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## Liberty National has face-lift since last Barclays

By Larry Fine

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(Reuters) - Liberty National burst into prominence as a golf venue with its great looks at New York harbor, the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline but it took a face-lift to smooth some rough edges for The Barclays.

Liberty National, built on reclaimed landfill on the banks of New York harbor, had its high-profile "coming out party" in hosting The Barclays in 2009 but the long, narrow layout designed by Tom Kite and Bob Cupp was not universally embraced.

Tiger Woods remarked to a player in his pro-am group that "Maybe Tom (Kite) did this course before his eye operation", in ripping some of the severe undulations on the greens.

Kite, who shed his thick-lensed eyeglasses after having Lasik surgery in 1998, fell in love with the project in 1992 and was determined to create with Cupp a world-class venue.

"We probably pushed it a little, but to get to host a tournament of this stature, you want it to stand up to them and be a challenge," Kite told a pair of reporters in a chat by the practice area on Monday.

"When I look back, a couple of greens might have pushed it a little bit."

A total of 74 changes were made to the course, many of a subtle variety involving 15 of the 18 holes.

"I think it is a very fair golf course," said Cupp, who added that some of the changes were made to comply with PGA Tour wishes. "The tour likes to see the boys making birdies."

Five greens were entirely rebuilt and another six were adjusted. Thirteen landing areas were altered and 11 tee boxes were expanded or moved, among the changes.

Thick rough has been cut back, allowing players to rescue drives that settle before reaching the tangly fescue that lines many of the holes.

The finishing hole is using a back tee box that enabled organizers to move the green forward and open up a dramatic view beyond the 18th green.

Kite and Cupp worked with Steve Wenzloff, the PGA Tour's vice president in charge of design services and player liaison, on some of the changes needed to ensure the venue's place in the New York-area rotation used for The Barclays.

"It's still a hard golf course, and there's nothing wrong with that," Wenzloff said. "The teeth will still be in it, just the teeth won't sink as deep into your skin."

(Reporting by Larry Fine; Editing by Mark Lamport-Stokes)