

By Paul Prendergast

Competitors in the 94th United States PGA Championship are assured of a helluva week when 2012's final Major, and the first to be played in the State of South Carolina, is contested over the magnificent Ocean Course at the Kiawah Island Resort from August 9th - 12th. The course recently topped a Golf Digest list of the 75 toughest courses in the United States and is lying in wait - all 7,606 yards of possible windswept fury - for another chapter to be written in a growing folklore.

The Ocean Course has been host to two World Cups, won by Ireland (Padraig Harrington and Paul McGinley) in 1997 and South Africa (Trevor Immelman and Rory Sabbatini) in 2003, the Senior PGA Championship in 2007 (won by Denis Watson) but is most famous for the 1991 Ryder Cup battle in the year the course opened, dubbed the 'War on the Shore'.

In an intensely fought contest that went right to the wire, Bernhard Langer narrowly missed a six foot putt on the final hole against Hale Irwin that would have tied the match and retained the Cup for Europe. The pressure charged atmosphere of

The Final Major Kiawah Island

the final day took a toll on most of the players but none more than the unfortunate Mark Calcavecchia, who lead Colin Montgomerie 4 up with 4 to play, but lurched from one calamity to another to let the Scot back in to square the match.

It was only some time later when the Cup was won by the Americans that Calcavecchia's spirits brightened, marginally. His experience around

the Ocean Course 'I've had enough tension this week to last a lifetime' he said at the time, is likely to be mirrored by many at this year's PGA.

Legendary course designer Pete Dye's creation by the Atlantic has stood the test of time but the now 86 year old was asked by the PGA of America to 'tweak' the golf course a little in preparation for the Championship. 'They just told us not to make it any

easier, that's all, and left!' Dye said at the PGA's Media Day, held at the course on a tranquil day in March.

All in all, 12 holes were fine-tuned with most of the work focused on reshaping bunkers that had been 'sandblasted' by winds over the years. Two of the biggest changes were made to the green complexes of the 217-yard, par 3 fifth hole and the 591-yard, par 5 eleventh. At the fifth, Dye lengthened a bunker on the left side of the green to toughen a back left pin location and at the 11th, he lowered the left side of the green in a move apparently designed to encourage more players to go for the green in two shots.

Defending champion Keegan Bradley got his first glimpse of the golf course at the Media Day and was duly impressed by a 'tough but fair' golf course. 'If the wind blows when we're here in August, I think the winning score could be over par,' Bradley said. 'I'm not sure what the greens are going to be like, or what the rough is going to be like, but it's going to be challenging no matter what the weather.'

Bradley thought it would take 'a complete player' to win around the Ocean Course, no matter the conditions. 'You need to drive it well

and also you're going to need to hit it in the correct area on these greens and stay away from the collection areas that Pete put in,' he said. 'I think you're going to need to be an all-around good player. It's going to take every ounce of your game. If you miss a green, you're going to be chipping up from a tight lie.'

'Obviously at any major you need to drive it well and hit it well, but it's going to take a complete game here.'

For his own part, Dye isn't too convinced the modern day player will find the changes all too significant. 'The players are playing so great today, they will get around. They will find a way to get home somehow or another. I don't think the changes made much difference to tell you the truth.'

Setting up a false sense of security perhaps?? Time will tell but the final Major of 2012 will make for fascinating viewing, the scheduling alone of back to back Majors over 'links' courses is something that will be a unique proposition. Only Shinnecock Hills and to a lesser extent, Pebble Beach, could lay claim to presenting 'links-like' playing conditions as hosts to US Opens directly before the Open Championship. Should the wind blow at some point of the tournament,

which you would expect it would, ball strikers and proven performers in similar conditions should come to the fore at Kiawah.

Personally, my thoughts before this season were that the shot making challenges the golf course and possible weather conditions at Kiawah might pose could be the perfect platform for Tiger Woods to resume his quest to overtake Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 Majors.

At the time, this view was based on Woods' strong ball striking and shot shaping performance in windy and firm conditions at the Australian Open and Presidents Cup matches at the back end of 2011. Clearly, Woods' multiple victories this season and the confidence he naturally derives from such performances have him more on track to achieve that goal than most people, not the least I, could have imagined in the short amount of time that has since elapsed.

As always, how the golf course will play will depend on weather conditions before the tournament. Should it rain, the golf course may be softened to the extent that both Dye and the PGA's course preparations are rendered immaterial, as Congressional was for the 2011 US Open and as most golf courses are to players of



'Carolina' Golfers

North and South Carolina natives, residents or college alumni seeking to take advantage of 'local knowledge' at Kiawah Island include:

- Webb Simpson
- Dustin Johnson
- Robert Karlsson
- Brendan de Jonge
- Carl Petterson
- Johnson Wagner
- Lucas Glover
- Bill Haas
- D.J. Trahan
- Mark Wilson
- Davis Love III

this calibre. A target golf course and benign conditions will mean low scoring and will bring a huge number of players into the equation for the Wanamaker Trophy.

In a week where the wind gusted up to between 30 and 40 mph, Raymond Floyd said of the golf course during '91 Ryder Cup 'It's so hard it's unbelievable. If you had to play this golf course with a scorecard, I don't

see how you could finish.' A bouncy, windy week around a golf course with difficult greens, sandy waste areas and vast water carries might be the most 'fun' to watch for those with an appreciation of the sadistic, but a repeat of the 'War on the Shore' conditions at Kiawah will certainly unearth a genuinely worthy, as well as mentally and physically exhausted, PGA Champion.



You've heard about its power, you've read about its performance...

NOW YOU CAN EXPERIENCE PRO GOLF IQ

FREE

Are you sick of slicing it out of bounds, or always hooking it in the water?

Are mental demons still your toughest opponent out on the golf course?

Do you want to learn how the pros think and 'shut off' before every shot and play consistently? ... **WELL, NOW YOU CAN!**

The team at Pro Golf IQ invite The Golfer readers to experience their powerful program absolutely FREE!

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

GO TO www.progolfig.com/try

Grab the opportunity with two hands and add your name to the growing army of Pro Golf IQ success stories.

Great golf starts with the mind

Pro Golf IQ is a revolutionary program that gets your mind into optimum shape for golf, allowing you to think like a Pro.

A safe, highly advanced, scientifically proven system, consisting of a 5-week course in the comfort of your own home. Pro Golf IQ will coach you to think like a Pro and get into the ZONE on every shot. Before long, you'll be playing the best golf of your life.

ProGolfIQ.com
It's the mind that plays the shot

