



August 21, 2013

The Barclays: Players like changes at Liberty National

Steve DiMeglio, USA TODAY Sports 6:29 p.m. EDT August 21, 2013



(Photo: John O'Boyle, The Star-Ledger)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Players** says the course changes at Liberty National are good ones
- "They made some really nice improvements," Tiger Woods says
- The Barclays tees off Thursday

JERSEY CITY — Liberty National Golf Course's opening act under the bright lights of New York four years ago didn't reap rave reviews.

A caddie said they ruined a perfectly good landfill. One player said the Statue of Liberty was glad she couldn't turn around and look at it. When asked about the course that was the site of the first FedExCup playoffs event in 2009, Tiger Woods said, "it's interesting." Interesting in a good way? "It's interesting," he said again. And after the first round, Robert Allenby was asked if the course was better than expected after the angst during practice rounds.

ADAM SCOTT: [Tiger would take his year](#)

"I really don't know how to answer that in the right way, because I could really get myself into a lot of trouble," he said. "They set it up very well. That's as good as I can go on the course."

TIGER WOODS: [Slowed by neck and back pain](#)

Well, the players are going on and on about the course's return to the big stage as they prepare for Thursday's start in The Barclays, the first tournament of the FedExCup playoffs. And the verdict of the course that rests by the New York Harbor and has the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan Skyline as a backdrop? Thumbs up.

RISING: [Jordan Spieth continues climb](#)

"They made some really nice improvements," said Woods, who tied for second 2009 and is the leader in the clubhouse heading into the \$67 million postseason. "Some of the landing areas have been changed. Some of the greens have been changed, and a couple bunkers have been repositioned, but they have made some really nice, positive improvements."

In all, 74 alterations were made on 15 of the 18 holes built on a reclaimed landfill. The Bob Cupp/Tom Kite design across from Lower Manhattan was ravaged by the players back in 2009 for its severe, sloping greens, awkward sight lines, thin landing areas and rough 4 inches tall. Basically, the only good things anybody had to say dealt with the backdrop of the Manhattan Skyline and Lady Liberty.

While multiple players have been tweeting photos of the stunning views this week, just as they did in 2009, the financial backing of billionaire club chairman Paul Fireman has helped smooth out the rough edges of Liberty National. Five greens were entirely rebuilt, and six others got major reconstruction. Some greens were moved, some creeks relocated. Trees were taken out, 13 landing areas were altered and 11 tee boxes were expanded or moved. And the rough is no longer as rough.

"Obviously it got a lot of criticism, but there was nothing too crazy that I saw out there," Masters champion Adam Scott said Wednesday. "The course is in perfect shape. They can get (the greens) as fast or as slow as they want. The greens are not very big, so if you're hitting the green, I think you're going to see a lot of birdies because they are not going to be long putts."

During Wednesday's pro-am, Phil Mickelson, an honorary member at Liberty National, was happy to see the rough.

"They have opened up the course because the rough isn't 4 inches high," Mickelson said. "You can play a variety of shots out of it now. That's the way it should be. And the fescue still comes into play."

"And the course is in great shape. No one can blame the course this year."

Or criticize it, it sounds like.