

SPECIAL REPORT: USGA | P24-33

Leadership, new direction, new corporate sponsors: This isn't your father's USGA

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Chambers Bay breaks mold

The USGA's offer to hold the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay in University Place, Wash., is a significant move for several reasons.

The daily-fee layout, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and associates Bruce Charlton and Jay Blasi, sits on a stunningly beautiful site just outside of Tacoma that overlooks lower Puget Sound. The course, owned by Pierce County and operated by KemperSports, opened only last summer – to rave reviews. County Executive John Ladenburg spearheaded the \$20 million project with hopes it might draw widespread attention and tourist dollars.

Chambers Bay is the youngest course to be tendered a U.S. Open. It's also the first course opened since 1967 – Atlanta Athletic Club's Highlands Course, which played host to the 1976 Open – to hold the national championship.

The USGA had been wedded to a rota of venues that date to the classic, pre-World War II era – most of them private clubs. That began to change with Pebble Beach in 1972 and Pinehurst No. 2 in 1999, both public-access resort layouts. In 2002, for the first time, the USGA went to a municipal layout with Bethpage Black. This year, the USGA goes to Torrey Pines South, a course that's not only municipal but also postwar (opened in 1958).

Chambers Bay outdoes them all. It's municipal and new. It's also the first Northwest site for an

Open. It will provide unparalleled access to more spectators than ever have attended a U.S. Open. In a fitting touch of retro-sensibility, the USGA also will be able to utilize an active train line and bring spectators on site from Greater Seattle.

The environmental model provided by Chambers Bay might prove to be the most enduring. The course was developed as part of a 930-acre public park on an abandoned sand and quarry pit. The rehabilitation of the site into faux dunes ideal for golf is impressive enough, but the fescue grasses used on Chambers Bay and the resulting tawny, knee-high roughs should also be an industry-wide exemplar of eco-friendly, low-chemical-input course maintenance.

That holds for the greens, in particular. In an era when country clubs seemingly outdo themselves trying to reach ultra-fast speeds by double-cutting greens to 1/10th of an inch, Chambers Bay's bristly greens do absolutely fine at twice that height. The results at Chambers Bay are firm, fast golf and linkslike conditions that will make the 2015 Open a model for the golf industry to take seriously.

Bradley S. Klein

Bradley S. Klein
Senior writer

Preferred by serious golfers

1500 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL 32835
Customer service: 800-996-4653
Editorial fax: 407-563-7077
63-7076 Production fax: 407-563-7078
Offices fax: 407-563-7099
Reprints.com

Editor: Jeff Babineau

Steve Harmon
Gene Yasuda

Kaufmann
Chris, Matt Severance
Editor: James Achenbach

407-563-7041
870-867-4407
704-660-0229
407-563-7037
860-243-3296; fax 860-726-9523
845-773-9121
5-1815; fax 708-206-1895
407-563-7064
1-582-841-620

Reinbreder

Max Andrew
Editor: Erick Dzolsi
Moderstrom
Kirby, Dan Mirocha, Lance Ringler
Hughes

ing, Matt Messenger, Jared Clemons
eck

Blackhouse
Anna Murray
Ibart

Carly Wadle, Stacy Sanders
re: Brian Grant

Cherry Masih
Patterson

C. Redditt, 877 Island Ave. #203,
fax 619-546-8034
ery Goods: Jereme Day, 7954 High
310; fax 913-602-8396
1500 Park Center Drive, Orlando, FL
076
ret: Kelly Fulford, 1500 Park Center
12; fax 407-563-7076
ry Dees, 1500 Park Center Drive,
407-513-9108
olsenhek, 379 Holopuni Road, Kula,
3-876-1646
er: Richard Holcomb, Brandon Holcomb,
phone 770-740-7120; fax 770-740-8544
atie Jordan, 1050 Lenox Park Blvd. NE,
869-8107; fax 404-869-8131
19550 N. Grayhawk Drive, Suite 1121,
ax 480-323-2490
ocialies Inc., 1735 East Big Beaver Road,
8-524-9337
n, 800-441-2617
anager: Erin Mason, 407-563-7073
Osborne, 407-563-7014

Marketing Manager: Amy Bunn
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