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# FG

who wins on your card?

PEBBLE vs. BANDON

CDA vs. TAMARACK

VEGAS vs. SCOTTSDALE

[THE BOXING ISSUE]

## Billionaire-Dollar Baby

# Trump



'National' Tops Our List

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## THE SIGNATURE Another Year Down the Fairway, and Pickin' 'Em is Still Tough

**T**hough this is the fourth edition of FG's year-ending Signature Series, we didn't start ranking golf courses in true numerical order until last year. It was a tougher job than we thought it would be, and after another season of seeing some courses for the first time and revisiting others, we realize the list-making remains an inexact science, born of memory and emotion as much as it is of empirical data — ratings, slopes, green speeds and the like. In fact, when we got right down to reconsidering, re-shuffling and revamping last year's lineup, the same elements came into play: Gut feelings mixed with scorecards; public standing mixed with personal preference; history intertwined with architectural leaps forward.

As always, these rankings are based on decades of combined golf travel experience and the knowledge that we are privileged to live in a part of America unmatched for its geographic and climatic diversity — and definitely unsurpassed for sheer wealth and richness of golf experiences. And as with last year, you'll find our winners broken into two camps, resort and non-resort.

The criteria for each list are straightforward.

- An FG staffer or writer must have played the course.
  - All courses must be available for public play, either on a resort stay or daily-fee basis.
  - Courses on the resort list must be affiliated with a hotel or lodging of some sort, whether or not it is contiguous to that property. The quality or rating of the lodging doesn't figure into our ranking here; it's all about golf — hole-to-hole and overall design, memorability, playability, setting, conditioning, service, emotional engagement and that gestalt-like conclusion we call the Total Experience. Though being next to or affiliated with a world-class hotel certainly doesn't hurt.
  - Courses in the non-resort list are stand-alone entities, though many of them take part in stay-and-play packages offered by nearby hotel properties.
  - We didn't take green fees into account. Rates here range from less than \$30 to \$500 for weekend high season, so we figure it's up to you, dear reader, to find your dollars-and-cents (or sense) threshold and play twilight or off-season if you have to.
- Enjoy. And let us know your reactions a [www.fgmagazine.com](http://www.fgmagazine.com) by becoming a member of our new online community, logging in and letting fly. We want to know if we're on point, and when we're off track.

## RESORT COURSES

**1. Pebble Beach** | Pebble Beach, Calif.  
[www.pebblebeach.com](http://www.pebblebeach.com) | 831.622.8723

The setting, the history, the mystique ... plus holes 4 through 10 and the world's most famous finisher: Pebble will be a top-five forever. Last year Spyglass finished above it on this list, but in 2007, its excellent conditioning and service, experienced anew during our latest father-son adventure, have pushed it back to the top where it belongs.

**2. Pacific Dunes** | Bandon, Ore.  
[www.bandondunesgolf.com](http://www.bandondunesgolf.com) | 800.742.0172

Which of the three outstanding Bandon Dunes Resort courses deserves top billing? A couple years ago we kicked around this idea through three impassioned treatises, but reached no consensus. Yet Pacific edges the others again. Yeah, it's short by modern design standards, and sure, the back nine has four 3-pars. But when the Southern Oregon Coast wind gets frisky — which is the case more days than not — Tom Doak's Irish links-like masterpiece is as tough as they come. Figure in its visceral and visual power, with enough stunning sea-meets-sand-meets-heather wonder to impress even the most jaded traveler, and it's no contest.

**3. Bandon Trails** | Bandon, Ore.  
[www.bandondunesgolf.com](http://www.bandondunesgolf.com) | 800.742.0172

Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore went into the forest at Bandon Resort's southern tip and routed an incredible mountain-like course. Simple, stunning and strategic, it makes an argument for being the best of them all.

**4. Spyglass Hill** | Pebble Beach, Calif.  
[www.pebblebeach.com](http://www.pebblebeach.com) | 831.625.8563

Hole for hole, it's the best of the Company's estimable quartet, and certainly the toughest. The first five holes remain Robert Trent Jones Sr.'s crowning achievement.

**5. Bandon Dunes** | Bandon, Ore.  
[www.bandondunesgolf.com](http://www.bandondunesgolf.com) | 800.742.0172

Links purists prefer David McLay Kidd's original, for good reason. Overall, some believe it is the sternest test in the Bandon trio.

**6. Cascata** | Boulder City, Nev.  
[www.cascatagolf.com](http://www.cascatagolf.com) | 702.294.2000

Magic on a desert mountainside, now owned and operated by Harrah's, and affiliated with all of its Vegas hotels. Rees Jones knows how to wow the senses. After

a decade in the shadow of the "Creek," this colorful and fascinating layout is finally getting the kudos it deserves. And the river-runs-through-it clubhouse is outstanding.

**7. CordeValle** | San Martin, Calif.  
[www.cordevalle.com](http://www.cordevalle.com) | 408.695.4500

You've got to stay at the exquisite boutique Rosewood resort to play this Trent Jones Jr. gem south of San Jose, but take the wallet-choking plunge. It's unforgettable.

**8. Shadow Creek** | Las Vegas  
[www.shadowcreek.com](http://www.shadowcreek.com) | 866.260.0069

It's a \$500-a-pop Disneyland for golfers thanks to the genius of Tom Fazio and the deep pockets of Steve Wynn, and a pretty darned delicious test, too.

**9. Circling Raven** | Worley, Idaho  
[www.circlingraven.com](http://www.circlingraven.com) | 800.523.2464

The Coeur d'Alene tribe's pride and joy, this youngster south of Coeur d'Alene just gets better with repeated plays. Spread over 600 acres with nothin' but nature surrounding it, the Raven rousts ancient, deep-seated feelings that border on the religious — and seem to attract a lot of big-name play though it's out of the way.

**10. Spanish Bay | Pebble Beach**

[www.pebblebeach.com](http://www.pebblebeach.com) | 831.647.7495

Designed by committee (including Tom Watson, Trent Jones Jr. and Sandy Tatum), its conditioning is always spot-on, and its mix of seaside and forested holes comprise a stirring, singular and challenging experience.

**11. Osprey Meadows | Tamarack, Idaho**

[www.tamarackidaho.com](http://www.tamarackidaho.com) | 877.TAM.RESORT

In the heart of Idaho, Robert Trent Jones II makes another play for design greatness — with Andre Agassi and Stefanie Graf behind the resort next door. Sounds like a prescription for success, and at first blush, the golf side is glorious, at the foot of ski slopes and overlooking beautiful Lake Cascade.

**12. Princeville Prince | Kauai**

[www.princeville.com](http://www.princeville.com) | 800.325.3589

A 145 slope rating, lots of jungle, perhaps the toughest opener in creation, and pure Hawaiian magic on a bluff above the roiling Pacific.

**13. We-Ko-Pa (Saguaro) Fort McDowell, Ariz.**

[www.wekopa.com](http://www.wekopa.com) | 480.836.9000

The more established Cholla remains the locals' choice at this Native American resort east of Phoenix, but in the year-old Saguaro, Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore finally pull off what so many other architects have attempted: They bring true links-style golf to a desert setting. Wide fairways, fascinating green complexes, supreme sightlines and conditioning, with the resort's beautiful clubhouse and a casino-resort right next door? We could get used to this.

**14. Barona Creek | Lakeside, Calif.**

[www.barona.com](http://www.barona.com) | 619.387.7018

This Native American-owned course northeast of San Diego is instantly addictive, with no weak holes. Just ask the Nationwide Tour's best, who competed there this year for their tour's championship.

**15. Coeur d'Alene | Coeur d'Alene, Idaho**

[www.cdarsort.com](http://www.cdarsort.com) | 800.688.5253

A slew of '05 upgrades made this "Augusta of the West" even more sublime. FG's return visit in May 2007 brought those changes into clearer focus and convinced us of its carefully calculated greatness — and the surrounding resort's proven sense of giving golfers everything they want in an upscale vacation.

**16. Saddle Creek | Copperopolis, Calif.**

[www.saddlecreek.com](http://www.saddlecreek.com) | 800.611.7722

Carter Morrish's Sierra foothills marvel keeps getting better, and the comfy bungalows make for the perfect golf-centered guy getaway or biz retreat. And there's a brand new wine room, too. Check out our updated review at [www.fgmagazine.com](http://www.fgmagazine.com).

**17. Crosswater | Sunriver, Ore.**

[www.crosswater.com](http://www.crosswater.com) | 541.593.6196

Bob Cupp's stellar semi-private course, which winds along the Deschutes River south of Bend, is Sunriver Resort's flagship track, good enough to host a U.S. Open; for now it's the new home of a Champions Tour major, the Jeld-Wen Tradition.

**18. Reflection Bay | Lake Las Vegas**

[www.lakelasvegas.com](http://www.lakelasvegas.com) | 877.698.4653

Jack Nicklaus at his desert-hugging best, with superb use of the lake and killer views. Someday Coyote Springs north of town may give it a run, but for now it's still the king of the Bear's Sin City efforts.

**19. Whitehawk Ranch | Clio, Calif.**

[www.golfwhitehawk.com](http://www.golfwhitehawk.com) | 800.332.4295

Dick Bailey's first-ever design is staggering in the way it naturally embraces the multi-hued alpine landscape — forest, wetlands and streambeds — of the Sierra's Mohawk Valley.

**20. Aviara | Carlsbad, Calif.**

[www.fourseasons.com/aviara](http://www.fourseasons.com/aviara) | 760.603.6800

Arnold Palmer and Ed Seay got all the details right at this immaculate classic.

**21. Primm Valley | Primm, Nev.**

[www.primmvalleyresorts.com](http://www.primmvalleyresorts.com) | 800.366.7867

We consider the Lakes the better of two outstanding Tom Fazio tracks straddling the Nevada-California border, with a Shadow Creek-like sheen.

**22. Wynn | Las Vegas**

[www.wynnlasvegas.com](http://www.wynnlasvegas.com) | 877.321.WYNN

Its time on Earth is reportedly short, so play while it lasts if you can swing the five bills and a room rate. You'll be surprised by the calm, quiet in the middle of the Strip.

**23. Torrey Pines (South) | La Jolla**

[www.torreyprimes.com](http://www.torreyprimes.com) | 800.867.7397

Watch for this seaside SoCal muni institution to toughen up as the 2008 U.S. Open nears.

**24. Banff Springs | Alberta, Canada**

[www.fairmont.com/banffsprings](http://www.fairmont.com/banffsprings) | 403.762.2211

The granddaddy of Canadian Rocky courses, by north-of-the-border master Stanley Thompson.

**25. Kapalua Plantation | Maui**

[www.kapalua.com](http://www.kapalua.com) | 877.527.2582

Standard bearer for Valley Isle resort golf, and scene of those epic Tiger-Ernie battles.

**26. Running Y | Klamath Falls, Ore.**

[www.runningy.com](http://www.runningy.com) | 888.850.0275

Arnie and Ed have never been better; the first five holes along Klamath Lake are unforgettable.

**27. Stevinson Ranch | Stevinson, Calif.**

[www.stevinsonranch.com](http://www.stevinsonranch.com) | 877.752.9276

Bay Area golfers have been raving about this middle-of-nowhere, Central Valley John Harbottle product for a decade. And so have we — it's a classic hidden gem.

**28. Loews Ventana Canyon | Tucson**

[www.loewshotels.com](http://www.loewshotels.com) | 520.299.2020

Sonoran swinging just doesn't get any more sublime.

**29. Entrada | St. George, Utah**

[www.golfentrada.com](http://www.golfentrada.com) | 435.966.2200

This lava-laced jewel is Miller's best desert effort.

**30. Bear Mountain | Victoria, B.C.**

[www.bearmountain.com](http://www.bearmountain.com) | 888.533.2327

Nicklaus' first Vancouver Island product, with an incredible par-3 "19th" — in the middle of the back nine.

**31. Red Hawk Lakes | Sparks, Nev.**

[www.resortatredhawk.com](http://www.resortatredhawk.com) | 775.626.8000

This fun and sneaky-tough effort snaking through wetlands northeast of Reno marked Robert Trent Jones Jr.'s first solo Northern Nevada effort in 1997. It will reportedly get even better when the front nine is re-routed to include three new holes in 2008.

**32. Poipu Bay | Kauai**

[www.poipubaygolf.com](http://www.poipubaygolf.com) | 800.858.6300

Princeville is still the Garden Isle's top choice, but Trent Jones does some great work here, especially on the final quartet of holes along the ocean. Open, breezy and sometimes quirky, it can give up a low score.

**33. Mauna Lani South | Kohala, Hawaii**

[www.maunalani.com](http://www.maunalani.com) | 808.885.6655

A couple of epic Pacific par 3s make this one a must.

**34. Jasper Park | Alberta, Canada**

[www.jasperparklodge.com](http://www.jasperparklodge.com) | 800.257.7544

Right up there with Banff Springs in Canada's golf Hall of Fame, again from Thompson's fervent design mind.

**35. Half Moon Bay (Old Course)**

[www.halfmoonbaygolf.com](http://www.halfmoonbaygolf.com) | 650.726.1800

A new and even prettier 18th gives this track the nod over its Ocean sibling.

**36. Bailey Creek | Lake Almanor, Calif.**

[www.baileycreek.com](http://www.baileycreek.com) | 866.959.7829

One of the most fun and engaging mountain courses you'll ever play, rolling through big Douglas firs and Jeffrey pines in the northern Sierra.

