

Donald Gives New Life to Dye

Trump resurrects Ocean Trails into #1 course in Southern California and best 'new' course in the state

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America's favorite real estate mogul-turned-TV star has pulled off the seemingly impossible yet again. A proven master of spinning gold out of nearforgotten hunks of landscape, Donald Trump didn't just rebuild Ocean Trails, which was most famous for what it didn't have - a full 18 holes. He took Pete Dye's original design, consulted Tom Fazio for about a minute and a half, scraped together nearly \$200 million and took the design reins himself, for the first time in history.

"It's an original Donald Trump design, and it'll be the only one," he told Fairways & Greens earlier this year. "I would have just fixed it up a little bit and opened it a year ago, but I decided not to do that. And I think it turned out better than we expected."

But is it now one of the West's best? We think it is. So do several of the LPGA stars who put the course through its first competitive paces at the Office Depot Championship a few months ago. Though they griped about some traffic issues – the course is a tough walk with a few big climbs from green to tee – they praised its Pacific views and said it's a thorough test of golf.

"The views are better than you're going to get anywhere," Janice Moodie told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I think some of them even beat Pebble Beach."

Added Cindy Figg-Currier: "It's challenging in all aspects. The tee shots, you have to know where to place them."

The ladies played the course at just over 6,000 yards. Imagine what it's like from the tips, way over 7,000 yards. From that perspective, it might rank among the most difficult par-71 tracks in the entire state. Three 4-pars measure over 500 yards, two of them into the prevailing southwest breeze. No. 5, for instance, asks for a 240-yard carry over two barrancas. No. 18 is 512 yards from the pros' tees, requiring a monster carry to a tiered fairway, with a half-dozen bunkers to the left and a hillside to the right. Then it's at least 200 yards home, to the course's most heavily bunkered target.

Trump enlarged nearly every green, some of which are tiered into Alister MacKenzie territory. Bunkers are much bigger, filled with bright white limestone and crushed marble and sharp-shaped like Augusta National. Sightlines are better defined. New tee boxes are tucked into hillsides atop retaining walls of Palos Verdes stone, or carved onto pedestals of earth against a background of blue-gray sea.

And we can't overlook the waterfalls. After all, they'll be overlooking us: After hitting right into them from the No. 1 fairway or No. 17 tee, golfers drive their carts under their upper reaches and marvel at the manmade wizardry of it all – of pumping 8,000 gallons per minute into a pond below the green, and making it look natural enough to fit in with the rest of the landscape.

The goal was to turn Trump National into the public version of the Boss' private East Coast clubs, and he succeeded. Challenge and beauty are the bedrock of this transformed slice of coastline, but when the round is over, the property's first-class service, food and clubhouse fit-and-finish are firmly within the Trump milieu, right down to the gold leaf-painted ceilings in the new upscale restaurant and the sumptuous lunch specials served every day – a favorite among the ladies. The stellar, nearly palatial practice facilities make warming up a true pleasure. Now all Trump needs is an onsite resort. A few high-end villas are in the master plan, but if anyone can figure out how to build a full-blown hotel out here on the other California peninsula, he will. Just look what he's done here already.