



Liberty National Golf Club
Earned Media Coverage
Recap Report



Public Relations, Marketing & Government Affairs



MEDIA COVERAGE RECAP REPORT

TOTAL EARNED MEDIA VALUES

Media Type	Total Impressions	Total Publicity Value
<i>Print</i>	9,720,198	\$643,776
<i>Television</i>	273,000	\$12,973
<i>Online</i>	26,034,181	\$520,684
<i>Radio</i>	29,929,364	\$752,016
<i>Wire</i>	276,743,999	\$5,437,288
Total	342,700,742	\$7,366,737

MEDIA OUTLET	DATE	DETAILS	IMPRESSIONS	PUBLICITY VALUE
PRINT				
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	August 24, 2013	Ran feature on Liberty National including quotes from Paul Fireman	7,218,996	\$192,598
<i>Golf Magazine</i>	September 1, 2013	Ran front-of-book photo/sidebar spread on The Barclays returning to Liberty National	1,425,490	\$414,200
<i>The Star Ledger</i>	August 18, 2013	Ran feature on the return of The Barclays to Liberty National	935,712	\$24,598
<i>The Met Golfer</i>	August 1, 2013	Ran feature on Liberty National after an interview with Paul Fireman	140,000	\$12,380
TELEVISION				
CNBC	August 21, 2013	Aired live interview with Paul Fireman on <i>Squawk on the Street</i>	230,000	\$11,801
Golf Channel	August 20, 2013	Aired live interview with Paul Fireman on <i>Golf Central</i>	28,000	\$889
Golf Channel	August 21, 2013	Aired live interview with Greg James on <i>Morning Drive</i>	15,000	\$103
ONLINE				
Forbes	August 21, 2013	Posted video interview of Paul Fireman about Liberty National	10,500,000	\$210,000
CNBC	August 21, 2013	Posted video interview of Paul Fireman about Liberty National from <i>Squawk on the Street</i>	6,580,320	\$131,606
The Wall Street Journal	August 23, 2013	Posted article on the Barclays returning to Liberty National	5,410,383	\$108,208
NJ.com	August 18, 2013	Posted article on Liberty National's redesign and the Barclays returning	2,377,552	\$47,551
CBS New York	September 16, 2013	Posted segments from nationally syndicated "CEO Radio" program	1,165,926	\$23,319

<u>Met Golfer Digital</u>	August 1, 2013	Posted article on the Barclays returning to Liberty National	N/A	N/A
RADIO				
<i>CBS Radio "CEO Radio"</i>	September 16-27, 2013	Ran nationally syndicated "CEO Radio" segments resulting from interviews with Paul Fireman	26,550,600	\$667,120
<i>Sirius XM Radio "Fairways of Life"</i>	August 19, 2013	Paul Fireman was a guest on the Sirius XM show <i>Fairways of Life</i>	1,689,382	\$42,448
<i>Sirius XM Radio "Fairways of Life"</i>	August 20, 2013	Tom Kite was a guest on the Sirius XM show <i>Fairways of Life</i>	1,689,382	\$42,448
WIRE				
<u>Associated Press</u>	August 20, 2013	Ran story on Liberty National hosting the Barclays with quotes from Paul Fireman Pickup included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huffington Post • Yahoo! Sports • ABC News • FOX News • NBC News • NPR • ESPN 	248,291,507	\$4,876,403
<u>Reuters</u>	August 20, 2013	Ran story on Liberty National hosting the Barclays with quotes from Paul Fireman. Pickup included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yahoo! News • Yahoo! Sports • Chicago Tribune • Baltimore Sun 	28,452,492	\$560,885



PRINT

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

August 24, 2013



Jersey City, N.J.

Paul Fireman, then the chairman of Reebok International, describes his 1998 decision to buy the stinking, toxic landfill that is now Liberty National Golf Course as a "moment of insanity."

"There were broken down buildings and dumpsters, abandoned trucks and cars. It was an eyesore," he said Thursday at a table in the clubhouse during a rain delay at the PGA Tour's Barclays tournament at Liberty. "But it had a major attitude about it. The location was iconic. How could you not want to do something with this property?"

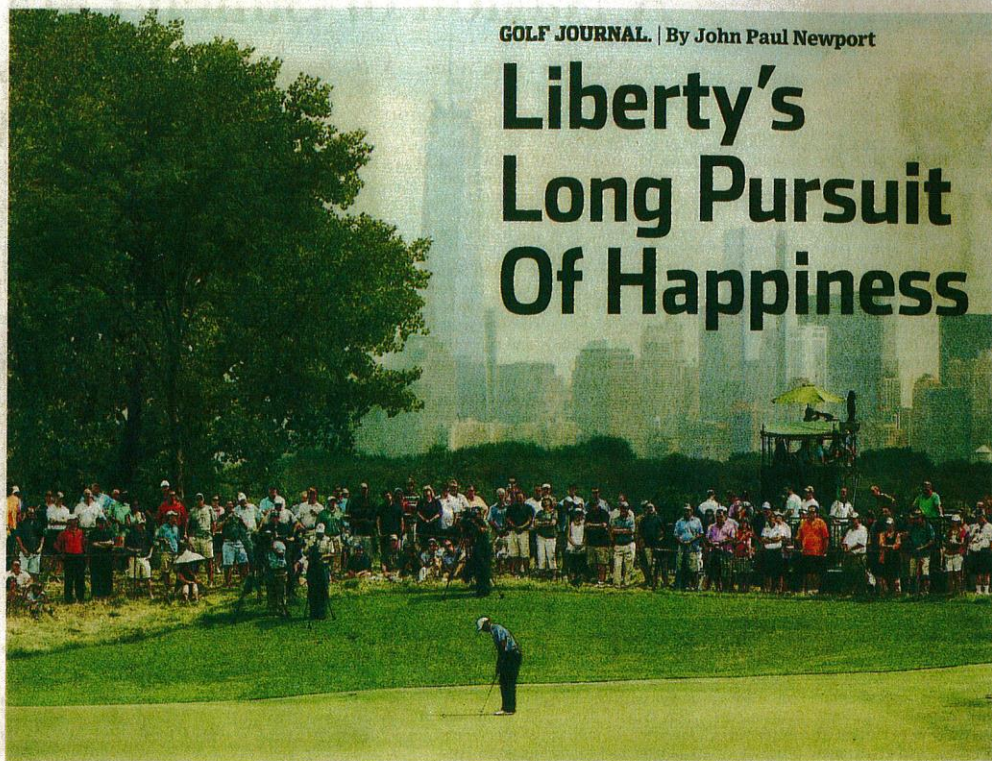
The chief selling point, of course, was the Statue of Liberty rising from New York Harbor scarcely 2,000 yards away. And behind Lady Liberty, the fairy-tale Manhattan skyline. Could there be a more dramatic setting for the kickoff event of the FedEx Cup Playoffs?

Fireman said he bit on the project as a kind of escape from the corporate "warfare" of running his global shoe and apparel giant. (He sold Reebok to Adidas in 2006.) "Some people read books, some people buy a boat, some people go on vacations. To me the escape was looking at design plans for a course and bringing people together to make it happen," he said.

In an earlier conversation, Fireman had told me he spent 80% to 90% of his time at Reebok in the design studios and on marketing, rather than on the numbers side of the business. Golf courses similarly appeal to his artistic side, he said, though he has never claimed to be anything but an amateur when it comes to course architecture.

As a hobby, starting in the early 1990s, Fireman acquired, built or rebuilt eight other courses, one on Cape Cod and five in Puerto Rico. Keeping the crew he had assembled for those projects busy was one reason he succumbed to the temptation to buy the landfill in New Jersey. Another was imagining his grandparents, one from Russia and one from Australia, sailing past the land when they immigrated to America through Ellis Island roughly a century ago.

What he didn't know, but probably should have, was how expensive it would be to make Liberty National work. That was the "insanity." Remediating the land, which took half a decade, required capping the waste, trucking in 2 million cubic feet of fill and clearing endless regulatory and environ-



GOLF JOURNAL | By John Paul Newport

Liberty's Long Pursuit Of Happiness

Liberty National, built on a former landfill, is hosting the first event of the FedEx Cup Playoffs. Above, Tiger Woods putts on the 13th.

mental hurdles. By the time the course opened in 2006, it had cost \$250 million, likely making it the world's most expensive golf course.

And then, after the Barclays was played at Liberty National in 2009, he had to remediate the land, in a sense, a second time. Some of the pros at that event were unkind to the course. "They took a perfectly good landfill and ruined it," was the most famous (anonymous) remark.

The PGA Tour advised Liberty that if it wanted to continue as one of the four rotating sites for the Barclays beyond 2013, when its contract ends, it needed to make some changes. The other courses in the rotation are Ridgewood Country Club in Paramus, N.J., where the Barclays returns in 2014; Plainfield Country Club in Edison, N.J. (2015); and Bethpage Black in Farmingdale, N.Y. (2016).

So Fireman pulled out his checkbook again. He rehired the original architects, Tom Kite, the 1992 U.S.

Open champion, and Robert Cupp, to make extensive alterations, including completely rebuilding five of the greens and altering 13 fairways.

The pros' reception this year has been much better. "They made some really nice improvements," said Tiger Woods, one of the headline complainers in 2009. "I think it's one of the best venues we play on Tour," said Rory McIlroy.

The owner said he is pleased. "It was never about making money, not that I wanted to lose money," he said. The club itself, after stalling during the recession, now has 175 members, with a current full initiation fee of \$250,000, and could top out at 250 members or so next year, Fireman said. The average member age is a surprisingly young 42. He said he expects a residential tower near the clubhouse, a delayed part of the original plan, to break ground within a year. "If that plays out like we hope it will and I break even on the whole thing, I'd be thrilled."

Fireman, 69, fell for golf as a boy in Brockton, Mass., a blue-collar city south of Boston. The club where he caddied, Thorny Lea, had an unusual charter requiring a third of the members to be Catholic, a third Protestant and a third Jewish, he said. He was taken under the wing of a Massachusetts state amateur champion named Ed "Smiley" Connell, who showed him respect even as a kid caddie.

"My experience there at Thorny Lea was the strongest, most fundamental thing in my life, even more than parental," he said. "I thought that golf had integrity, so I wanted my life to have integrity. And it showed me the value of respect and mutuality among people, that no one should be treated differently." He said he abhors cliques and snobbish behavior in golf—even at clubs with \$250,000 initiation fees—and that he tried in his business life to embrace and empower people from all walks of life.

His persistence at Liberty Na-

tional, he allowed, might have had something to do with giving back to the game for what the game gave him as a youngster. "I'm going to put my money back somewhere, and this is something I love," he said. "It's a lot better than a tombstone."

Would he do it again, given the wild cost and time overruns? "No," he said without hesitation. "But that's true of a lot of people about a lot of things."

In 1992, Fireman assembled a crew to run in the 635-mile Newport, R.I., to Bermuda yacht race, without knowing much about sailing. "It was miserable. The wind, the rain, 12-foot seas coming over the bow, no sleep, we were sick," he said. He would never do that race again, either, he said, despite his boat having won its division. But you could tell by the way he told the story that he was glad he did it once.

Email John Paul at golfjournal@wsj.com



September 2013



“When Liberty National Golf Course hosted The Barclays, the first leg of the FedEx Cup, three years ago, its dramatic setting on the New Jersey side of New York Harbor (that’s the par-3 2nd, left) wasn’t enough to win over grouchy Tour pros who found the greens too severe and the fairways too narrow. At least partly in response to the criticism, the club has since softened a dozen of the greens and reworked several fairway landing areas. The verdict? We’ll find out soon. The Barclays returns to Liberty National Aug. 22-25.”

The Star-Ledger

August 18, 2013

Liberty National ready to open doors for second chance for first impression at The Barclays



Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City will host The Barclays for the second time, but first since making changes after hosting for the first time in 2009. *(Andrew Mills/The Star-Ledger)*



By **Brendan Prunty**/[The Star-Ledger](#)

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on August 18, 2013 at 6:00 AM, updated August 18, 2013 at 6:06 AM

It was sometime in May 2010 when the lunch date was arranged. The tournament officials for the PGA Tour had asked for a meeting with the brass of Liberty National Golf Club to go over The Barclays.

Nine months earlier, the shiny new club along the Hudson River in Jersey City had played host to the world's best in making its public debut before the golf community.

There was some trepidation from Liberty National as to what the meeting might be about. Hosting The Barclays in 2009 was a one-time contract, and there had been some very public comments made — mainly criticism by Tiger Woods — about the course's design.

The club wanted to have the event back. But would the PGA Tour want to return? The answer, it found, was yes. With a caveat: Changes would have to be made to the course.

What the tour officials found was that Liberty National was already ahead of them.

"Golf courses are very much like a painting," club co-founder Paul Fireman said. "They change as time changes. Like oil on canvas. A golf course is growing. The ground changes, the grass grows, conditions change. There's always subtle things. The main thing that most of the great golf courses in the world? They change on a regular basis."

This week, Fireman and Liberty National will get a second chance to make a first impression.

Four years after first hosting a PGA Tour stop, the first leg of the FedEx Cup Playoffs will return to Jersey City, and what those who were at the course in 2009 will find out is that their voices were heard. Fifteen of the course's 18 holes have undergone some form of work — ranging from the moving of greens to relocating creeks. Trees have been taken out, the rough has been changed and Liberty National is hoping to get the reception it was looking for when it first played host.

"I expected this," Fireman said. "We found all the things we could find and the PGA wanted to work with us and we wanted to take advantage of that opportunity."

GATHERING THE INFO

Even though Liberty National already had made the decision to redo parts of its golf course, one person had to be consulted if the PGA Tour was going to bring The Barclays back: Steve Wenzloff.

As the PGA Tour's vice president of design services and player liaison, he's the middleman between the golfers' impressions of the course and that of the tour officials. He already had begun mining opinions from players the week following the 2009 Barclays, and what he found was that the course was fairly well-received. But like any first-time venue, it had spots to smooth out.

"It wasn't broke," Wenzloff said recently. "It took a lot to take what used to be a dump and turn it into what it is. With all that going on, it gets easy to get lost in certain details."

Together with the course's original architects — Bob Cupp and Tom Kite — Wenzloff, Fireman and his son, Dan, went about mapping out what changes needed to be made in order for The Barclays to return this year. Some holes (Nos. 3 and 18) had to have entire greens redone. Some (Nos. 13 and 17) needed fairway re-contouring. Others (Nos. 2, 4 and 14) were left untouched.

In addition to using player reaction, Wenzloff went back and pored through the data provided by the PGA Tour's ShotLink system, which collects statistical analysis of every shot hit on tour. What he found was the course had played how they expected it to, but not in the way they expected. Some holes that were supposed to be birdie holes were par holes. Others that were supposedly harder played easier. And in the case of the 331-yard, par-4 16th hole — a hole touted by tournament officials as a "drivable par 4" — it was never played that way. (Players felt there wasn't enough reward to take the risk of trying to drive the green, the way the hole originally was designed.)

"Now, when you're on this hole, there's an incentive to go for it," Dan Fireman said recently, standing on the tee box of the 16th hole. "It has a whole different feel to it."

Overall, 74 changes occurred through 15 of the 18 holes on the course, according to a new yardage book distributed by the club and the tour. Some of them were made for the playability of the golf course, but others were done to allow the PGA Tour to set up hospitality and concession tents differently and move the flow of pedestrian traffic.

"We never used this back tee box in '09," said Peter Mele, executive director of The Barclays tournament, while standing on the 18th tee. "So we moved the green forward about 20 yards. But that also allowed for us to not have to put the television towers and grandstands behind the green and block the view of the skyline. Because no one else in the world has this, so why not use it?"

A MASTER-FUL IDEA

"Dan, I've got a suggestion."

Phil Mickelson, major winner and an honorary member at Liberty National since its opening, pulled Dan Fireman aside after a round last year with Rickie Fowler because he had an idea. The changed golf course was much improved, but there was a problem: It was still too penal. It was a brawny layout with water and hazards everywhere, including mounds of knee-high fescue. So, why, Mickelson prodded, is there a need for traditional country club rough?

Dan Fireman, a co-founder with his father, understood what he meant. So he asked Mickelson what he had in mind.

"Do it like they have at The Masters," Fireman recalled Mickelson telling him. "Augusta National has that short cut of rough that, if the ball rolls in, you're not penalized. It makes playing so much more fun.' We thought it was a great idea."

So much for a guy being just an honorary member. Mickelson's suggestion to the Firemans was taken up and is considered by a number of the club's regular members to be the missing piece to the reconstruction puzzle. A number of players have come through this season since the club switched over to the intermediate rough and have raved about the changes. After the U.S. Open in June, Graeme McDowell, Rory McIlroy and Ian Poulter came through and loved the new concept.

"You're always living on the edge, with the risk of falling off," Wenzloff said of making changes.

Even Woods has spoken to Paul Fireman about the changes and his comments from 2009. He told Fireman nearly a year ago that he's eager to test out the new course. That chance will come this week.

"It was our rookie year, and we got beat on a little bit," Fireman said. "Maybe there were some things that were out of line and it was too tough. But this isn't our rookie year. We're seasoned."



August/September, 2013 Issue



The Return of LIBERTY

When the PGA Tour revisits Liberty National GC in Jersey City, N.J., for the 2013 Barclays on August 22-25, players will be greeted with some welcome refinements to the Tom Kite/Bob Cupp layout as well as a striking change to the downtown Manhattan skyline.

To the latter point, players and spectators alike will no doubt get goose bumps as they look out at the nearly completed Freedom Tower, with Lady Liberty keeping watch nearby. The course renovations will be less dramatic but important nonetheless, as they address some player concerns raised during the 2009 FedExCup and will give PGA Tour officials a wide range of setup options in order to provide an inarguably fair test of golf. Several fairways have been widened (most notably on the par-4 third hole) and 12 greens have had their contours softened. Likewise, some greenside swales, such as those to the right of the putting surface on the par-5 13th, were made shallower.

Another change is the trimmed-down first cut of rough, which club owner Paul Fireman said will make the course play more like Augusta National—players will be able to hit approaches that could potentially hold the green from all but the deepest cuts of rough. Still, fescue and other high grasses will remain a framing feature, especially on the dramatic finishing hole.

What hasn't changed: the prospect of a thrilling week of golf as the world's top players compete on a world-class course with world-class views.



TELEVISION



August 21, 2013

A screenshot from a live broadcast on CNBC. The background shows a man in a dark blue polo shirt speaking on a golf course. In the top left corner, there is a "LIVE" indicator. At the bottom, a news ticker displays the program title "SQUAWK ON THE STREET" and the headline "BARCLAYS PGA TOUR RETURNS TO LIBERTY NATIONAL". To the right of the headline, the NASDAQ index is shown with a value of 3,598.35, a change of -15.24, and a percentage change of -0.42%. The CNBC logo is in the bottom right corner.

» LIVE

SQUAWK ON THE STREET

BARCLAYS PGA TOUR RETURNS TO LIBERTY NATIONAL

NASDAQ
-15.24 -0.42%
3,598.35

CNBC



August 20, 2013





August 21, 2013



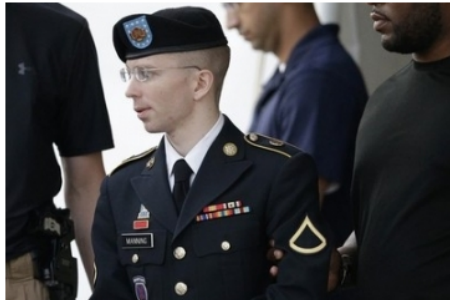


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Andy Greenberg, Forbes Staff

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Steve Schaefer, Forbes Staff

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Meghan Casserly, Forbes Staff

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Paul Fireman on improvements made to his \$250 million golf course to get it ready for the Barclay's.
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Inside Forbes: The Innovators Issue
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A couple of hackers show off a series of nasty new attacks on cars—with Forbes' Andy Greenb...

Forbes®

August 21, 2013



F

PAUL FIREMAN
Founder, Liberty National



August 21, 2013

» LIVE



SQUAWK ON THE STREET
PAUL FIREMAN
LIBERTY NATIONAL GOLF COURSE CO-OWNER

WTI CRUDE
-0.51 -0.49%
104.60

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TRANSCRIPT INFORMATION COMMENTS

Getting retail back in the green

WED 21 AUG 13 | 11:54 AM ET

Transcript: [Print](#) | [Email](#) Auto Scroll

⌵ Click text to jump within video

the barclay's pga tour kicks off tomorrow and is returning to the liberty national golf course. paul fireman is the co-owner of liberty national, also the former chairman and ceo of reebok international. he joins us this morning from the course. paul, good morning. good to have you. good morning. pleasure. how excited are you for tomorrow? this is very exciting. we waited four years to come back and we've prepared well and we're hearing good thick and we're very excited. we were talking about some of the comments made back in '09. various comments tiger made about the conditions and the difficulty level. you have compared golf courses to painting and you said they change over time. how has liberty changed? i think all creations of that

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

August 23, 2013

GOLF JOURNAL | August 23, 2013, 6:36 p.m. ET

Up From the Dumps: Liberty National Golf Course

Hosting the Barclays tournament this week, it was once just a landfill with a view.

By JOHN PAUL NEWPORT



Getty Images

Liberty National, built on a former landfill, is hosting the first event of the FedEx Cup Playoffs. Above, Tiger Woods putts on the 13th.

Paul Fireman, then the chairman of Reebok International, describes his 1998 decision to buy the stinking, toxic landfill that is now Liberty National Golf Course as a "moment of insanity."

"There were broken down buildings and dumpsters, abandoned trucks and cars. It was an eyesore," he said Thursday at a table in the clubhouse during a rain delay at the PGA Tour's Barclays tournament at Liberty. "But it had a major attitude about it. The location was iconic. How could you not want to do something with this property?"

The chief selling point, of course, was the Statue of Liberty rising from New York Harbor scarcely 2,000 yards away. And behind Lady Liberty, the fairy-tale Manhattan skyline. Could there be a more dramatic setting for the kickoff event of the FedEx Cup Playoffs?

Fireman said he bit on the project as a kind of escape from the corporate "warfare" of running his global shoe and apparel giant. (He sold Reebok to Adidas in 2006.) "Some people read books, some people buy a boat, some people go on vacations. To me the escape was looking at design plans for a course and bringing people together to make it happen," he said.

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What he didn't know, but probably should have, was how expensive it would be to make Liberty National work. That was the "insanity." Remediating the land, which took half a decade, required capping the waste, trucking in 2 million cubic feet of fill and clearing endless regulatory and environmental hurdles. By the time the course opened in 2006, it had cost \$250 million, likely making it the world's most expensive golf course.

And then, after the Barclays was played at Liberty National in 2009, he had to remediate the land, in a sense, a second time. Some of the pros at that event were unkind to the course. "They took a perfectly good landfill and ruined it," was the most famous (anonymous) remark.

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So Fireman pulled out his checkbook again. He rehired the original architects, Tom Kite, the 1992 U.S. Open champion, and Robert Cupp, to make extensive alterations, including completely rebuilding five of the greens and altering 13 fairways.

The pros' reception this year has been much better. "They made some really nice improvements," said Tiger Woods, one of the headline complainers in 2009. "I think it's one of the best venues we play on Tour," said Rory McIlroy.

The owner said he is pleased. "It was never about making money, not that I wanted to lose money," he said. The club itself, after stalling during the recession, now has 175 members, with a current full initiation fee of \$250,000, and could top out at 250 members or so next year, Fireman said. The average member age is a surprisingly young 42. He said he expects a residential tower near the clubhouse, a delayed part of the original plan, to break ground within a year. "If that plays out like we hope it will and I break even on the whole thing, I'd be thrilled."

Fireman, 69, fell in love with the game as a boy in Brockton, Mass., a small, blue-collar city 25 miles south of Boston. The club where he caddied, Thorny Lea, had an unusual charter requiring a third of the members to be Catholic, a third Protestant and a third Jewish, he said. He was taken under the wing of a Massachusetts state amateur champion named Ed "Smiley" Connell, who showed him respect even as a kid caddie.

"My experience there at Thorny Lea was the strongest, most fundamental thing in my life, even more than parental," he said. "I thought that golf had integrity, so I wanted my life to have integrity. And it showed me the value of respect and mutuality among people, that no one should be treated differently." He said he abhors cliques and snobbish behavior in golf—even at clubs with \$250,000 initiation fees—and that he tried in his business life to embrace and empower people from all walks of life.

His persistence at Liberty National, he allowed, might have had something to do with giving back to the game for what the game gave him as a youngster. "I'm going to put my money back somewhere, and this is something I love," he said. "It's a lot better than a tombstone."

Would he do it again, given the wild cost and time overruns? "No," he said without hesitation. "But that's true of a lot of people about a lot of things."

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September 16, 2013

CEO RADIO



CEO Radio



 **Longtime Reebok Chief Behind New \$250 Million Golf Course In Shadow Of Statue Of Liberty**

September 16, 2013

Ray Hoffman with Reebok CEO Paul Fireman (Air and Web Versions - Part 1 - Monday, September 16, 2013)



WIRE



August 20, 2013

FEDEX CUP PLAYOFFS: SOME RIPS, PLENTY OF RICHES

BY DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (AP) -- Jordan Spieth used words like "incredible" and "amazing" to describe Liberty National Golf Club.

He can be forgiven. He's only 20.

Spieth wasn't a member of any tour at the start of the year, and now he's taking part in the financial windfall known as the FedEx Cup playoffs. He has only been a full PGA Tour member for five weeks, not nearly long enough to learn how to complain.

No one used words like that when The Barclays was held at Liberty National four years ago.

Tiger Woods said it was "interesting," a description that was subject to interpretation, though no one needed an interpreter. One player said the front nine didn't return to the clubhouse for fear no one would play the back nine. A caddie said golf course designers Bob Cupp and Tom Kite ruined a perfectly good landfill. And the jokes went on. It almost became a sport in itself, seeing who could deliver the best one-liner.



AP Photo/Mel Evans

No doubt, there were awkward sight lines off the tee to tight landing areas, and it didn't help that the rough was close to 4 inches. The slopes on some of the greens were severe and didn't hold shots. It needed some work, and billionaire club chairman Paul Fireman paid for them out of his own pocket. More on that later.

Lost amid the criticism of Liberty National was that it produced the best tournament of the 2009 playoff season. Heath Slocum won with a 20-foot par on the final hole, and while he remains the lowest-ranked player to win a playoff event at No. 124, the real measure was who he beat by one shot - Woods, Steve Stricker, Ernie Els and Padraig Harrington.

Also overlooked was the history and location of Liberty National. Fireman developed the course on the site of a former landfill, and no other golf course screams out, "New York, New York" better. It sits on the shore of the Hudson River across from Lower Manhattan, so close to the Statue of Liberty that she looks as if she's holding one of those "Quiet, Please" signs. Dozens of players have been posting photos on Twitter of the views, from either the course or the water taxi over to Manhattan.

But there's a bigger picture.

The Barclays is the start of a four-tournament series with a total of \$67 million in prize and bonus money - \$8 million purses at each FedEx Cup playoff event, and \$35 million in bonus money, with \$10 million to the winner.

The greens were too severe? The course looked contrived? Really?

INTERACTIVES



HOLE-BY-HOLE TOUR OF PGA CHAMPIONSHIP



HOLE-BY-HOLE TOUR OF BRITISH OPEN



U.S. OPEN PANORAMA



HOLE-BY-HOLE TOUR OF BETHPAGE BLACK



HOLE-BY-HOLE TOUR OF AUGUSTA NATIONAL

SPECIAL SECTION

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ON THE FRINGE

FEDEX CUP PLAYOFFS: SOME RIPS, PLENTY OF RICHES

WOODS' YEAR CHANGED AFTER DISTRACTION AT MASTERS

LATEST GOLF NEWS

FOR WOODS, STILL SOME WORK TO DO THIS YEAR

WOODS HAS STIFF NECK AND BACK FROM HOTEL BED

LPGA TEEN SENSATION CHARLEY HULL BACK TO WORK

That's what annoyed Cristie Kerr.

The two-time LPGA major winner is a member at Liberty National, and she had heard enough. Kerr ran into a couple of players - Woods included - last year during a charity event and told them they weren't giving the course a chance.

"I talked to a couple of guys about how lucky they are to play on this stage, and to have a guy like Paul Fireman who will spend any amount of money to build the best course he can," Kerr said Sunday evening in Colorado. "It didn't deserve to be beat up like that. They should be grateful to be there. For us women, we struggle to get sponsors. So it's tough to hear. I think they respect me and respect what I was saying. And I know a couple of guys apologized to the Firemans."

Fireman said Woods approached him at the Deutsche Bank Championship last year and they had a nice conversation. He said Woods had heard about the changes to the golf course and looked forward to playing.

"Sometimes," Kerr said, "you can get a little big for your britches. They just need to be thankful for the stage, for the money they play for and the TV coverage they get, and all the other things that come along that they get to do."

She might have been referring to the rows of black BMW courtesy cars outside the clubhouse.

Fireman heard the good and the bad from four years ago - "It wasn't that bad, but it definitely had a tone," he said - and instead of taking it personally, he took action. Five greens were rebuilt (the 12th green was rebuilt three times until they got it right). Others had the slopes significantly reduced. The landing areas were widened on nearly every hole. And the 18th green was moved some 20 yards closer to allow for better staging.

He paid for the changes himself.

"The most important thing is the course will show well," Fireman said. "You can make it as tough as you want. We made it easier - not easy, but easier. My members love it, and I think I should worry about that first. I think we've done a great job. We've done everything we can do."

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GOLF AUDIO

▶▶AP GOLF WRITER DOUG FERGUSON AND AUTHOR PETE MCDANIEL ON DIVERSITY IN GOLF

Phil Mickelson also is a member, and Fireman leaned on him for advice. Mickelson's philosophy is to at least give players a shot at the green, even if they get into more trouble trying. His recommendation was largely about how to set up the course.

"What I said to Paul was if you were to play Augusta National and have 4-inch rough, you'd be miserable and the beauty of Augusta National would not come out," Mickelson said after an 18-hole practice round Tuesday. "I felt that way about Liberty National. If you get rid of the rough and put the first cut in there, you always have a shot. Since he's done that, it has made Liberty National play so good."

Mickelson said some of the complaints from 2009 were valid, "but nobody articulated it well at the time. They just made the claim it was too hard, too severe."

It's a different golf course. The reviews have been far more positive this week. The sights are as spectacular as ever.

The one thing that hasn't changed is that the players are still competing for an insane amount of money. This is no time to complain. It wasn't then, either.



August 20, 2013

Liberty National has face-lift since last Barclays

By Larry Fine

JERSEY CITY, New Jersey | Tue Aug 20, 2013 4:42pm EDT

(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.

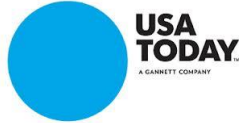
Kite and Cupp worked with Steve Wenzloff, the PGA Tour's vice president in charge of design services and player liaison, on some of the changes needed to ensure the venue's place in the New York-area rotation used for The Barclays.

"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)



OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE



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.



August 21, 2013

Sore neck limits Tiger at pro-am

By [Farrell Evans](#) | ESPN.com

Updated: August 21, 2013, 3:58 PM ET

JERSEY CITY, N.J. -- At The Barclays, the first leg of the PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoffs, [Tiger Woods](#) said Wednesday that he would take one major over his five wins in 2013.

Still, the 37-year-old 14-time major champion says that he's had a great year, despite extending his careerlong drought in major wins to 18.

"You're looking over a course of a career, and you're going to have years where you don't win major championships and years that you do," he said. "There's years where I've won one tournament and years where I've won nine.

"So as long as I keep winning in all those years, it's not too bad."

For the second consecutive year at The Barclays, Woods has complained of back or neck pain related to a soft hotel bed. So on Wednesday he played only nine holes of his pro-am. He walked with his amateur partners but only chipped and putted at Liberty National. Last year during the event at Bethpage Black, he struggled through lower back pain to a tie for 38th.

Woods was seen grabbing his back in the final round of the PGA Championship this year. He also had an elbow injury that troubled him for two months this summer.

He said he's not concerned but didn't want to push it. He said everything felt fine when he was home.

Asked about getting a new bed, Woods smiled and said, "We'll have something."

Woods' best finish in seven Barclays appearances came in 2009, when it was last held at Liberty National and he finished in a tie for second.

He is ranked first in the FedEx Cup points race, but he understands that the winner isn't going to be determined until the playoff finale at the Tour Championship in late September.

Twice a FedEx Cup champion, the 79-time tour winner has grown comfortable with the series, now in its seventh year.

[+] [Enlarge](#)



Andrew Redington/Getty Images

After a 4-over finish at Oak Hill, Tiger Woods' major drought now sits at 18.

"You're basically playing for the top-five positioning going into the Tour Championship. Win it, and that will assure you being the champion of the playoffs," he said. "The first couple of years when Vijay and I won it, we didn't really have to play the Tour Championship."

When The Barclays was first held at Liberty National, Woods was a member of a vocal chorus of players who didn't particularly like the golf course. He described the Tom Kite-Bob Cupp design as "interesting."

Since then, the course, which has views of the Statue of Liberty and New York City, has undergone major renovations.

"They made some really nice improvements," Woods said. "Some of the landing areas have been changed, and a couple bunkers have been repositioned."

Woods said it would mean a lot to win his 11th PGA Tour Player of the Year honor.

"That's voted on by the players, so when you get the respect and the hats-off by your peers, that's something that we don't take lightly," he said.

Asked to name his competition for the honor, Woods gave Phil Mickelson, Matt Kuchar and Brandt Snedeker, all multiple winners in 2013.

"Obviously this run, any of those guys wins, hypothetically, wins all four, you're looking at a four-, five-, six-win season, and that's a pretty good season," he said.

On Wednesday, Woods also put a spotlight on his consistency since joining the tour in 1996. He pointed to the 10 years where he has won at least five events.

"That's one of the stats that I look at as one of the ones I'm really proud of," he said. "This is one of those years."



August 21, 2013



GOLF WEEK

August 19, 2013

▶ Hole-by-hole: Liberty National starts FedEx Cup



Photo by Associated Press

The Statue of Liberty is visible at Liberty National.



By **Bradley S. Klein**

August 19, 2013 2:41 p.m.

Follow Me: [Twitter @BKleinGolfweek](#)

JERSEY CITY, N.J. – It's not often that PGA Tour players get to take a ferry to work. But that's part of the thrill of golf at Liberty National, home of The Barclays Championship, the inaugural event in the 2013 FedEx Cup playoff series. The leading 125 players on the FedEx Cup points list are eligible to play in the first of four playoff events, and this time they're returning to a golf course that was not met with glowing kindness when it first (and last) held the event in 2009. This time around, the reception should be better.

This is a complicated site – a reclaimed industrial landfill, degraded and abandoned as worthless for decades. Then came a \$250 million investment by Paul Fireman of Reebok fame. He turned the site into an upscale private golf club and adorned it with a hyper-modernist steel-and-glass clubhouse that looks like a spaceship. It stands in stark contrast to the reclaimed wildlife habitat and Hudson River Waterfront Walk that also now share the site.

Co-designers Bob Cupp and Tom Kite did wonders with the 160 acres of petroleum waste and industrial debris that constituted the site when they first saw it in the early 1990s. They covered it all with impervious fabric and clay – then built the golf course on top of it, largely with material dredged from the bottom of Lower New York Bay, and capped it with sand. The land plan includes a massive range, unfortunately with 70-foot-high netting for the tournament, and barriers that isolate the golf course from an exit of (what else?) the New Jersey Turnpike Extension. And there's some high-rise condo development at the far end. But then there are those stunning views of Upper New York Bay, downtown Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty.

The course has bounced back from a renovation after the 2009 Barclays. Cart paths have been pushed back from the line of play, landing areas widened, fairway bunkering simplified and drainage shifted from unsightly catch basins that were in play to more reliance upon surface flow, which also makes for more interesting ground contours. From the air, Liberty National still looks like a spaghetti junction of squiggly fairways, cart paths and pond edges. But from the ground, it has started to acquire some much-needed maturity and sense of place. Four years of tree growth has helped. And there's a consistency to the turf quality, with flawless L-93 bentgrass fairways and A-4 bentgrass greens. Fairway definition has been enhanced by abandoning any intermediate-step cut; the fairways are 26-30 yards wide in most landing zones, and from there out it's all low-mow bluegrass cut to a uniform 2 inches – enough to take off some spin but not enough to prevent advancing the ball confidently with a middle iron.

Even at 7,353 yards and par 71 (with a 77.7 rating and 155 slope), the pros will find this a very easy course – unless the wind howls. Fans should have a great look at the action on the most spectator-accessible tournament course in the Met area.

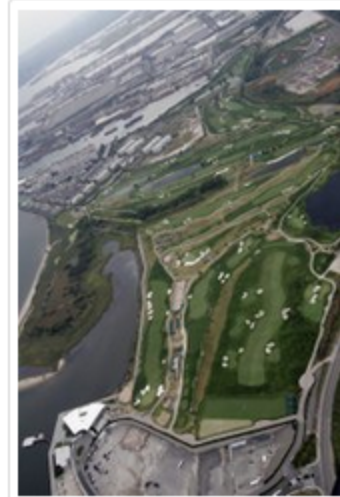


Photo by Associated Press
An aerial of Liberty National, site of the Barclays.

No. 1: Par 4, 398 yards



An odd opening hole, one with no option but to lay up off the tee. The fairway is lined on the right by a creek that crosses the landing area diagonally starting at 285 yards out. The risky 310-yard carry to the far fairway – over water and sand – brings no reward worth the danger. So it's a long-iron or fairway metal off the tee and then a short-iron/wedge to a three-tiered green. Unlike many modern tournament courses, this one occasionally allows players to work the ball into the center of the green from outside the surface by using the peripheral contours to feed the ball in.

• • •

No. 2: Par 3, 219 yards

Uphill and into the prevailing southeasterly wind off the harbor, this hole features one of the larger greens at Liberty National, and one that's very receptive to a right-to-left approach. The back-left hole location is especially tough because of its proximity to sand on three sides.

• • •

No. 3: Par 4, 395 yards



You read it here; someone will drive this green. The hole plays straight downwind to a main landing area 280 yards off the tee and 30 yards wide, from which the fairway necks down on the downslope. If someone can carry it 330 on just the right line, the ball will catch the last of the downslope and amble up onto the green. Otherwise, it's a lay-up to the wide part of the fairway and a short approach from 100-120 yards through a small defile to the only unbunkered green on the course – a putting surface that spills the ball outward at every point.

• • •

No. 4: Par 3, 193 yards

A great view of lower Manhattan looms behind the green; or it would, except for the diaphanous effect of that driving-range net. The shot here is to a green 20 feet above the tee and calling for another right-to-left approach shaped over a yawning pond and two front bunkers.

• • •

No. 5: Par 4, 427 yards

Still no driver; a long iron or fairway metal is in order to reach a narrow fairway that slopes towards a pond, which flanks the entire left side of the landing area. The fairway's constricted shape and slope is reproduced in the green, this time with a creek cutting in tight along the left side and gobbling up virtually anything that lands on the left side of the putting surface. Meanwhile, the front right is protected by sand. This hole will yield some ugly, high scores.

• • •

No. 6: Par 5, 538 yards

Finally, it's time to unsheathe the driver, thanks to a short par 5 that would be even easier for the field to reach in two if it did not play into the prevailing wind (out of the southeast). With the fairway 30 yards wide in the main landing area and that 2-inch rough (without a step cut) inducing no worries whatsoever for anyone in the field all week, there's no reason to hold back on this hole (or any other where the driver is the choice club off the tee). The only issue here is in a green that hooks around yet another one of those massive ponds at Liberty National. It's enough to make you think you're in Florida, were it not for that vision of the Statue of Liberty in the background on the approach. Still, there's not much to worry about on a lay-up second shot here (or at any of the three par-5s), especially because there's a front-left bunker that will see a lot of play as a safety option for those who don't want to challenge the green on the fly.

• • •

No. 7: Par 4, 467 yards

It'll be bombs away off the tee here on a downwind hole with plenty of landing room and set up for a modest left-to-right fade that easily carries a bunker complex on the right and that skirts up to or past another one intruding on the left. The bunkers would scare off your average golfer, but Tour pros won't be deterred by bunkers that, by their standards, are not all that deep and punitive. When you can play with impunity off the tee and have little rough to worry about, it simply makes for confident, worry-free driving and very low scores – especially here, headed toward one of the largest, most receptive greens on the course. The right side is defended by the largest bunker at Liberty National, but the left side is wide open and presents very easy recovery from low-cut chipping ground.

• • •

No. 8: Par 5, 611 yards

Long, solid par-5 played through a crosswind, with offset bunkers in the first landing area that require accuracy with a driver. The right side is the bad miss off the tee, forcing an awkward angle for a second shot that steers away from trees short right of the green. While the ideal line in for a third shot is from the left, near a phalanx of bunkers, there's actually little resistance or worries on a second shot, even one hit from the (light) rough. Few will reach this green in two, but many will still be able to bomb their second shot, with a front right greenside bunker a very safe haven for those who come up short.

• • •

No. 9: Par 4, 474 yards

Here starts the strongest, most compelling and demanding stretch of the golf course, and interestingly it comes far from the clubhouse, in and among a separate real estate development

of upscale apartment blocks. The tee shot here is intimidating, thanks to a dramatic tee shot over a sunken road, across a pond and to an island of a fairway that spills left into a pond. From there, you walk around across a Venetian-style bridge that links up to the last segment or pod of the golf course. The fairway runs out 330 yards, leaving an uphill second shot to a green that actually offers far more open ground around it than appears to be the case, thanks to a deception bunker that's 30 yards short.

• • •

No. 10: Par 4, 496 yards

This start to the inward nine appears to offer room off the tee, but the right side is cut close to out-of-bounds and constitutes a useless inside line on this dramatic dogleg right. The ideal line is as close as possible to a fairway bunker on the left, 272 to reach and 294 to get past. One of the real strengths of this golf course is the way the fairway edge has been cut into the flanking bunkers; instead of a protective collar of rough to keep the ball out, here the ball bleeds into the sand. The second shot is a middle iron into a prevailing cross breeze from the right – uphill, to the deepest green on the course at 48 yards long, one that peels off in all directions and makes it very hard to hold.

• • •

No. 11: Par 3, 250 yards

It's good to see real length occasionally in a par 3, but it would better if there were something else to deal with than just distance. This will be a very easy approach shot – downwind, wide open up front and on the right. And as firmly kept as these bunkers are, with the ball rolling to the bottom and leaving a very clean lie, there's little at which FedExCup players can flinch because of the sand guarding the entire left side of the green.

• • •

No. 12: Par 4, 431 yards

Decision time! And on a tee shot played from across the road on an elegant platform tee that requires crossing that Venetian bridge again. A true split fairway par-4, the more advantageous line is to the left and a narrower, more tightly bunkered fairway that probably calls for a fairway metal off the tee. The more inviting fairway to the right leaves enough room for a driver but leaves an awkward, semi-observed view of the green below on the second shot. And the green here, among five completely rebuilt in the latest renovation, has more movement and interest than any putting surface at Liberty National. The front is heavily bunkered and the back rolls out into a large, embracing chipping area that leaves a delicate little up-and-over recovery shot.

• • •

No. 13: Par 5, 563 yards



Bombs away on what will prove to be a very exciting hole. The left side off the tee, away from the right-side fairway bunkers that are 276-312 yards out, is actually the ideal line. If players find the light rough, no problem; they'll just lay up right. For those going for it in two, good luck into the prevailing wind, across the length of a(nother) large pond to a relatively shallow green tipped from back to front.

• • •

No. 14: Par 3, 150 yards



Over a little bridge, past the wildlife trail, suddenly you're transported to a waterfront hole that is among half a dozen of the most exhilarating par-3s in the entire Met area – Long Island included. The shortest hole to the smallest green, with tall, wispy fescue waving everywhere, finds the wind howling in from the right. If you take a moment to pause and look at the Statute

of Liberty only 1,000 yards away, you'll know you're at a very special place. You can bet the cameras will register that iconic image from this tee all week long. The sad thing about playing this hole is that there aren't a few more like it on the rest of the course. But enjoy it while you can, visually at home and carefully from the tee. The GIR numbers here will be surprisingly slim and my bet is that there will be twice as many bogeys as birdies.

• • •

No. 15: Par 4, 481 yards

Another very tough drive, from out of a chute formed by trees on the left and a wildlife nature preserve on the right. The bunkering here is very demanding off the tee. It's just too bad that here and on most of the par-4s and par-5s there's not more uneven contour underfoot to make the world's best players feel uncomfortable. You can't beat these guys with distance, but a little unease underfoot when they're standing there with a middle or short iron in hand goes a long way to making them work to achieve a good swing.

• • •

No. 16: Par 4, 325 yards

Great fun here on a hole that's classic risk/reward from the tee. There's water down the entire right side that comes into play for anything hit a bit too much left-to-right. The layup is also tight, with a deep bunker on the left 230 yards out and a long, lateral bunker on the right that ends 260 yards off the tee. So the layup must have some precision to it. For those bold enough to have a whack all the way, the green has been rebuilt because the old putting surface, heavily criticized, was so hyperactive that it was almost a liability to hit it off the tee; it certainly was a liability to have to putt more than 30 feet on it. The new green is subtler, more receptive and enticing – and with just enough segmentation that if the hole is located in certain areas (top right, bottom left) it might be smarter to try hitting it with a wedge rather than with a driver. This hole will prove successful if there are just as many 2s made as 7s.

• • •

No. 17: Par 4, 445 yards

Two very strong par 4s to end. The ideal drive here is right-to-left, past a pair of bunkers on the left (267-295 yard out) and across from a smaller one on the right that's 304 yards away. From the left side the elevated green opens up somewhat, though the only way to get to the third of the putting surface perched behind the two front bunkers is to hit a bold, well-elevated approach that comes down with a lot of spin and can settle into the little punchbowl there. A little buried mound in the middle of the green creates a lot of hard-to-read, up-and-over putts on a green that's very exposed to the wind.

• • •

No. 18: Par 4, 490 yards



There aren't many finishing holes with as much going on around it as this one: a landmine of sand flanking both sides of the fairway; waterfront down the right side; stadium seating behind and to the left, and off to the right is that spaceship clubhouse with the Manhattan skyline looming over it. These fairway bunkers are among the deeper ones at Liberty National. The approach shot – for these guys, a middle or short iron – is uphill to a green with a false front that promotes a little extra effort on the way in. The tendency is to hit it long here, into a low-lying chipping area that wraps around the back of the green. It's sure to be the scene of some dramatic recoveries as players try to qualify among the top 100 in FedEx points to move on the next week to the Deutsche Bank Championship.



August 20, 2013

Liberty National's hole-by-hole changes



Liberty National has undergone renovations since first hosting The Barclays in 2009.

August 20, 2013
Special to PGATOUR.COM

When The Barclays returns to Liberty National this week, watch for a markedly different golf course to greet players than that of four years ago.

Not long after Heath Slocum won the 2009 event here, the PGA TOUR teamed up with club founder Paul Fireman, course construction company Heritage Links and architects Bob Cupp and Tom Kite to make the visually striking, waterfront layout even better.

"In a nutshell, the goal was to try and increase the playability of the course, primarily focusing on the greens' overall receptiveness to approach shots," said Steve Wenzloff, the PGA TOUR'S vice president of design services and player liaison.

No one could ever deny the uniqueness of Liberty National. Once the site of a toxic landfill, the property is positioned along the New Jersey side of New York Harbor, offering gorgeous views of the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty. But it became apparent during The Barclays 2009 that some softening of the 3-year-old track was necessary, as approach shots — even good ones — often repelled through the greens in a somewhat penal manner.

Some players were verbally critical of the track, despite the fact that it produced a truly exciting Sunday finish. There was no question that the course was immature and needed some work after the 2009 event. It wasn't so much that the greens needed to be rebuilt, but rather that the greens required expansion and re-contouring to allow for more pin placements.

So Wenzloff and his team went to work, retooling a total of 12 greens and altering 12 tee boxes, which greatly increased set-up flexibility and spectator flow.

In addition, portions of 13 fairways were re-contoured at Liberty National, with numerous fairway bunkers repositioned and an intermediate cut of rough grown throughout the course to buffer its bent grass fairways from its blue fescue primary rough.

"In some cases, fairways were widened," says Wenzloff. "For instance, on the third hole, we moved the entire fairway bunker to the right to widen the landing area. It was one of the tightest on the course, flanked by fescues. It was too tight. And there wasn't much intermediate rough on some holes. So we added that between the bent grass and the fescues. In fact, that's the sort of thing we did on several holes."

Wenzloff says the goal was not to change the course, but to make it more receptive to high-level competition. "I think you should really see a big difference in the setup this year," he says.

And that should result in a much more playable golf course for the field — and a more spectator-friendly track for those following the action.

August 26, 2013

Golf: Liberty National is A-OK

MONDAY AUGUST 26, 2013, 10:37 PM

BY GREG MATTURA

STAFF WRITER

THE RECORD

JERSEY CITY — The willingness of Liberty National Golf Club to make significant changes to its course has strengthened New Jersey's reputation and standing as a host of The Barclays.

Phil Mickelson and his fellow PGA Tour players praised the alterations, four years after criticizing this former industrial waste site for its oh-so-tight fairways, severely sloped greens and exceedingly high rough.

"You can be more aggressive because you're not getting gobbled up by 4- or 5-inch rough," Mickelson said Sunday after shooting 6-under 65 to tie for sixth at 9-under. "I thought that made the world of difference."

"The course changes were really well received by the players," said Peter Mele, The Barclays' tournament director. "And a lot of the changes they made helped move spectators around, and build the golf-course hospitality, and it went really well."

Mele is happy the first leg of the four-event FedEx Cup Playoffs will return to the Garden State the next two years. Next summer, [Ridgewood CC in Paramus](#) will host for the third time in seven years, and Mele said, "We're excited to go back to [Ridgewood](#)."

[Ridgewood](#) officials are excited to host for the first time since 2010. Alex Khowaylo, [Ridgewood's](#) event chairman for The Barclays, said Sunday that the club "sent notice" a few days ago that it also is willing to host in 2018.

"I think our membership is looking forward to it, our staff is looking forward to it," Khowaylo said. "We think it's going to be a great event, and we would like to make it even better than it was in 2010, and we want to give spectators a great experience."

Liberty National's primary task was to provide a good experience for tour players, who care more about the fairways and greens than the spectacular views of the New York City skyline and Statue of Liberty.

Paul Fireman and his son, Dan, co-founders of the course built in 2006, responded. Several greens have been rebuilt, including the 18th, which allows for fairer play as well as better flow of spectators. Fairways were widened, rough was shortened.

"Liberty National, I equate to Augusta National in that it's a second-shot golf course," Mickelson said, referring to the home of The Masters. "The greens are the nuances, the greens are the challenge of the golf course, the subtleties, the breaks. You have to have a chance to go into the green, into the approach.

"If Augusta had rough like we had rough at Liberty in '09, it's no fun to play. We have to play defensive off the tee, and it's so penalizing for your second shot.

"When they got rid of the rough, I thought it changed this course entirely and the whole dynamic of how you perceive this course, because now the corridors and the fairways are wider and you have more shots into the green, and you don't have to play defensive off the tee."

Ridgewood, an old, traditional course with its tree-lined fairways, has drawn rave reviews from players. So its goal will be to accommodate larger crowds. Khowaylo estimates the 2010 Barclays drew 80,000 spectators, and he anticipates next year's number exceeding 100,000. With ample parking nearby at Bergen Community College, the event can handle the larger crowds next year (Aug. 21-24).

"We've started looking at it, we've started planning for it," Khowaylo said. "And all we need is the Lord to give us good weather and we'll really have a special experience."

This is the seventh year of the FedEx Cup Playoffs and New Jersey has hosted this first event five times. Edison CC in Plainfield is also in the rotation and hosting again in 2015. The Garden State has been good to The Barclays, and The Barclays has been good to the Garden State.

"The attendance has grown," Mele said. "Our corporate support has grown measurably. Donations have grown, so everything is building. The tournament continues to be on an upswing, even through what has been a rocky economy the past few years."