

After spending three and a half days squeezing in 108 holes of breathtaking golf, it was clear that it didn't take some marketing guru three months at great expense to create a strapline that best embodies golf at Bandon Dunes, perched on the cliff tops of the spectacular Oregon coastline.

**L**ike the pure links golfing land that greets you at the five courses (including a magical par-3 course) that have sprung up over little more than a decade, the line was most likely sitting just there all along in the subconscious, waiting to be brought to light.

'Golf as it was meant to be', the message greeting you at the entrance to the pro shop at the main lodge, says it all. After all we had heard and were about to experience firsthand, this simple, understated sentiment was the perfect introduction to a golf destination that is far from understated.

Bandon is quite simply: 'Golf' as it

was meant to be' and golf that you need to go out of your way to see – at least once.

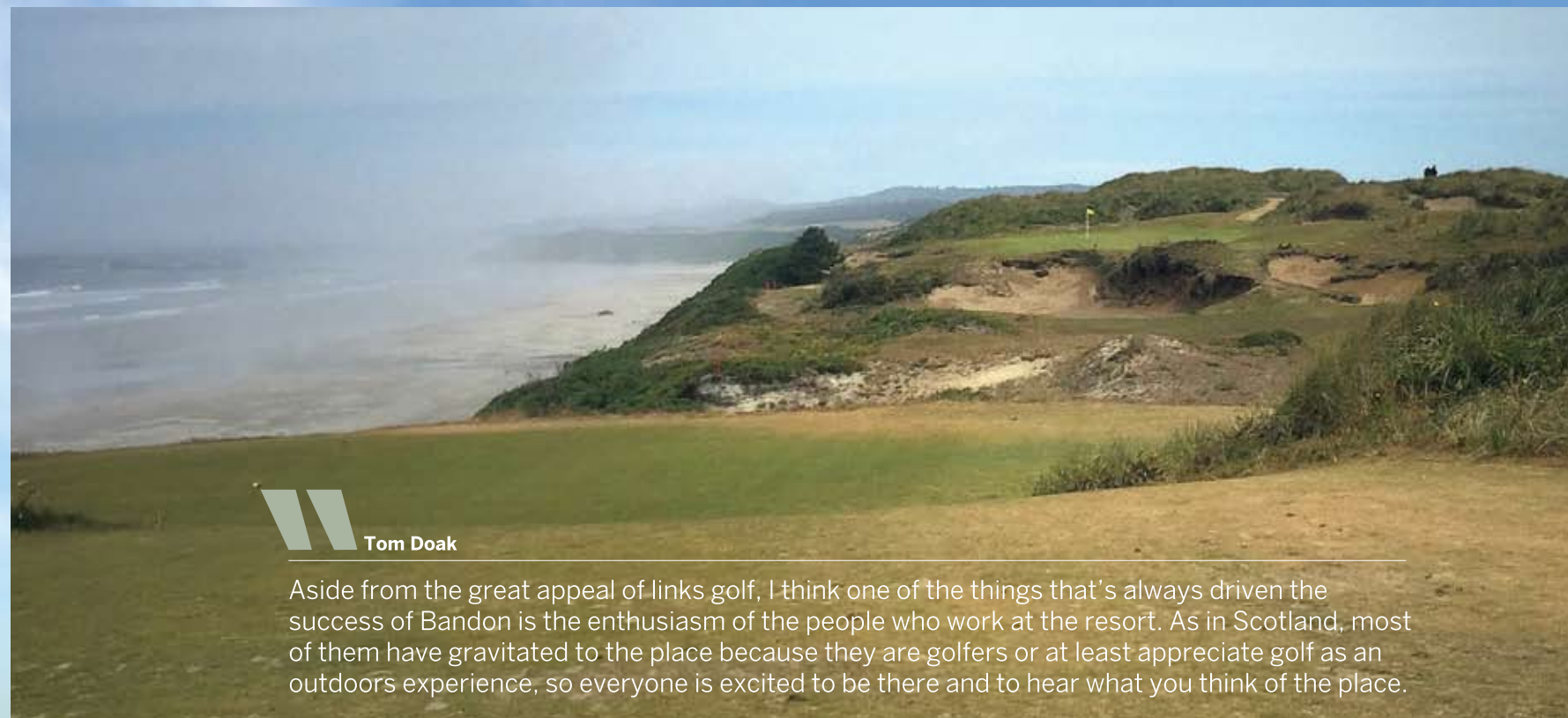
Writing as I am for an audience on the other side of the world, I can appreciate the logistical considerations. We certainly procrastinated enough after an embryonic plan was hatched at the 2013 World Cup of Golf at Royal Melbourne, when an American friend visiting Australia for the first time helped sow the seed.

In between watching the tournament and introducing him to such layouts as Kingston Heath, Woodlands and St Andrews Beach, he kept up a daily

'Bandon' banter which eventually turned lethargy into strategy on our behalf. And we're forever indebted.

The man behind this glorious expression of golf is Chicago developer Mike Keiser, who was pointed in the direction of the spectacular property of dunes, gorse and majestic coastal views from 100 foot cliff tops on the isolated Oregon coast, when searching for the ideal land to develop his vision for 'golf as it was meant to be' in the U.S.

Keiser brought in a then unknown Scot David McLay Kidd to design the first course, Bandon Dunes, which opened to great acclaim in 1999.



**W** Tom Doak

Aside from the great appeal of links golf, I think one of the things that's always driven the success of Bandon is the enthusiasm of the people who work at the resort. As in Scotland, most of them have gravitated to the place because they are golfers or at least appreciate golf as an outdoors experience, so everyone is excited to be there and to hear what you think of the place.

# Golf as it was Meant to Be

By Paul Prendergast  
Photo Credit: Mark Wilson

Tom Doak's Pacific Dunes opened two years late and over the next decade, Coore & Crenshaw's Bandon Trails (they were also responsible for the sublime par-3 course, Bandon Preserve) was added and finally, Doak and Jim Urbina completed Old MacDonald in 2010.

The response from across the United States in particular has been stunning, with many players making the pilgrimage year in, year out to get their annual fix.

Two-time PGA Tour winner Kevin Streelman loves the place and considers Bandon Trails to be: "a masterpiece, with a perfect blend of short and long par-3s, long and driveable par-4s. Just perfect in my opinion. They (the courses) all are amazing though."

Not for the first time, 2006 U.S. Open champion Geoff Ogilvy

prepared for the 2015 Open at Chambers Bay (he finished tied 18th) with several days at Bandon the week before, where he played at least 36 holes every day.

"Being in a place like that with all your buddies, having a couple of beers and playing 36 holes a day, it just excites the senses," Ogilvy said about golf at Bandon some years ago.

"You play 36 and you are wondering if you can fit another nine in before bed. It's not that I don't have the passion for the game, you just realise how much you like the game."

While the quality of golf is widely acknowledged in prominent world course ranking lists, Doak noted the Bandon of today has surpassed anything that Keiser had in mind when he set out to pursue his passion.

"I think Mike would be the first to

tell you that the resort has exceeded his expectations, by a lot. He was hoping it would become a special place but I know his biggest vision initially was just to have two courses.

"He's proceeded incrementally to be sure that the size of the place never overwhelms the experience of being there that everyone has loved so much from the beginning."

Each of the designers, on all but the inland Bandon Trails, have taken advantage of the stunning coastline with uninterrupted views as far as the eye can see, with a series of jaw dropping holes played to and along the cliff edge.

Keiser's final addition to the Bandon collection was to pay homage to early 20th century course designer Charles Blair Macdonald and particularly, his iconic National Golf Links of America – Keiser's favourite golf course.



*Shades of the great linksland courses of the British Isles.*

Credit: Timothy Scallill



**Geogg Ogilvy**

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*Majestic Pacific Dunes.*

The finished product is not only a seamless addition to the resort's armoury of memorable and exciting links holes but a walking education in classic course architecture. You'll find a Road Hole at 'Old Mac', albeit a straightaway version compared to the dogleg 17th at the Old Course, but with a green complex, devilish pot bunker and swales a close match with the original.

It was a shame that none of our foursome caught the 'Road Hole' bunker when we played, although earlier in the round, one of our group was overjoyed to have speared his approach into the pot bunker fronting the Eden Hole (see St Andrews 11th) at the 2nd.

An excitable reaction such as this was not only a feature of a round at Old Mac but across all the courses at Bandon. With all due respect to tennis, I thanked my lucky stars that I took up playing golf way back when as we bounced around energetically like kids with new toys.

In the summer months with firm, fast fairways and a constant ocean breeze prevailing, yardage books and distance markers were largely superfluous. Bandon's turf and tight fescue green surrounds reminded of

a comment five-time British Open champion Peter Thomson made to me some years ago: "There's a special skill to hitting the ball off tight, links fairways."

I don't know if Mr. Thomson has had the chance to visit Bandon but I suspect he'd heartily approve of what has evolved here.

Your first challenge is perhaps this most basic of fundamentals in playing the game – clipping the ball cleanly and squarely off tight, bouncy turf.

Hitting to a yardage on most occasions meant very little. Judging the strength of the wind, picking a spot to land the ball, where to play for position for the best chance of getting the next shot close and then, with which club to try to execute any of the above, best illustrates the 'fun' that lies in store, around every corner, on every course at Bandon.

None of the golf courses extend beyond 6,900 yards (6,300m) yet the wind and the sea air ensure your shot making and recovery skills will be thoroughly tested. Brute strength alone will not be rewarded as much as imagination and creativity.

As the designer of Pacific Dunes and Old Macdonald, Tom Doak

clearly has a personal affinity and a strong sense of satisfaction with what has developed in a relatively short space of time at Bandon Dunes.

Credited with many great designs including Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand and Barnbogle Dunes in Tasmania, along with many important restorations of classic golf courses, Doak's influences have been many and varied but 12 months living in St Andrews in his early years inspired a passion for the ideals of links golf that have been replicated at Bandon.

"Aside from the great appeal of links golf, I think one of the things that's always driven the success of Bandon is the enthusiasm of the people who work at the resort," Doak said.

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**Bandon Dunes Golf Resort**

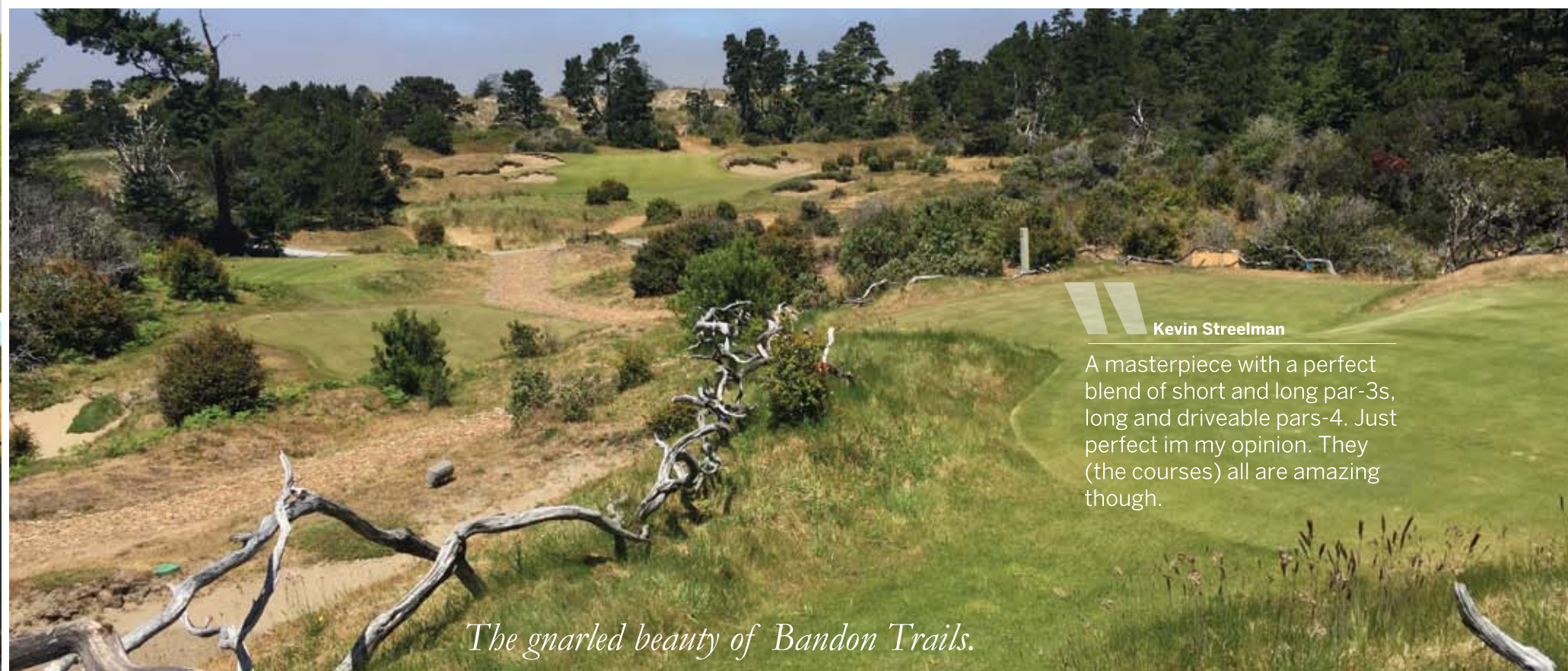
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*Pot bunkers and fog at Bandon Dunes.*



*Tom Doak's Punchbowl putting green.*



*The gnarled beauty of Bandon Trails.*

**Kevin Strelman**

A masterpiece with a perfect blend of short and long par-3s, long and driveable pars-4. Just perfect in my opinion. They (the courses) all are amazing though.