Turnberry

The Ailsa Course



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AYRSHIRE, Scotland - On the cold and windswept opening day of the 1986 British Open, not one player bettered par and the field was a cumulative 1,251 strokes over par on the famed Ailsa course at Turnberry.

Greg Norman rebounded from that opening-round gale to post a 63 in the second round and tamed the "Beast" to win the 1986 British Open. It was just one chapter in Turnberry's fabled history that also includes a Jack Nicklaus versus winner Tom Watson "Duel in the Sun" in 1977 and Nick Price's 50-foot eagle putt on No. 17 to win the 1996 Open.

The "Beauty" of Turnberry is in the impressive views of the lighthouse, Bruce's Castle, Ailsa Craig, the massive granite dome rising from the sea, and The Isle of Arran. It's a west coast beauty on the Irish Sea and the Firth of Clyde and on a clear day golfers can see Ireland far in the distance.

"Turnberry is the favorite course of many Scots. The location is just spectacular, probably the most scenic of all the British Open courses. Most links courses are flatter, but Turnberry has the views, large mounds and undulations. When you get to Nos. 9 and 10, with the lighthouse, coastline and ruins of Bruce's Castle, you see the true beauty in the course .

No. 9, a 454-yard, par-4 monster in the wind, is called Bruce's Castle, after Robert the Bruce, Scottish king from 1306-1329. The ruins of his castle are here, just in front of the lighthouse. Golf Magazine named No. 9 on its list of Top 500 golf holes in the world. In gale-force winds, standing still, trying to hit a golf ball, at one of the highest points of the course, is a challenge. Staying motionless through the swing is difficult.

Don't overlook No. 10, though, because it is just as beautiful. The 452-yard dogleg left borders the sea and the second shot is menaced 55 yards out by an island trap, a huge circle of sand with a sizable chunk of rounded fairway in the middle.

Wee Burn, No. 16 is another famous hole. The green is surrounded by Wilson's Burn, and anything short of the putting surface could roll back down into the deep darkness. Long-handled ball retrievers are provided for the many golfers who end up in the burn.

In the 1963 Walker Cup, the Wee Burn decided the match. The winning American team triumphed over the burn and the British didn't.

Rebuilding projects at Turnberry

Designed by Willie Fernie and opened in 1902 the course was requisitioned in WW1 and WW2 as an air base .

In 1946, the Ailsa and Arran Courses, with their spectacular views of Ailsa Craig from every fairway, were a mess. Turnberry had been used as a World War II landing strip, still seen to this day, and the fairways were used by the airmen. Golf course architect Mackenzie Ross rescued and rebuilt the courses in the 1950s and since then the hotel has hosted many amateur and professional championships, including the three British Opens.

Ross made plasticine models of the greens to show machine operators the correct contours to re-construct. Not all of the courses were destroyed. The runways had been located on the higher central ground, so Ross had the unscathed coastal area to create a masterpiece.

After Ross rebuilt the courses, the Ailsa Course became noteworthy the world over. It has been ranked among the world's top 20 courses ever since.

Other championships staged here include the Ladies' British Open Amateur, Scottish Ladies' Amateur, PGA Match Play, PGA Cup Matches, British Senior Open and The European Open just to name a few.

The Photo Below shows the Airbase in WW2





A double Celtic Cross erected by the people of Kirkoswald Parish in 1923 to honour those airmen stationed at Turnberry Air Field who died during the First World War. A later section was added for WW2

Enjoy your round on The Ailsa Course and make sure you keep out of the rough.

