish to smoked marlin and ceviche. "I like the town of San Jose del Cabo. San Jose has culture and real people and a city square with markets," Seidel says.

"One of my favorite little places in San Jose is El Toro Güero. That is where I go for the local chocolate clams. It's an amazing taste, like no clam you've ever had in your life. I also love what Cesar Pita is doing at Lumbre, a fine dining place. He's so



PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK



thoughtful about bringing Japanese and Mexican influences together in his seafood dishes,” Seidel says.

San Jose del Cabo is also home to Carbon Cabron, where all the dishes are cooked over wood fire, and La Lupita Taco & Mezcal, “an upper end taco shop where he makes corn tortillas from scratch,” Seidel says.

Up the coast in the quiet, artsy, rural town of Todos Santos, the region’s agricultural bounty is celebrated. “Chef Javier Plascencia has a restaurant called Jazamango that is really serving farm-to-tables food,” he says.

Nearby, on the beach at Los Cerritos, the legendary Barracuda Cantina attracts its share of taco influencers, but it’s still worth making the trek, according to Seidel. “At Barracuda, they do a tuna aguachile – like a quick, spicy ceviche. They serve it with this great salsa macha made from dried chilies, nuts and oil. Everybody has a different salsa macha on the table down there,” Seidel says.

Finally, the Denver chef casts a dinner vote for Carnitas Miguel located in El Pescadero. “They do a thicker, fluffier corn masa gordita, almost like a chewy pita pocket, filled with carnitas mixta - various meats and vegetables, innards and skin and all the good things,” he says.

After some recent back problems, Alex Seidel is ready to play a round or two again. “My son messaged me that we’ve got to play this place called

Quivara, Quivara Golf Club, the next time we go down to Cabo. It looks gorgeous,” he says.

If Seidel and son get hungry while in Cabo San Lucas, he knows where to go. “You can get a good birria taco at this little dive, Birria de Res Los Montaña,” he says.

### TACO TOURS

Creating food and drink tours and classes for visitors to Mexico’s resort towns wasn’t on Enrique Chavelas’ bucket list.

The veteran chef was busy running his Puerto Vallarta restaurant. “When I talked to visitors they kept asking where else they should eat shop and drink. They needed someone to show them where to go,” Enrique Chavelas says, calling from his office in Puerto Vallarta.

Chavelas and his family launched Juan More Taco Tours and now guide visitors in Mexican resort towns including Cancun, Cabo San Lucas, and San Jose del Cabo. “We want to share the local culture and cuisine with people that are willing to go beyond the hotels,” he says.

“We’re taking them to the real thing. That includes taco carts, small family-owned restaurants, the candy shop, the people who sell tamales, the little house where they sell ceviche.”

Juan More Taco tours typically visit five and six places, according to Chavelas. “You might taste seafood tostadas, or tamales or stop by the one

who sells the elotes (roasted corn) in the cup. We almost always stop for churros,” he says. Tours can be scheduled in the morning or evening.

The company also hosts evening events that combine a cooking class and mixology lesson based on agave liqueurs.

“Finally, we teach you Mexican or Latin dances like the cha-cha, merengue and cumbia,” Chavelas says.

Next up for the company are tours for culinary adventurers. “They want to taste something that they don’t get at the places where they live. We want to take them where they can taste something like tacos de cabeza (beef head), tacos de tripa (stomach), and tacos de lengua (tongue) because people have been asking for that,” Chavelas says. Juan More Taco’s cooking classes in Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo always start outside the kitchen.

“First, we go to the markets where local families buy groceries, and then the butcher shop, the tortilla place, and the fish market,” he says.

For larger groups, the classes are taught in restaurant kitchens. “But if we only have a few guests, the chef takes them to their house in Cabo to cook. In Puerto Vallarta, I love doing cooking classes at my house. It’s more relaxed. They learn dishes, techniques and ingredients and then, everybody sits together to eat,” he says.

“That’s the most important part to me.” 🇲🇽

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# A Year of Luxury Change

AUTOMAKERS FACE A CROSSROADS: TARIFFS, GLITCHY TECH, AND CONFUSING DESIGN CHOICES ARE RESHAPING HOW WE BUY, DRIVE, AND EVEN OPEN THE CARS OF TOMORROW

BY ISAAC BOUCHARD

2025 was a year of massive changes for the car industry. Some of these were externally driven, such as tariffs and the early expiration of EV support. Others came from inside, such as how interfaces are configured. The result is the most turbulent time for building and driving automobiles since the 1970s.

Seemingly simple interfaces we've become accustomed to over decades are undergoing rapid evolution—or in some cases, devolution.

## DOOR HANDLES & SHIFTERS

Remember when some of these essential controls were hard to use? Decades ago, some cars required you to push a button and pull a handle in opposite directions. A consensus developed and it became easier to get into your vehicle—just pull.

That predictability is gone now, with door handles from companies like Mercedes, Hyundai and many others that are flush with the panel (for smoother airflow) until you walk up to the door you want to enter, at which point they're supposed to motor out

to meet your hand. But what happens when they don't, or they retract before you've grasped them? Anecdotal evidence suggests that they don't work correctly about 30 percent of the time.

Even many seemingly-normal door pulls are now acting up too, due to programming issues or connectivity glitches with key fobs. Nothing undermines confidence in a product like inconsistent operation.

And now that almost every manual transmission is gone, underworked or bored designers and engineers are reinventing this essential control. From buttons that take up the same space as a pistol-grip console shifter, but are confusing to use (Honda) to Audi shift copycats that don't go into gear reliably (Range Rover and numerous others), these manufacturers need to get over themselves and settle on a standard that works, 100 percent of the time, and is intuitive and space efficient.

One great solution is the return to the column shifter. It frees up space for phones and drinks, and is

easy to use. It can even be combined with paddle shifters in performance cars so the driver gets the best of everything. A great example is Mercedes-AMG.

## SCREENS, BUTTONS & VENTS

Car companies became enamored of screens—and screen size. Done right they look great and make getting to the function you want easier and safer. But good ones cost money, so many companies made the misguided decision to cut the number of actual, physical buttons to offset the new cost.

Want to turn on your heated seats? Some cars (Step forward, VW) require you to navigate through two or three menu layers to do so now—all while driving. Change radio station presets? Nowhere to be found in many cars now, including Mazda. It often takes three or four swipes, tugs or pushes of their control wheel to change stations in their system. At least that Japanese company still has superb, consistent-feeling buttons for climate controls. Some companies have already realized the error

of their ways. Hyundai brought back actual “hard buttons” within a year of customer complaints about the erratic behavior of virtual “haptic” ones on screens, but sister company Kia makes you swipe at a flat, haptic control to convert the temperature control to a volume knob. Volvo and others got rid of buttons for the four power windows and replaced them with a rocker switch so you can choose whether its two buttons roll down the front or rear windows.

Another knock-on effect of big screens is smaller HVAC register sizes and poor placement. While this may not matter as much in cloudy Germany or Sweden, here in gloriously sunny Colorado it’s a real downer on a hot summer day.

No one wanted to go back to noisy, wheezing air con that seemingly only trickles out a tiny bit of chilled O2, but here we are. This affects new entries from BMW and Polestar (Volvo’s EV sister company) and

even Toyota, heretofore the maker of the quietest and most powerful AC systems ever seen.

Some might call this the pride of progress, but hopefully its merely growing pains on the way to all-around better solutions, in the same manner that catalytic converters and early air bags and motorized seat belts initially made cars slower and more annoying to use, but eventually cleaner, safer and faster for everyone. 🚗



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# THE COLORADO PGA WE ARE GOLF!

With more than 900 Members and Associates, the Colorado PGA Section is made up of individuals who each leave their own mark on the game and the people who play it.

To us, golf is far more than a pastime or a casual round with friends - it's both our profession and our passion. For many, it's what we know best. And every day, we're driven to share that knowledge and our love for the game with you. Learn our stories and how golf has shaped who we are today.

# 'Tis the Season

WHEN THE HOLIDAY SEASON ROLLS AROUND, FINDING THE PERFECT GIFTS FOR EVERYONE ON YOUR LIST CAN FEEL LIKE A DAUNTING TASK. WITH A CALENDAR FILLED WITH GATHERINGS, DECORATIONS TO HANG, AND HOLIDAY TREATS TO BAKE, IT'S EASY FOR GIFT SHOPPING TO FALL TO THE LAST MINUTE. BUT DON'T WORRY—OUR HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE (AND SANTA) ARE HERE TO HELP!

BY DAVID YOUNG



# HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

## **KNOCKAROUND FAST LANES GOLFER SUNGLASSES**

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## **TORCH FLASK**

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## **VESSEL PLAYER V PRO STAND GOLF BAG**

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## **GARMIN APPROACH S70 GOLF WATCH**

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For data-loving golfers, the Garmin Approach S70 offers 43,000 course maps, virtual caddie, swing tracking, and health metrics, such as sleep, stress, and heart rate, to track all in a sleek smartwatch.



## **STRANAHAN'S MOUNTAIN ANGEL 10 YEAR SINGLE MALT**

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If you're looking for something to fill a golf flask with this holiday season, look no further than Colorado's own Stranahan's American Single Malt Whiskey. The number one American single malt, which just won double gold, is the Mountain Angel 10 Year, which will make a perfect gift for any golfer looking to celebrate a great shot with friends.



## **PINS & ACES LOUISIANA HOT SAUCE DANCING PEPPERS**

\$79.95

The Arvada-based golf retailer continues its tradition of wild designs and colors to add spice to your golf wardrobe. This pullover keeps wearers warm and helps block the wind in the fall and winter rounds.



# HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



## SUNICE HAMILTON THERMAL HYBRID HOODED JACKET

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For year-round golfers, the Hamilton Thermal Hybrid Jacket delivers warmth, Climaloft insulation, WXTech rain protection, and a hood—perfect for extending play through cold weather.

## MEN'S SAXX ACTIVE GOLF UNDERWEAR

\$29

Saxx Multi-Sport Mesh underwear ensures comfort for golfers with No-RideUp legs, Stop Drop Technology, and the signature BallPark Pouch PRO. Ideal for long days on the course, available in nine colors at Colorado Nordstrom and Dillard's.



## KUHL MEN'S RESISTOR LITE CHINO, WOMEN'S FREEFLEX ROLL UP

\$69

Kuhl's new golf apparel line offers stylish, versatile pieces like Resistor Lite Chinos for men and Freeflex Roll Ups for women, perfect on-course or downtown. Available at Kuhl Boulder.



## PAR BLEU GOLF TOWELS

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Golfers will love Par Bleu's creatively designed towels, including floral options for women—both offering premium drying performance on the course.



## L.A.B. OZ.1I HEEL SHAFT PUTTER

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The L.A.B. OZ.1i Heel Shaft Putter, featuring Lie Angle Balance Technology, delivers consistently square putts. This first heel-shafted model from L.A.B. blends traditional looks with innovative performance. Available at Colorado PGA Superstore and Golf Galaxy locations.



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Sunday Swagger and Guinness team up for stylish holiday golf shirts for men and women. Bold prints, perfect for golf enthusiasts, available at Scheels Colorado locations



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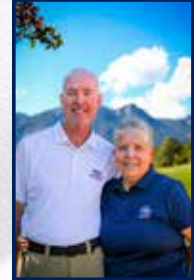
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Jim Bailey, PGA  
PGA Life Member



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**SALESPERSON OF THE YEAR**  
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The Colorado Golf Association and the Schomp Automotive family in Denver have had a friendly relationship for years. For many years, BMW at a national level supported the Solich Leadership Academy, and Schomp BMW was glad to step up and help their friends at the CGA when needed. From having vehicles placed at CGA Championships to sending official BMW graphics to support the program, Schomp was glad to help and celebrate the cause.

This year the opportunity came available for Schomp to support the Solich Leadership Academy at an official level. We at Schomp were happy to step in. The Schomp name has established a considerable footprint on the Havana Motor Mile with four dealerships – just a short 2-iron and wedge across the road from CommonGround Golf Course. Many Schomp team members can be found getting some practice in or playing an evening nine after work, enjoying the Tom Doak gem that can be seen from their offices.

Schomp has built an identity in Colorado for their focus on children's charities and causes. They believe in supporting organizations that demonstrate a high degree of focus and organization in supporting youth in the communities they serve. Within the last few years, the Schomp organization has also focused on sports as a vehicle for kids to find community and purpose.

"There are several former athletes in the Schomp organization that have come together to introduce programs internally and support external groups that are focused on areas around youth development in sports," said James Kurtenbach, the marketing director for Schomp Automotive who played on the Colorado State University men's golf team.

"This provides kids with the skills in leadership, grit and long-term goals that can be learned outside of the classroom. This, paired with our long history of supporting education, has been a great addition to our giving identity."

The sponsorship goes beyond monetary support. The Solich Leadership Academy has plans to organize class settings and donor meetings at the recently-built Schomp Mazda dealership that overlooks the practice area at CommonGround.

"We are more than excited to invite our partners in from the CGA and Solich Leadership Academy to our state-of-the-art facility," said Jack Cardlla, the general manager of Schomp Mazda. "We can host the kids, and those who support the program within our walls, so they can have an ideal learning environment to instill the values that the Solich Leadership Academy provides."

The Solich Leadership Academy at CommonGround is run by the Colorado Golf Association

and brings in teens from the neighborhoods around the course to train them in caddying and make them eligible for college scholarships upon graduation from high school. Ed Mate, CEO of the CGA, said working with Schomp to support the program has been a good fit.

"They're an easy company to believe in," Mate said. 🙌



HELLO, BEAUTIFUL!

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Say hello to Colorado's newest golf adventure, Bella Ridge Golf Course in Johnstown, where the promise of beauty meets the thrill of discovery. From the moment you crest the first ridge and catch sight of Longs Peak shimmering in the distance, you'll know you've found something special. Designed by acclaimed architect Art Schaupeter, Bella Ridge is no ordinary course—it's a bold, rolling landscape of drama, fun, and unforgettable views.

Born from the vision of four dairy-farming brothers who turned their family fields into fairways, Bella Ridge embodies the spirit of reinvention and adventure. Temporary clubhouse or not, players can't stay away and once you tee it up, you'll understand why.

By Jim Bebbington



Ciao  
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*let's adventure*



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## HELLO, BEAUTIFUL!



to the sides or the back. Many holes have raised green complexes, and players will want ideally to bring shots onto the centers or with spin to keep shots from spilling off the sides. Bunkering is extensive, and done to have real impact. Several holes sport large bunkers contoured precisely to challenge shots; smaller bunkers near the greens come into play often.

"I'm thrilled and I'm excited by the response I've heard," Schaupeter said. "At the end of the day the golf has to be fun."

The first three holes are a perfect appetizer for what is to come – relatively wide open and allowing players to get started with confidence. Then No. 5 and No. 6 turn up the heat. Six is the No. 1 handicap hole, a long par 4 with bunkers precisely where typical drives will land, and a long approach shot to a raised green awaiting.

But the real carnival begins with No. 7, as the holes turn south and begin to take full advantage of the ridge terrain.

"That's where you buckle in because you're in for a wild ride," said General Manager Ryan Flamm.

The thing about opening a brand new public golf course in the fall in Colorado is that people will flood your tee sheet even if the driveway onto the property is still unpaved, the city has blown up your main access road for a new sewer line, and your temporary clubhouse isn't built yet so your staff works out of a nicely renovated garage they have come to call the 'temporary, temporary clubhouse.'

For the owners of Bella Ridge Golf Course near Johnstown – and the players who packed the tee sheet all fall – the one thing that matters is that the course is green and the golf is fun.

And is it ever.

Bella Ridge Golf Course is the first new public golf course to open in Colorado in several years. It is also situated in a part of the front range that is seeing steady, regular population growth and adds an exciting new option for a Colorado golf boom that shows no signs yet of slowing.

The course exists because a group of four brothers reared as dairy farmers decided they wanted to grow the family business. Ten years ago the four Podtburg brothers began thinking about moving the family dairy operation away from the growing city of Johnstown, and converting the land they

were leaving behind into something new. Some of them live on homes next door, and at times had gone into the back field to hit golf balls.

They hired golf course architect Art Schaupeter – who designed the nearby Highland Meadows and TPC Colorado golf courses. And they settled early on a name - Bella Ridge. The land for the course rises significantly from the front nine to the back, and the beauty of the views of Longs Peak and the rest of the northern Rockies can stop players in their tracks. When you play, give yourselves extra time to take some fantastic photos.

Schaupeter has designed a course that comes with unique qualities from the terrain, as well as signature elements that he brings to all his courses.

The course rolls, pitches and heaves from the first tee box to the 18th green. The slope of the land provides much of it, but even the opening holes on the front nine are contoured up and over and down through natural streams and other elements. Drives will roll from one side of a fairway to the other before coming to rest.

"That's a key aspect for players – to find the right angles," Schaupeter said recently. In addition nearly every green has significant roll-off areas





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## HELLO, BEAUTIFUL!



BELLA RIDGE HOLE #11//  
PHOTO CREDIT: BELLA RIDGE/DANNY DODGE

Among the biggest shocks players will feel is after leaving the 10th green the back nine's two large lakes come suddenly into view. The final eight holes are laid out creatively around these lakes, and Schaupeter added some very fun quirks. No. 12 is a downhill par 3 that is 261 yards from the back tees. Then No. 14 is an uphill par 4 that is just a few feet longer – 276 yards from the back tees.

The 14 fairway is an absolute mine field of mounds and bunkers, and the only less welcoming land in sight is the small green guarded by still more bunkers and steep runoffs.

The No. 14 tee box is destined to be home to many conversations along these lines: “C’mon, be a man.” “Nope. You first; be my guest.”

Then, in an homage to the owners’ former habit of hitting balls over their dairy cows, No. 15 is a par 3 built on the spot where they usually practiced. The hole has been named “Genesis,” in recognition that it was the start of it all. The course finishes with holes running mostly downhill. No. 18

is a curving par 5 that is 646 yards from the back tees that finishes to a well-protected high green with three runoffs. Overall it a course that can be enjoyed by all level of players, but tee box choice is crucial. Play from the tees that let you have fun; being even just a little too far back can make for a long day.

The course is being run by Troon. General Manager Ryan Flamm is a golf industry veteran and Superintendent Mitch Bryden worked for more than 10 years at TPC Colorado. This is the second new course Flamm has opened in his career.

“It’s a bit of mindset; you have to be patient with the process,” he said. “You have to think ahead of everything. You have to be pretty detailed and organized, and know that it’s going to be a mess. It takes longer than you think and it’s more expensive than you think and nobody is an exception to that rule.”

For now, because Weld County Road 44 is being completely rebuilt right along the course, visitors

are routed in using a long temporary gravel road from the south side of the property. The ‘temporary’ clubhouse is still under construction, with a full-blown clubhouse building not expected for several more years. Customers park at a temporary lot, then are shuttled in carts to the first tee box several hundred yards away.

Across County Road 44 lies the course’s practice grounds, which are enormous. The range will have dozens of slots, be 400 yards deep, and include a separate short-game range and a 15,000 square foot practice green.

“I think it’s one of the top in the state; the layout is amazing,” Flamm said. “There’s a little bit something for everybody. The architect did a really great job incorporating where the game is today with pace of play, player development, play for people of all abilities. It attracts a lot of different kinds of people and I think where we’re at in 2025 with the popularity of the sport, it nails it all.”

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PHOTO CREDIT: EXPERIENCE SCOTTSDALE

# Best Times to Golf in Scottsdale

## A Seasonal Guide to Sonoran Desert Fairways

By Lauren Wise

It's easy to see why Scottsdale is considered "The World's Finest Golf Destination." A quick tally will yield more than 50 courses in the city proper (many of them public) with 150 more available in the nearby area. Add in a picturesque Sonoran Desert landscape, luxury resorts galore and more than 300 days of sunshine annually, and this city is a golfer's paradise.

One of the most frequent questions local golf courses hear from visitors is, "When's the best time to golf in Scottsdale?" While the truth is there's never really a bad time for a Scottsdale golf getaway, the ideal season depends on what kind of golf experience you're looking for, whether it's perfect temperatures, off-season pricing, or peak course conditions.

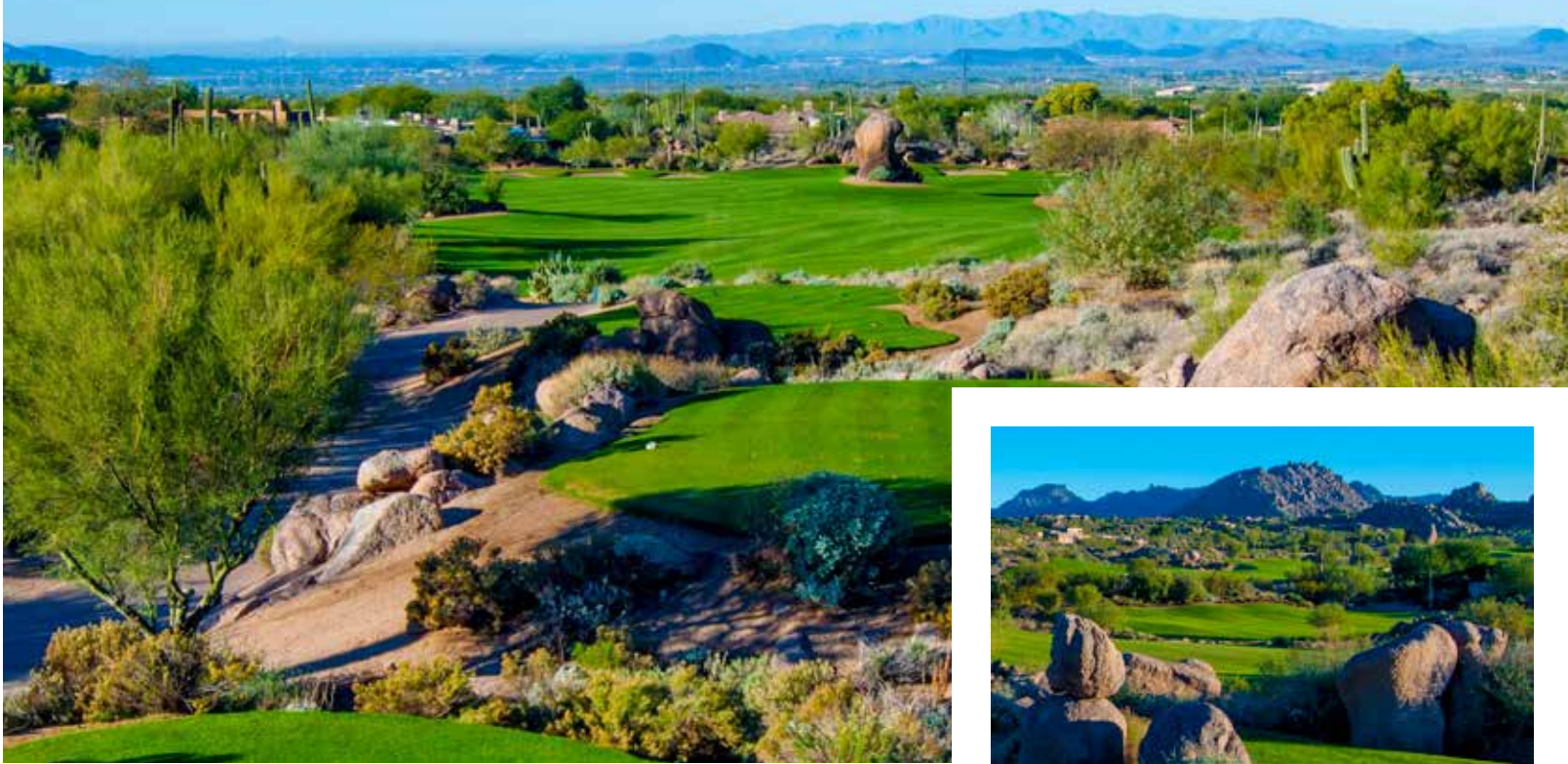
Here's a season-by-season breakdown of the best times to hit the fairways in Scottsdale.



PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK



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# Winter

Winter in Scottsdale is prime time for golfers. With plenty of sunshine and daytime highs in the 60s and 70s, it's the perfect weather for extended rounds followed by a drink or meal on the patio. This is also peak season for out-of-towners escaping cold-weather states, so courses fill up quickly, especially around the world-famous WM Phoenix Open (Feb. 5 to 8), which brings PGA TOUR excitement to the TPC Scottsdale.

- Gorgeous course conditions
- Greens fees at their peak and tee times booking up quickly

**WINTER PRO TIP:**

- Book 60 to 90 days ahead, especially for top-tier courses like TPC Scottsdale and Troon North, or at local under-the-radar gems like Silverado Golf Course and Continental Golf Course, both of which have been voted as Scottsdale's best budget courses.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- Tee Time Sweet Spot: mid-morning for great lighting and rhythm

**BEST FOR:** Golfers who want unbeatable weather and are willing to pay a premium.

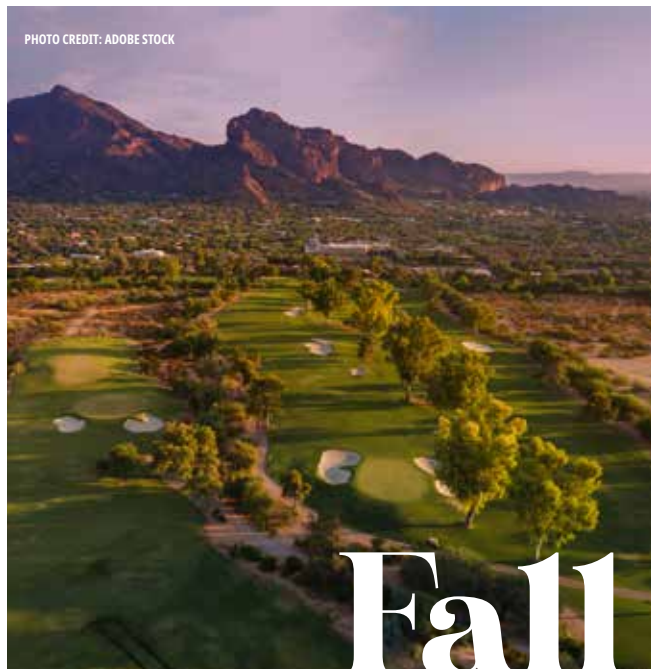


PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK

Fall is a hidden gem for Scottsdale golf. Some courses close for October overseeding, but by November fairways are lush, revived, and weather is perfect.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- Tee Time Sweet Spot: Early morning for optimal temperatures and greens
- Fresh course conditions after overseeding
- Daytime highs in the 70s to 80s and plenty of sunshine
- Increased visitor traffic leading into the holiday season

**BEST FOR:** Players who want premium course conditions without the intensity of winter crowds.



PHOTO CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK

Summer brings Scottsdale's best golf deals. Despite the heat, early or twilight rounds offer cooler temps, unbeatable rates, and poolside afternoons at luxury resorts.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- Tee Time Sweet Spot: Before 6 a.m. or shorter twilight rounds once the sun starts its descent
- Deep discounts and easy access to tee times
- Due to their slightly higher elevation, north Scottsdale courses like Grayhawk, Troon North and Boulders Club tend to be a few degrees cooler.

**BEST FOR:** Seasoned golfers, deal hunters unfazed by the heat.



PHOTO CREDIT: EXPERIENCE SCOTTSDALE

Spring brings vibrant blooms and perfect weather to Scottsdale. March is pricey, but April–May offer lower rates and deals like Troon Access for major savings.

**WHAT TO EXPECT:**

- Tee Time Sweet Spot: Early to mid-morning, when it's still cool
- Gradually warming temps (from 70s into low 90s)
- Lush course conditions, especially before summer prep work
- Bonus energy from MLB Spring Training

**BEST FOR:** Players who want great weather with slightly easier tee time access than winter offers.



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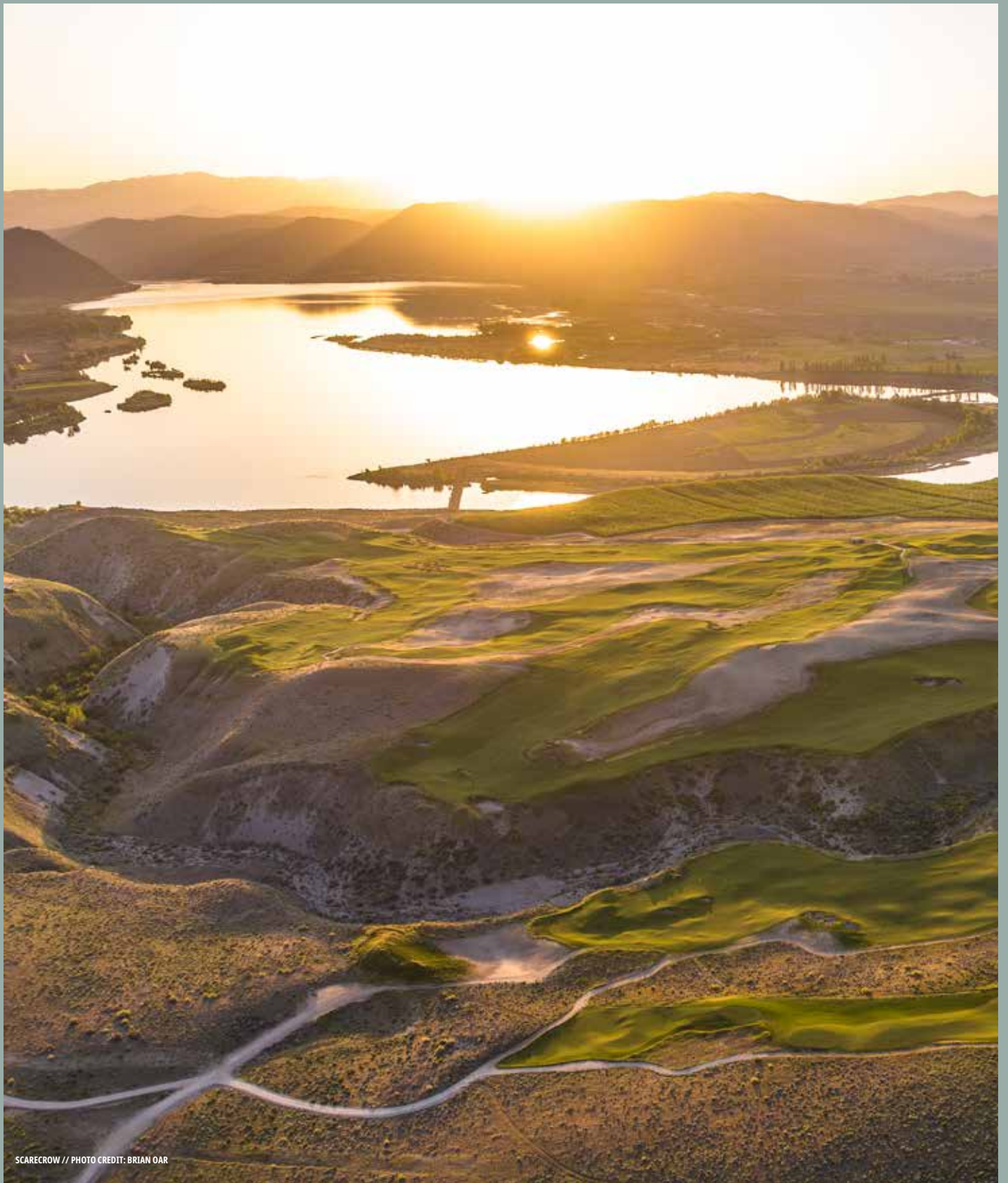
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**T O N T O V E R D E . O R G**



SCARECROW // PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN OAR

# No Gamble at All

Escape to Gamble Sands, where golf becomes an adventure across wind-sculpted dunes, orchard-lined fairways, and dramatic cliffs overlooking the mighty Columbia River. Every hole surprises: downhill drives, daring carries over chasms, and sweeping panoramas that make it hard to keep your eye on the ball. The original Gamble Sands course enchanted golfers a decade ago, and the new Scarecrow Course pushes the thrill further with bold elevation changes, strategic bunkers, and wide, rolling fairways. Whether chasing the perfect shot or pausing to drink in a sunset over the river, this is golf that feels like exploration—and you'll want to return again and again.

By Tom Mackin

## GOLF ON THE EDGE OF INFINITY

I don't know where to look.

Yes, there's a downhill par-4 unfurling itself right in front of me that should be the focus. But to my left I can see at least 10 different greens. To my right, endless rows of apple orchards. Far below me? The mighty Columbia River. Beyond that, the ridgelines of various mountains stretch upward. And I'm supposed to concentrate on my score here? Yeah, right.

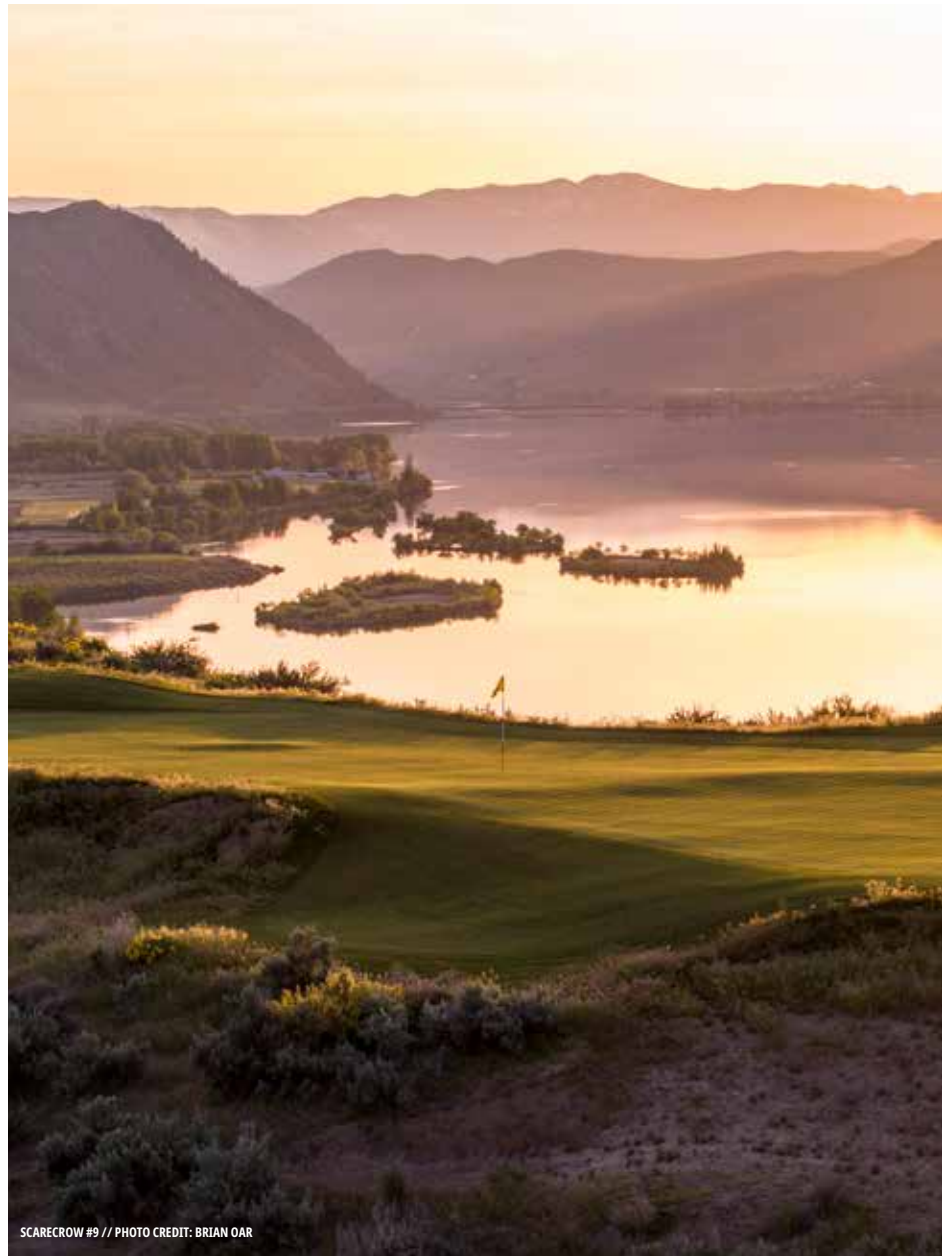
So goes a round on the new Scarecrow Course at Gamble Sands; those same things will distract anyone who plays here. The layout is another David McLay Kidd concoction (as is the original course that debuted here in 2014), but one that's been deftly executed by his associate Nick Schaan. This is thrilling, infinity-edge golf at its finest, with the mesmerizing, panoramic scope of the landscape almost too much to digest in one visit.

It's all thanks to the Gebbers family, local Washington legends whose fruit growing operation remains in full bloom these days. They have long been sending their apples (grab one in the golf shop), cherries (try the chocolate-covered ones), and other tasty fruits out to customers around the country and the world.

Then a whole new breed of customers started coming to them when McLay Kidd authored that fetching original Gamble Sands layout more than decade ago. It was instantly recognized as a must-play that today sits at No. 14 and No. 24 respectively on Golf Magazine's and Golfweek's "Top 100 Best Courses You Can Play in the U.S." ranking.

"At one point we were turning away golfers because tee times sold out," said Blake Froling, general manager since 2021. "So people were calling here but then going to play somewhere else. That was the driver behind building the second course. That's probably the hope for the next course, once we're sold out at Scarecrow, too." Bet anyone your green fee (that's \$215-\$255 for either course between April 18th and October 5th next year) that will definitely happen.

First, that course name. This was not some piece of Midwest farmland. Instead it was sand and sagebrush-laden property on a bluff high above the Columbia River, all a 2.5-hour drive from Spokane (where Southwest and United fly direct from Denver, although more direct flights go into Seattle; from there it's a 4-hour journey). But a part of it had been used to grow corn, hence the name of that area's former protector. Then again, another portion was once used as a reindeer farm, so it could have been called Reindeer Run. Alas,



SCARECROW #9 // PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN OAR

not to be. Scarecrow is a different experience than its older sibling, thanks largely to topography. As Schaan has said, "This part of the site has higher, peakier spots that were more akin to classic sand-dune, sandhills type blowouts — and we exposed some of those, we preserved some of those. And the piece of land is just smaller. If you draw a circle around the first course, it sits on 350-500 acres depending on how you draw it.

This new course sits on about 300 acres, and so it's a lot more compact, things are a bit closer together. But the fairways are still wide — in some cases, they are even wider." Width is less important on the opening hole than staying right of the

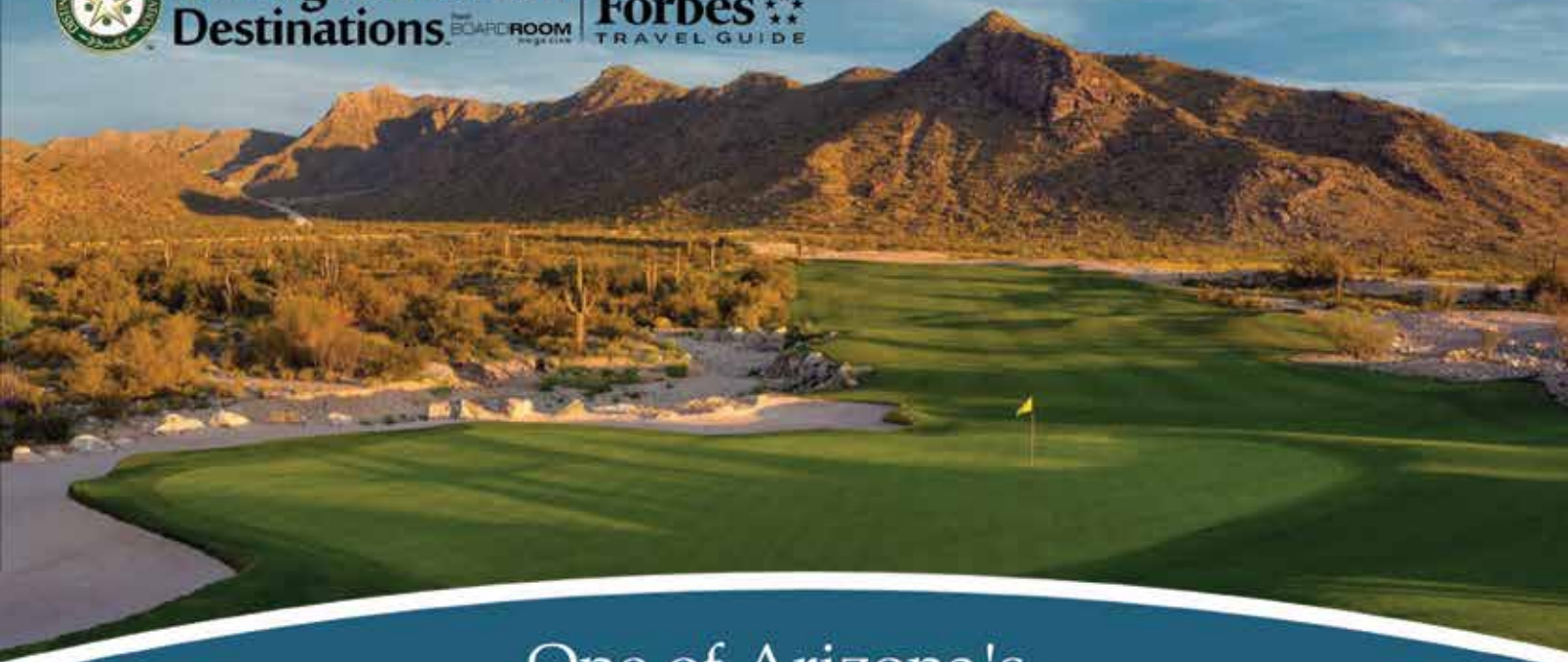
fairway bunker. Do that and a steep downhill will propel your ball toward the green. Not dissimilar is the seventh and the 14th, the latter with a ski slope fairway severe enough you could use a putter for your approach. The real stars are the ninth, 10th and 11th, two par 3s backdropped by the Columbia River and bracketing a downhill par 4 with orchard and water views. The closer is a drivable par-4 (if you play the right tee), rare for an 18th hole, albeit one requiring a bold carry over a chasm and the avoidance of greenside bunkers.

Like all siblings, the two courses have their differences. "When the idea of a more challenging second course was presented, I wasn't a big fan



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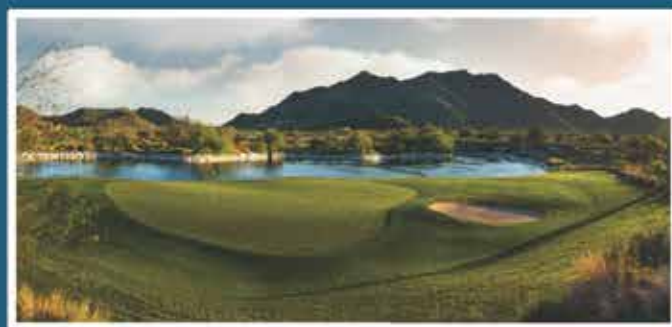
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## GOLF ON THE EDGE OF INFINITY

of that just because I love how much fun people have on Gamble Sands,” explained Froling. “I think you need to be a bit more targeted on choosing the right fairway side on Scarecrow for a better angle to the hole. There’s often blind shots if you’re not, so that’s a subtle difference. There are the same big rolling hillsides and slopes as there are on Gamble Sands, but on Scarecrow there are bunkers in those slopes, so you’re got to be more targeted. The topography comes with more elevation changes on Scarecrow. It’s all enough to never make you feel like you are playing the same course.”

I played both a day apart this summer and if forced to choose, would play seven of 10 rounds on Scarecrow. It’s just more fun and manageable overall, but you really can’t go wrong with either choice. “The reason why Gamble Sands was successful is that you want to go play it again right

away,” said Froling. “When you get done playing 18 there, you know there are things you would do differently. Same goes for Scarecrow.”

Speaking of fun, you must play Quicksands (\$60-\$75), an engaging gathering of 14 par-3 holes a quick stroll away from the clubhouse. A blast in all respects, especially with a Huckleberry Transfusion in hand for fuel. Nightcaps with glow balls on the Cascade putting course, steps away from the main lodge rooms (an original 37 there have been augmented with another 40 opened this summer overlooking the Scarecrow course), often serve as the finishing touch on most days here.

Golf season in these parts usually runs from early April to mid-October, with September a particular standout for both course conditions and less wind than usual. “The beauty of this place is you never to cancel your trip due to weather here,” notes Fro-

ling. “You’re not going to have rain forecast for five days. It might be warm, but that’s the only risk you are taking.” Froling’s days will soon be filled with even more golfers flocking to this remote part of Washington now that the place meets Mike Keiser’s standards (the Bandon Dunes founder has famously said, “One course is a curiosity. Two are a destination”).

But when Froling does get the chance to play, there’s one particular spot he relishes the most. “To be playing 17 green on Gamble Sands at sunset is my favorite place to be,” he says. “The sunsets from there are silly. You’re seeing over to Scarecrow, to the 18th fairway on Gamble, there’s there’s a bunch of holes behind you, and there’s the view of the Columbia River and beyond. It’s a magical spot if you can time it right.”

Same goes for Gamble Sands. 🍷



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By Jim Bebbington



PHOTO CREDIT: QUIVIRA GOLF CLUB

## WINTER WITHOUT LIMITS



Visitors have been wintering in Mexico for golf for more than 100 years and Colorado players have a unique advantage of having the country's two largest clusters or beautiful courses less than a four-hour direct flight away.

Resort operators are now at full bore – bringing new courses and hotels online almost annually.

There are growing world-class golf options in both Cabo San Lucas – on the southern tip of the Baja peninsula – and in Puerto Vallarta, southeast from there across el Golfo de California. And some of the best PGA Tour professionals who have also ventured into golf course design over the past 40 years – Woods, Nicklaus, Norman, Weiskopf, Els – have flagship properties throughout the region. Both regions offer world-class experiences with or without golf: lush beaches, exclusive resorts, and welcoming restaurants and nightlife. But as the region's high-season begins, it is good to catch up on the latest on the courses, communities and resorts that make a golf trip here special.

### PUERTO VALLARTA

Any golf visit to Puerto Vallarta begins with a choice on how to incorporate the two championship courses at the region's largest resort, **Vidanta Nuevo Vallarta**. The massive resort complex north of Puerto Vallarta encompasses seven hotels, 20 pools and covers more than 2,400 acres.

There is enough to do here even without golf, but the addition of two championship courses and one new lighted course for night play makes it possible

to stay on the grounds for a long weekend and never do the same activity twice.

Guests who stay on the property have easy access to the complex's two 18-hole courses. But room availability during the winter can be very tight, and staying off-campus and playing as a daily fee guest is a strong option. Visits in spring and summer, when the heat can be a factor, make staying on the property much more likely.

The facility's Norman Course, designed by Greg Norman, hosted the Mexico Open last February (Brian Campbell won at 20-under par, taking home \$1.2 million) and the PGA Tour is expected to return here in fall of 2026. Angel Eduardo Gomez Torres, Vidanta's director of golf, said they worked

hard to bring the PGA Tour back and try to maintain the courses at a high enough level that they could host a large event on just a few days' notice. "We (The Vidanta Group) are the largest developers regarding golf in Mexico and then since I arrived at the company I put this phrase on every golf course that we need to be 'Always tournament ready,'" he said. "So that means the golf course, it's always ready to receive whatever event it's happening or not, just receiving our clients in the perfect situation with a perfect golf course."

At more than 7,200 yards from the back tees – with plenty of options in front of them – the Norman Course gives players as much challenge as they can handle. The complex's Nayarit Course is a par 70 that runs to nearly 6,700 yards and brings



## WINTER WITHOUT LIMITS



the natural tropical surroundings much more into play. In addition, the complex has a lighted 10-hole short Lakes Course that allows play up to 10 p.m. It opened two years ago – joining the trend of golf destination resorts that offer options for an ideal second round, with drinks, for any day of a weekend excursion. The complex also has a golf academy and a Par Tee Zone with simulators for players to play games and relax.

“We have a lot to offer here for golfers; It’s like Disneyland, but with golf,” Gomez Torres said. [VidantaWorld.Com](http://VidantaWorld.Com)

Nearby, Invited Clubs has two course complexes available. Vista Vallarta’s two courses on the eastern foothills of the city opened 25 years ago, designed by two of the greats.

The Jack Nicklaus signature course at **Vista Vallarta** runs out to a little more than 7,000 yards and makes great use of the hilly terrain and forest cover. The course gives players sweeping views of downtown, the bay and the Pacific Ocean beyond. The Tom Weiskopf Signature Course is nearly as long and considered a little less arduous, although the terrain is entirely different. The course cuts through deep forest and includes fast-running streams and steep ravines.

Caddies are available upon request at either course.

Near the heart of downtown is the companion complex to Vista Vallarta – Vista Marina. Both are part of the Invited Clubs network. Vista Marina is footsteps off the beach and a short walk from many of the top beachfront hotels downtown. Afternoon tee times can be had for \$65 in the fall. The 6,700 yard 18-hole course is woven through a modern shoreline development near the harbor. Some local clubs offer Stay and Play packages. [InvitedClubs.com](http://InvitedClubs.com).

### CABO SAN LUCAS

The southern tip of the Baja peninsula has a string of great resorts, and courses, that can make a visit here seem much too short, and more are in the pipeline.

**Questro Golf** operates three resort/public golf complexes on the peninsula that offer tremendous variety. **Cabo Real Golf Club** is one of the old lions on the peninsula, which was relatively golf-free until the early 1990s.

At nearly 6,900 yards the course was featured in two PGA Senior Slam events in 1996 and 1999; Robert Trent Jones Jr. is credited with a refreshed





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## WINTER WITHOUT LIMITS

design of the front nine, and creating the entire back nine. Club Campestre is 15 minutes up the Sea of Cortez coast from downtown Cabo, offering a course nearly 7,000 yards long. And Puerto Los Cabos features 27 holes designed by Greg Norman and Jack Nicklaus which can be played in a variety of mixes. [QuestroGolf.Com](http://QuestroGolf.Com).

One of the newest courses, **Oleada Golf Links**, is being built north of Cabo San Lucas up the Pacific shoreline. From Ernie Els Design, the course is away from the ocean and boasts links-style design and is the anchor of a large new housing and resort development, featuring a 300-room Grand Hyatt Los Cabos and the 130-room Conrad Los Cabos. [Oleadaloscabos.com](http://Oleadaloscabos.com).

**Pamilla Golf Club** has three 9-hole tracks which are available to on-property resort guests in a mix-and-match formula. For day-trippers, only the Ocean course is available beginning this year. But the three – Ocean, Mountain and Arroyo – can combine to give players unbelievable variety. The Mountain course is the longest. The Ocean course gives players the challenge of more than 600 feet of elevation change just in the first six holes. The Arroyo course weaves through terrain that would be familiar with any of the Scottsdale-area desert courses. [PamillaGC.Com](http://PamillaGC.Com).

**Vidanta** runs one of the oldest courses on the peninsula – Vidanta Los Cabos, a nine-hole course built just before the golf boom here of the 1990s. They now have under construction an 18-hole par 70 course, East Cape, designed by Greg Norman, that is expected to open in 2027.

**Quivira Golf Club** features its iconic cliff-clinging course, designed by Jack Nicklaus. The resort is available for visiting players as well as stay-and-play guests. An entire trip here is worth it to take a few swipes at Quivira's famous No. 6 hole. Perched nearly 300 feet above the ocean to the left, the fairway leans right-to-left the entire way. At only 310 yards it might be tempting to hit driver, but Nicklaus knew what he was doing here. This is a classic hole on which to choose your battles. There is a reason a photo of this hole is the first one shown on the Nicklaus Design website. [QuiviraLosCabos.Com](http://QuiviraLosCabos.Com).

**The Grand Solmar Pacific Dunes Resort** and accompanying Solmar Golf Links Course offers visitors a good experience.

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PHOTO CREDIT: GRAND SOLMAR

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# The Cruellest Season

Earning or keeping tour status is golf's most unforgiving grind, and every November the pressure reaches a boiling point. For Colorado's Davis Bryant, the DP World Tour Q-School was six days of emotional whiplash—surges up the leaderboard, gut-punch bogeys, and a final push that kept his career on track for 2026. While some players saw their status slip away, others fought through grueling stages for a chance at next year's PGA and LPGA cards. It's a stark reminder that professional golf isn't just about talent—it's about surviving the sport's toughest test when everything is on the line.

By Jim Bebbington

## GOLF CAREERS PIVOT



Qualification tournaments take place every November and December for professional golf tours around the world, and the annual gamut can make or break pro careers.

In early November the DP World Tour Q-School competition concluded after six days of grueling golf in Spain. Aurora's Davis Bryant, who played on the DP World Tour in 2025, finished tied for 8th place with a closing round of 1 over par to make the cut and retain his status for next year.

Over the six days Davis was at various times well back in the field, then as high as 2nd place. On the final day he began the day in 5th place, shot two birdies, and appeared cruising to a successful finish. Then a flurry of bogeys and one double-bogey on the front nine dropped him perilously close to falling out of the top 20. The top 20 finishers earned higher status for 2026, giving them better opportunities to enter more tournaments next year.

Davis rallied on the back nine of the round on the Lakes Course, Infinitum, in Tarragona Spain, with two birdies on the final three holes to finish 8th. The DP World Tour Q-School is the first of three major tour qualification tournaments of the season. Later

this month and next the LPGA and PGA Q-Schools move through their final stages. Davis, former Colorado resident Dan Erickson, and former University of Colorado golfer Yannik Paul all competed in the DP World Tour Q-School. Neither Erickson nor Paul made the mid-tournament cut and both will head into 2026 with lesser status to enter DP World Tour events than they had this year.

Davis is coming off his first season on a major tour. For the second straight year he was the highest-finishing American in the DP World Tour qualification process. In 2025 he played a mix of tournaments between DP World Tour main events and those of its developmental league, the Hotel Planner Tour.

By mid-summer Davis had played well enough to be ranked in the top 100 of all DP World Tour players, which would have granted him full access in 2026. His best performance came in early July when he tied for 4th at the DP World Tour's BMW International Open in Germany, winning close to \$100,000. But in August and September he missed cuts in several tournaments and dropped below that line, leading him back into the Q-School process in order to retain his status for 2026. "I'm glad that's over," he said from Spain. "I'm extremely proud of the way I hung in there today after some

dropped shots on the end of the front nine. I am thrilled to be able to gain my full status back for next season. I will be in the same position as I was in the past season so should be able to play a fairly full schedule and looking forward to making my first start for the 2026 season at the BMW Australian PGA Championship."

Davis finished 2025 with \$323,000 in earnings on the two tours.

Erickson and Paul both have status for the 2026 Hotel Planner Tour and Paul is also registered to play in the DP World Tour's opening tournament, the BMW Australian PGA Championship. Erickson, whose family lived near Berthoud recently, earned around \$200,000 in his first season on the DP World Tour with his best finish being tied for 6th at the Porsche Singapore Classic in March. Paul has played on the DP World Tour the past three seasons and has one win but lost his card in October after a lackluster 2025 season.

"The universe had a different plan; it's hard," he told an interviewer in October. "I just didn't play well when it mattered."

For the PGA Tour Q-School process, Jake Staino of Englewood and Griffin Barela of Lakewood both made it through first round qualifying tournaments which were held in early October. They will compete in the second stage the first week of December, and if they make it through that will move onto the PGA Tour Q-School finals Dec. 11 to 14 played at TPC Sawgrass in Florida. AJ Ott of Fort Collins, who has played professionally for several seasons, missed the cut to move to the second stage by one stroke in a qualifier at Wilderness Ridge Country Club in Lincoln, Neb.

Other Colorado players who participated in the first stage of the PGA Tour Q-School this year but did not advance include Connor Jones of Westminster, Collin Englehardt of Castle Rock, Zhaikai Brown of Golden, Derek Fribbs of Aurora and Franklin Huang of Lafayette.

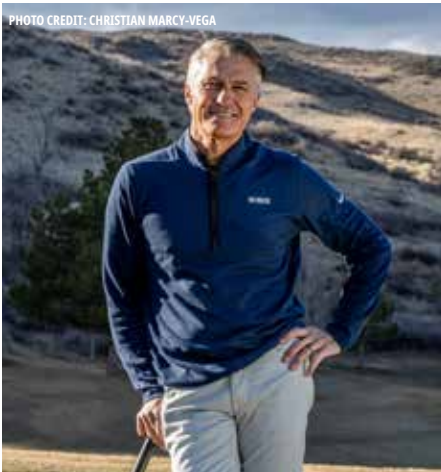
The LPGA Q-School finals are scheduled for Dec. 4 to 8 at at Magnolia Grove Golf Course in Mobile, Alabama. Sabrina Iqbal, a former University of Colorado player, is among those qualified.

Also qualifying are several players who have competed in the Colorado Women's Open in recent years, including Sophie Yixing Guo of China who finished tied for 4th this summer. Others include Annie Kim, Sarah Rhee, 2025 Top 10 finisher Nika Ito, Elizabeth Moon, Alexis Phadungmartvorakul, Katherine Muzi and Jiase Sun. 🇨🇳

# Revisiting the Stories that Helped *Define* our Year

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN MARCY-VEGA



Throughout 2025 we were lucky to be able to share great stories from interesting people, places and courses. But in nearly every case the stories continued to evolve after we took our hands off the keyboard. Here are how some of the stories moved on after we first told them.

**VIC LOMBARDI:** Longtime Denver sports broadcaster Vic Lombardi shared with us the latest last spring about his ongoing efforts to fight a prostate cancer diagnosis. Lombardi was diagnosed several years ago, and despite successful surgery was told that the cancer would likely return. That happened last year, and Lombardi was forthright and honest about what it meant to him and his family.

This summer Vic remained an enthusiastic and active member of the Denver sports broadcasting community. His social media posts detailing the enormous lunches his Italy-born mother still makes for him and his brothers were outstanding. In October he told us his cancer fight continues. He had just completed three weeks of radiation therapy as the cancer had progressed to his bladder.

“Hoping it works,” he wrote.

**ADELE ARAKAWA:** Arakawa, the retired news anchor, shared with us last summer the story of how she and her husband Barry are navigating his Alzheimer’s diagnosis, partly by using golf as



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN MARCY-VEGA

a safe haven. Barry and Adele still play often. Adele described how she hands him the club to hit, and he takes it from there.

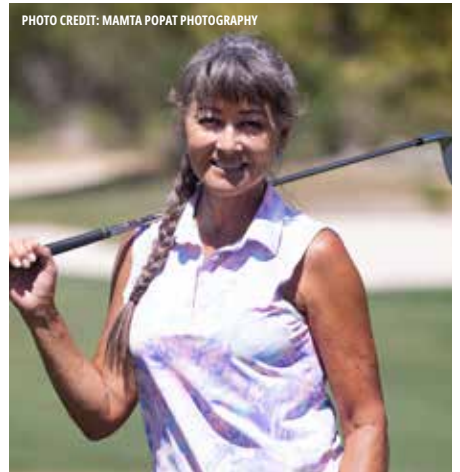
This fall she reported from their home near Tucson that the disease had progressed but they were still able to play.

“It may be from my tee box and I might have to help him choose clubs and remind him which ball is his, but his body and muscle memory is remarkable,” she said. “I do see the day he cannot join me on the course - but it’s still off on the horizon, and I try to keep my focus a bit closer to where we are now. Now that the Arizona heat is finally giving way to cooler temperatures, I try to get him out to the golf course at least once or twice a month. I can’t ask for any more.”

**EAGLE TRACE GOLF CLUB:** Homeowners in and around the Eagle Trace Golf Club in Broomfield have been working for more than a year to try to keep the course viable after the current owner sold off the course’s water rights. They fear the course is on track to close in Fall of 2026, and our story told about their efforts to keep it open.

This fall Bruce Erley, one of the homeowners working on this project, said they are feeling more optimistic. They have been able to create a new entity – a community development corporation – which is capable of receiving

PHOTO CREDIT: MAMTA POPAT PHOTOGRAPHY



donations of land or money and seeking grants to keep community neighborhoods from falling into blight. He said they have had constructive conversations with the course owner, a California attorney, and with the city of Broomfield. Much more work needs to be done, but Erley said they are hopeful to have a solution in place by next Fall.

**OLD TOM CAPITAL:** In July we told you about Old Tom Capital, an investment business co-led by Denver resident Matt Erley that is seeking to invest in companies with products that help golfers access the game in new and different ways. (Erley is also the son of Bruce Erley.) Matt Erley said in our story that he and his partner continue to look for new companies to invest in.

That came true several times since the article ran. In the months afterward Old Tom announced new investments in Golf Card, a credit card that has a rewards component which emphasizes using points on trips, club access, gear and experiences. It also announced leading a \$20 million investment round for Blue Jeans Golf, which calls itself a ‘driving range business for golfers.’ The company opens or buys existing ranges and upgrading them under the Golf Ranch brand. Old Tom also announced backing for the Grass League, which offers “High stakes par 3 golf” with teams from around the country competing, and operates a lighted par 3 course in Scottsdale, AZ. 🇺🇸

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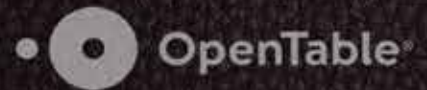
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