

30 BEST NEW COURSES OF 2004

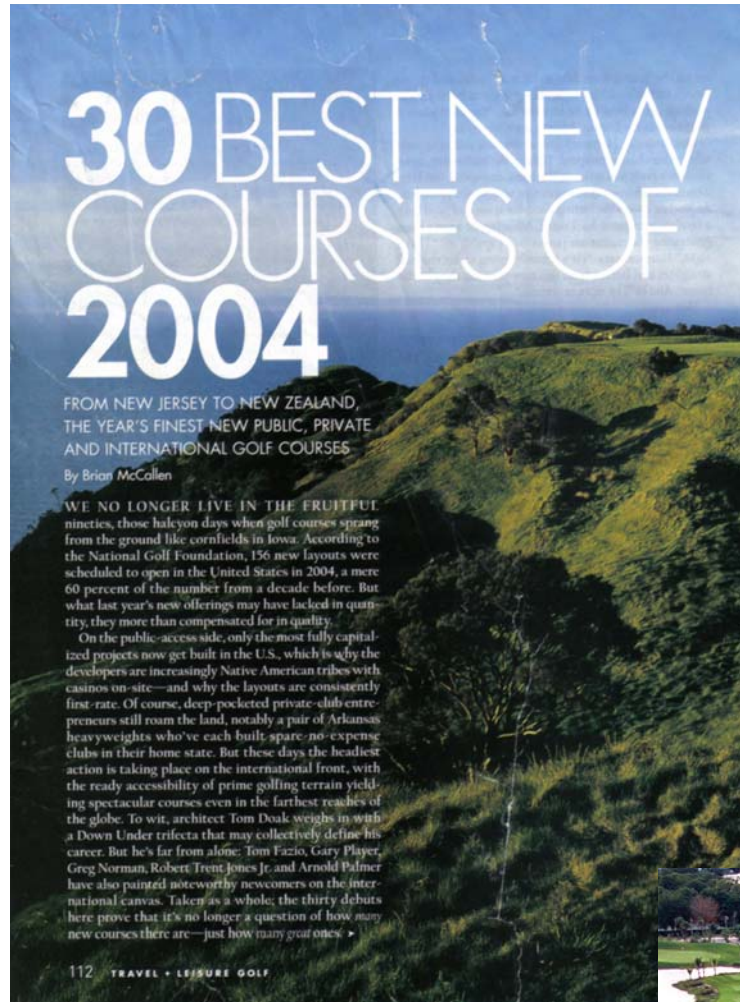
FROM NEW JERSEY TO NEW ZEALAND, THE YEAR'S FINEST NEW PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND INTERNATIONAL GOLF COURSES

By Brian McCollen

WE NO LONGER LIVE IN THE FRUITFUL nineties, those halcyon days when golf courses sprang from the ground like cornfields in Iowa. According to the National Golf Foundation, 156 new layouts were scheduled to open in the United States in 2004, a mere 60 percent of the number from a decade before. But what last year's new offerings may have lacked in quantity, they more than compensated for in quality.

On the public-access side, only the most fully capitalized projects now get built in the U.S., which is why the developers are increasingly Native American tribes with casinos on-site—and why the layouts are consistently first-rate. Of course, deep-pocketed private-club entrepreneurs still roam the land, notably a pair of Arkansas heavyweights who've each built spare-no-expense clubs in their home state. But these days the headiest action is taking place on the international front, with the ready accessibility of prime golfing terrain yielding spectacular courses even in the farthest reaches of the globe. To wit, architect Tom Doak weighs in with a Down Under trifecta that may collectively define his career. But he's far from alone: Tom Fazio, Gary Player, Greg Norman, Robert Trent Jones Jr. and Arnold Palmer have also painted noteworthy newcomers on the international canvas. Taken as a whole, the thirty debuts here prove that it's no longer a question of how many new courses there are—just how many great ones. ▶

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HAMMOCK BAY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, NAPLES, FL

The design team of Jacobsen-Hardy (Redstone Golf Club, Moorpark Country Club) has again constructed a modern classic, this one a desert-meets-Florida design with island-style fairways awash in coquina shell-filled waste areas. On the fringes of the Ten Thousand Islands, south of Naples, Hammock Bay features one of the highest golf course elevations in the region, parading players past marshes and mangroves along McIlvane Bay, an estuary of the Gulf of Mexico that usually produces a pleasant breeze.

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