

Global Golf Post



PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

Stacy Lewis and Rory McIlroy

Spieth's Heroic Double
Green Jr.: Tiger's Week
Purkey: Raising Questions

Stub Hub

What on earth, you ask, could Tiger Woods' short game at the Hero World Challenge possibly have in common with a large Super Bowl party? The answer:

Nine different chili dips.

Meanwhile, the inspection last week of Tiger's new/old full swing after a four-month layoff was ceaseless. It threatened to approach, in detail and sheer volume, the analyses at the Pentagon of Putin's troop movements in the Ukraine.

The good news for the flu-ridden Woods, despite finishing tied for last: His surgically repaired back appears pain free and his swing speed has gained a few MPHs.

That said, if I'm Chris Como, Tiger's latest flavor-of-the-month coach, I'm nervous. Chip yips, if left to fester, are nasty, toxic, neural, contagious, malignant, malicious and downright scary.

Right now, Tiger has a case. And he caught it on a course, Isleworth, he has played, by his own admission, more than a thousand times.

Jordan Spieth, on the other hand, has no nerves and lots of nerve. After commandeering the Australian Open two Sundays ago, he arrived in Florida brimming with confidence and game.

His margin of victory at Isleworth was a whopping 10 shots. And his future is suddenly even bigger and wider than the berth given the baboon that lumbered across Luke Donald's path on the course Friday at the Nedbank Golf Challenge in South Africa.

Donald, the 54-hole leader, niftily dodged the feral simian but couldn't avoid the Sunday charge of Danny Willett, who blew the field away with a closing 66.

Finally, we invite you inside our year-ending issue, to enjoy celebratory pieces on our Players of the Year – Stacy Lewis and Rory McIlroy.

Cheers.

Brian Hewitt

E-MAIL BRIAN

NOTHING BUT PLAYTIME

BY JOHN STEINBREDER

CABO SAN LUCAS, MEXICO |

I spend the day on the Ocean Course at the Cabo del Sol resort, and enjoy every bit of my round on that Jack Nicklaus track, with its sweeping views of the Sea of Cortez and holes routed through the sere hills above it. The finishers are especially strong, beginning with a par-4 16th that features a long and narrow green backing up to the cerulean waters. Next is a stirring three-par that evokes the beauty of the 16th at Cypress Point, albeit with a green that is much easier to hit. Then, there is No. 18, a Cape hole that hugs the sea from tee to green as it doglegs slightly to the right and provides just the right amount of drama and difficulty. ▶

local knowledge

◀ When my round is done, I head to this bustling town for dinner. My destination is a relatively sedate eatery called Edith's, where mariachi bands sing soulful *cancions* as guests sip glasses of amber-colored *reposados* and nibble on grilled tuna and jumbo shrimp. But on the way there, I pass much wilder places. They bear names like Giggling Marlin and Squid Roe and pulsate with loud rock and reggae music. They also overflow with overserved patrons, some of whom are so unencumbered by that sun-drenched setting that they strap themselves into seemingly sadistic drinking devices that turn them upside down and pour tequila down their gullets. And as I contemplate that scene as well as the way I have spent my day, I conclude that Cabo is most certainly a place to play golf. And also to play.

Even the courses have a certain exuberance about them. Halfway houses are staffed by bartenders mixing otherworldly margaritas and chefs producing fresh fish tacos. Music is also a big part of the golf scene. At the Diamante resort, where Davis Love III and Tiger Woods have designed a pair of links-style layouts, workers array speakers at the back of the spacious, 14-acre practice range so that hard-hitting tunes from the likes of Van Halen, George Thorogood and John Cougar Mellencamp envelop golfers as they warm up. In addition, players have a habit ▶

CABO SAN LUCAS, MEXICO | Traveling to and from Cabo is as easy as the living there, and many major airlines service Los Cabos International Airport. Los Angeles and Phoenix are mere two-hour flights away, and Dallas-Fort Worth only 2½ hours.

- ▶ I found the Los Cabos airport to be clean, modern and convenient. I also discovered it to be an interesting place to shop. Aside from standard duty-free stores, it features pharmacies selling drugs like Prozac and Viagra over the counter. Prescriptions, it appears, are not necessary here.
- ▶ While Cabo San Lucas gets most of the ink and the majority of the big drinkers, I prefer to spend my off-course time in San Jose del Cabo. It is a quieter place, with cobblestone streets, charming eateries, quaint squares, intriguing art galleries and ancient churches. It felt exactly as I hoped and thought Old Mexico would.
- ▶ As for dining in San Jose, I recommend **Restaurante H**, which serves up contemporary American and Mexican fare in a colonial building that boasts a traditional patio. The first-rate wine list contains surprisingly good Bordeaux-style blends from south of the border.
- ▶ The food in Cabo San Lucas is excellent as well. **Edith's** is as good as it is gleeful, with its potent cocktails and festive setting. I especially liked the Caesar salad that was prepared tableside, and the seafood was remarkably fresh. This spot is a favorite of locals and *turistas* alike, and the breezes cutting through the open-sided building only enhance the satisfying sense of being in the tropics. Another worthy option is **Nick-San**, a superla-



Edith's features potent cocktails in a festive setting.

tive Japanese seafood restaurant and sushi bar that occasionally fuses Asian and Mexican cuisine, with very successful results.

- ▶ There is a wealth of hotels in Los Cabos, and I happily opted for the **Hilton** during my stay. Set on the beach just south of Highway 1 about halfway between San Jose de Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, it is a wonderfully clean and comfortable place to stay, with spacious rooms, superb service and several good eateries, including a casual, poolside restaurant called Madero that overlooks the beach.

- ▶ Almost as renowned as the golf at **Cabo del Sol** is the Sunday brunch at the clubhouse. The wide range of culinary offerings run the gamut from tacos and quesadillas to prime rib and lobster, and it hard not to go back for seconds. Or thirds. The dessert selections are pretty tasty, too.
- ▶ I am usually very careful about what I ingest when I travel to certain regions. Like Central America. But I felt so at ease in Cabo that I eschewed my usually Spartan routine. Which meant that I drank the tap water and regularly ate salads or any other foods that might have been washed beforehand. And I did not suffer one bit.
- ▶ A fierce, Category 3 storm by the name of Hurricane Odile hit Cabo hard in mid-September, shutting down the international airport for a spell and causing several golf courses and hotels to close temporarily. But government officials say the area has recovered quickly and assert that all tourism operations are now back online.
- ▶ The end of 2014 marks the opening of a pair of much-anticipated layouts in Cabo. One is the **Quivira Golf Club**, a scenic, \$40 million track built by Jack Nicklaus in and around huge dunes, dramatic cliffs and desert foothills, with all 18 holes boasting views of the Pacific Ocean. And the other is the El Cardonal course at **Diamante**, which abuts the highly rated Dunes layout that Davis Love III created there and represents the first design effort of Tiger Woods after many false starts with projects in Dubai, North Carolina and Ensenada, Mexico, that were either abandoned or delayed primarily due to financial issues. ●

J.S.

◀ here of pulling out their iPods as soon as they get into their golf carts and beginning shuffles of Mexican *rancheras* and *corridos* that last whole rounds long. Even when shots are being played. And I find that the most important question before the start of most games has nothing to do with handicap indexes or bets. Rather, it is all about what kinds of music the foursome might prefer.

Clearly, fun is the operative word here. On and off the course. Which is why Cabo is such an attraction.

When people speak about “Cabo,” they actually are talking about a region at the tip of the mostly arid, 750-mile long Baja Peninsula called Los Cabos. It is where the Pacific Ocean and Sea of Cortez meet, and where some of the richest fishing waters in the world are located.

For decades, fishing was the primary industry in that region. But tourism started to become a factor in the 1950s, thanks in large part to Hollywood sportsmen like Bing Crosby, Desi Arnaz and John Wayne, who delighted in hooking, fighting and catching the marlin, wahoo, tuna and mahi-mahi that proliferated. They also liked that they could have a bit of fun in Cabo without anyone

really noticing. In time, far less celebrated travelers began making their ways here. They came for the near-perfect climate that kept things most days dry and sunny, and most nights cool. They also fell hard for white-sand beaches and reefs teeming with marine life of all shapes, sizes and colors. And the fishing, of course. The gray whales that migrated to the area each year to birth

their calves were another attraction, as were the sea turtles that laid their eggs on the sandy shores.

Even more travelers started to show up after the Mexican government paved the Peninsular Highway, also known as Mexican Federal Highway 1, in 1974. Nearly two decades later, in 1991, ▶

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◀ the first golf course opened in Los Cabos, at the Palmilla resort in the middle of the so-called Tourist Corridor, which runs some 20 miles from the quieter, provincial town of San Jose del Cabo to the more boisterous and developed Cabo San Lucas. The Nicklaus track at Cabo del Sol came online three years later, and that kicked off a sort of building boom. With the recent opening of a new Nicklaus course at Quivira and Woods' first design effort, dubbed El Cardonal, Los Cabos now boasts 14 layouts, most of which are within easy and close proximity to each other.

The addition of golf only enhanced the allure of Cabo as a tourist destination, and so did the growth of hotels catering to all comers. The genuine warmth and hospitality of the people living and working there wowed visitors as well. So did the comforting sense of security, and while swaths of Mexico succumbed to horrific bouts of violence, Los Cabos remained very safe.

My trip to Cabo started, quite appropriately, at the place where golf was born on the peninsula, the 900-acre resort community called Palmilla. There are three nines at that retreat, all laid out by the Golden Bear, and some 600 feet of elevation changes as well as gaping *arroyos* and near-constant vistas of the Sea of Cortez. To the west, on nearly two miles of Pacific coastline, is Diamante, a 1,500-acre resort community.

The Love-designed Dunes Course opened in 2009, and as the appellation suggests, it is a wind-whipped, links-style layout routed among the sandhills. The track is respected enough to have made the top-100 world rankings of some golf publications, and there is much anticipation about the El Cardonal course that Woods has created on similarly spectacular terrain nearby.

I enjoy my round on the Dunes, even though the course eats my lunch. And I find the homemade tamales served at the halfway ▶

a perfect day

CABO SAN LUCAS, MEXICO | As a rule, it is never a good day when it begins with a text message from an airline agent informing you that your flight has been canceled. But I am in sunny Los Cabos when I learn that I have been stranded, so I try to bear up. I take stock of the fact that temperatures will linger in the mid-80s and that I not only have my bathing suit and golf clubs but also a good WiFi connection and plenty of work in my briefcase to keep me busy.

A couple of hours later, I learn it might be a couple of days before I can get back to Dallas, where it has just snowed a couple of inches and placed the city into a state of near-nuclear panic about streets suddenly strewn with wet, white stuff. And when my wife, Cynthia, calls to tell me it is also snowing in Connecticut, I feel sure that I am better off where I am (though I am not so stupid as to offer that opinion to my better half). In fact, I believe that what started off as a bad day is going to turn out to be pretty perfect.

To ensure that, I immediately organize a tee time. But not until the early afternoon, so I have several hours to get caught up on e-mails and edits. Once my work is done, I head to the Madero restaurant by the Hilton hotel pool. There, I read *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* on my laptop as I sip Don Julio tequila and sup on fresh shrimp tacos. The breeze on my slightly sunburned face feels refreshing, and I savor the sounds of waves breaking on the beach below. Occasionally, I am jarred by the whir of a blender in which margaritas are being mixed. But down here, that is a happy sound.

I catch a ride to Diamante after lunch for a quick 18. And as I head back to the Hilton after my game, I feel pretty good at how I have salvaged my day. Then, I receive another text telling me my flight out is delayed another day. Truth be told, it is not an unfortunate development.

But it is a development I must share with my wife. I figure the best way to make that call is after I



Heaven is the halfway house at Diamante, and the margaritas that this maiden so deftly mixes.

have acquired some courage, in the form of some more Don Julio. So, I trek back to Madero for a drink before I connect to my Connecticut home, via Skype. I tell Cynthia about my being stranded again, while leaving out details of how I am spending my time in exile. I tell a good tale and even seem to be garnering a bit of sympathy about my plight. But just as I am finishing my story, the bartender fires up the blender.

"What is that?" my wife asks with a wry smile as the air is filled with the sounds of ice being pulverized.

I smile sheepishly, realizing that my cover is fully blown. Suddenly, this day does not seem quite as perfect anymore.

Oh well, I think after Cynthia and I say goodbye. There is always tomorrow. ●



Tiger Woods' El Cardonal course is under construction.



house to be a most welcome repast after nine holes.

Robert Trent Jones II also has left his mark in this area, in the form of his scenic Cabo Real Golf Course, and its routing – from the scrubby hills to the Sea of Cortez and back up again – fits my eye extremely well. So do the panoramas from each hole, a few of which run along the water, and I holler to no one in particular when I espy a gray whale breaching as I line up my putt on one green.

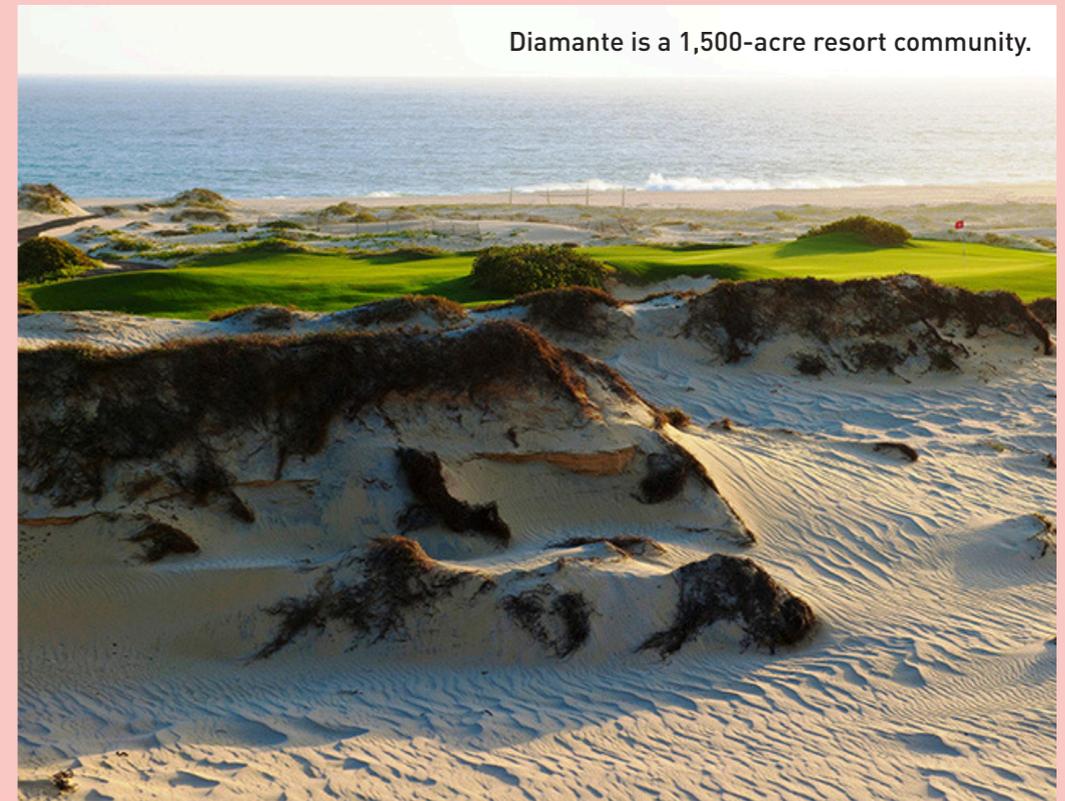
Cabo del Sol's Ocean Course may well be the class of Cabo, but I also give high marks to the Desert Course at this same retreat. Laid out by Tom Weiskopf, it features plenty of pleasing water views. Yet it often

feels as if I am playing one of his acclaimed Arizona courses, with lush green tees sitting like sodded lily pads amid expanses of pale-gray sand. The ample fairways encourage golfers to grip it and rip it, and the devilish green complexes put a premium on accuracy when it comes to hitting approaches.

The Desert Course is more or less empty the day I play it, and I tear around that layout in three hours. As soon as I am done, I start considering where I will go that evening. I am sure I will not be giggling with any marlins. But I will be going out, for I have learned that is what you do in Cabo. You play, after you have played. ●

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

Diamante is a 1,500-acre resort community.



Sun sets against the 12th green at the Quivira Golf Club.