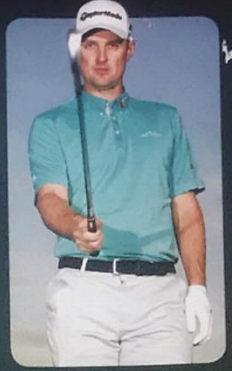


BATTLE OF THE DRIVERS
CALLAWAY ROGUE V TAYLORMADE M3

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JUSTIN ROSE
7 WAYS TO HIT
IT PURE

HOW
TOMMY FLEETWOOD
TURNED
HIS CAREER
AROUND

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MAJORLESS
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THE DISTANCE REPORT
WHAT IT SAID &
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HARD YARDS
TACKLING
THE WORLD'S
LONGEST
COURSE



PREVIEW

THE RISE & RISE OF

CAMERON SMITH

+

**PUTTING THE SHINE IN
SHINNECOCK HILLS**



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STRANDED ON 99

Every golfer dreams of playing Augusta National. It is one of the world's most revered courses. But for one Australian, the home of the Masters has simply become the final piece to a decade-long puzzle.

WORDS MICHAEL JONES MAIN PHOTOGRAPHY BRENDAN JAMES

It's the last day of Spring on Long Island, New York, when the phone finally rings. Greg Gilson feels his heart thump. He lifts the receiver and presses it to his ear. A familiar voice greets him but it sounds dejected – and Greg can sense what's about to be said.

The conversation continues, pleasantries are exchanged and words of reassurance are offered. But Gilson feels defeated. His opportunity to play Augusta National has crumbled at the eleventh hour.

Dr Alistair MacKenzie's masterpiece has

become Gilson's Holy Grail. It represents the final stage of a 10-year journey that has sent him to all corners of the globe.

The 61-year-old is chasing history, you see. He is vying to become the first Australian to play each of the world's top-100 ranked golf courses. But the gates to Magnolia Lane have just slammed shut – and he remains stranded on 99.

Augusta National is one of the world's most exclusive golf clubs; it has been since its inception in 1933. But privacy creates mystery. And that's what makes playing the Georgian layout all the more desirable.

There are actually multiple ways for people to walk the hallowed fairways with club in hand. But none are easy – and some are controversial.

You can play with one of the club's members if you receive an invitation. But that becomes challenging when you discover there are only 300 members at any given time. Gilson had finally managed to clear that major hurdle – or so he thought – by reaching out to a friend of a business client who happened to know one of the 'Green Jackets'.

But the rug had quickly been pulled from under his feet.

"There's probably a few people like me, marooned on 99 and missing that one cherry, so I was very excited by the prospect of playing Augusta National... But two nights before I was due to fly down from New York to Augusta, I got a message saying that the member could no longer make it," explained Gilson, whose original inspiration came from an international top-100 list published in an American golf magazine in 2009.

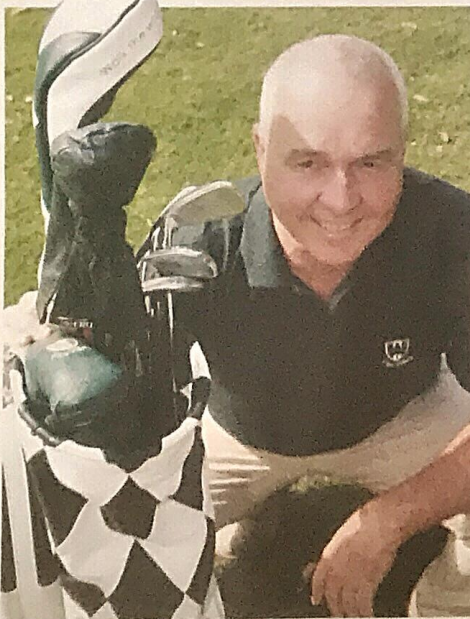
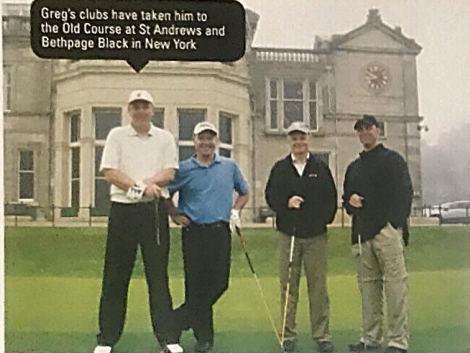
Gilson has spent most of his life completing that age-old ritual of waking up, boiling the kettle and turning on the television to watch the ▶



“BUT I THINK WITH A CLUB IN MY HANDS ... I WILL BE QUITE NERVOUS AT THE BEGINNING – AND I’LL BE VERY EMOTIONAL AT THE END.”
– GREG GILSON



Greg's clubs have taken him to the Old Course at St Andrews and Bethpage Black in New York



Masters. So Augusta National has always meant something to him. But playing the sacred course is fast becoming less of a desire, and more of an objective.

"Like anybody in golf, I grew up loving that Monday morning experience of watching the Masters," Gilson said. "But playing Augusta has become more of a goal to be achieved, rather than a 'dream come true' feeling.

"That might all change when I walk through the gates, of course. I've been fortunate enough to go to the Masters on several occasions. But I think with a club in my hands... I will be quite nervous at the beginning - and I'll be very emotional at the end."

Gilson essentially grew up with a golf club in his hands. His father was the head professional at Southport Golf Club - and he opened the first driving range on the Gold Coast in the early 1960s. After spending his high school years picking

up balls (by hand) on the range, he began working for Mobil, which allowed him to travel extensively and exposed him to some of the world's finest golf courses.

"When I started working overseas I got an education on golf courses," Gilson said. "In Australia, unless you're a member of one of the premium courses - or you're based in Melbourne - you don't have a sense of the diversity or the variety of some of the great golf courses that are out there."

When Mobil merged with Exxon in 1999, Greg decided to start his own business doing caddy work for overseas tourists visiting the Melbourne Sandbelt, which (unbeknownst to him) would eventually help him with his golfing mission.

"I would be out there all through the summer caddying for overseas visitors - and most of them would be members of Olympic, Pine Valley,

Shinnecock Hills... places like that," Gilson said.

"So I kept all those names, and when the time came and I was in their area, I would give them a call, remind them who I was and try to organise a game at their course. It became sort of a domino effect, they all know someone who's a member at another one of the great courses.

"With any of these global top-100 lists, at least two thirds of the courses are private. So getting into these highly private clubs is the number one challenge. It really becomes a networking game. You need to make the acquaintance of members of some of these clubs through family or through business relationships"

As far as Greg's aware, there are only 34 people who have played each of the world's top-100 courses - and of those people, more than 90 percent are from the US. So not only is it difficult to gain access to such exclusive clubs, it also becomes a geographical challenge when you

consider the majority of these courses are more than 15,000 kilometres from the east coast of Australia.

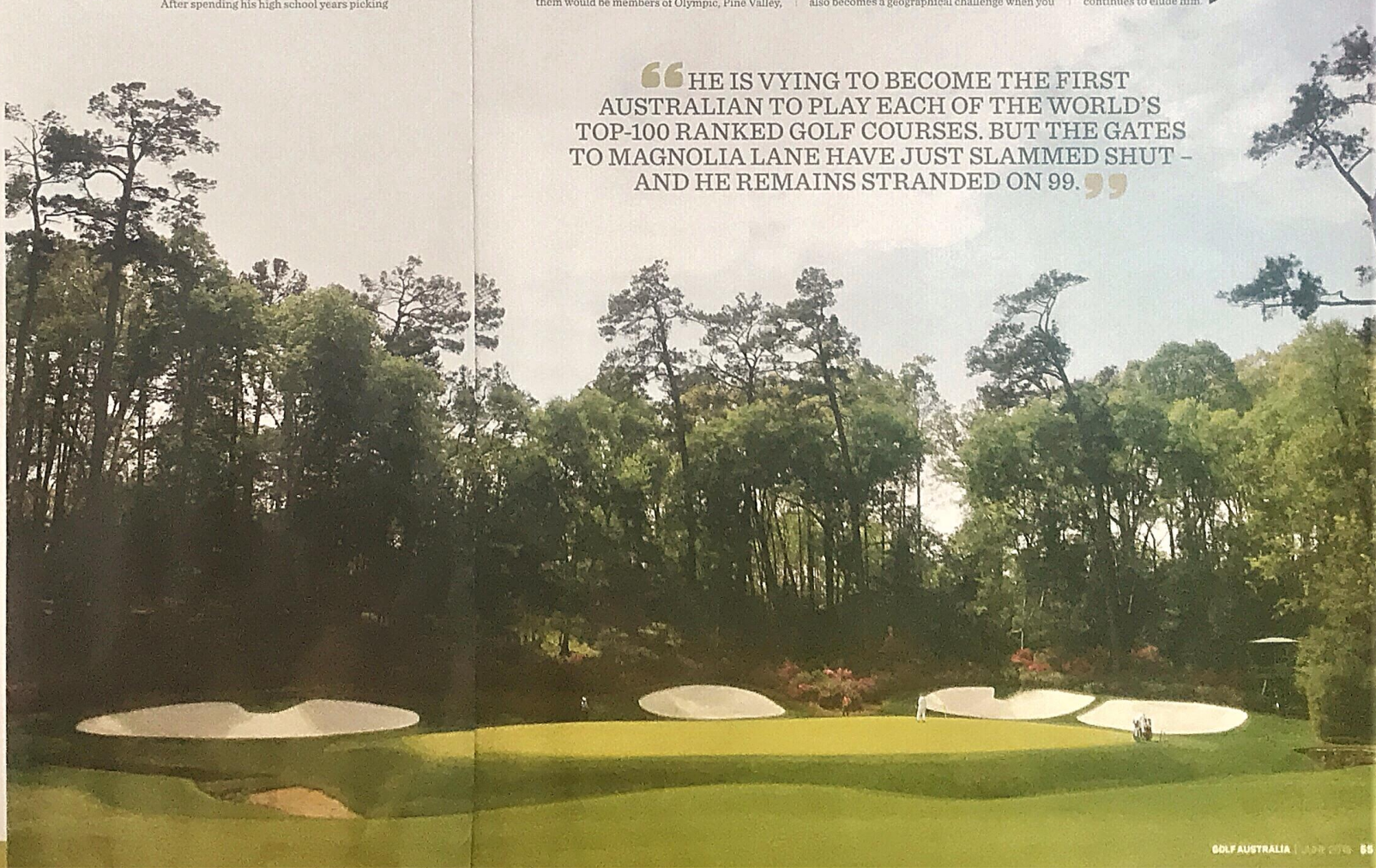
But that hasn't stopped Greg, whose bold venture continues to be fuelled by multiple publications.

"I started seeing these lists in magazines about the best golf courses, the hardest golf courses in the US and the most enjoyable golf courses - and being a diligent kind of guy, I started ticking off the ones that I had played," Gilson said.

"Eventually I came across this blog called 'top100golf', which was run by a fella like myself who was trying to play all the best courses in the world," Gilson said. "So that's what really inspired me to actually try and do this thing."

Gilson remains inspired. But that one final cherry dangling at the end of Magnolia Lane continues to elude him. ▶

“HE IS VYING TO BECOME THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN TO PLAY EACH OF THE WORLD'S TOP-100 RANKED GOLF COURSES. BUT THE GATES TO MAGNOLIA LANE HAVE JUST SLAMMED SHUT - AND HE REMAINS STRANDED ON 99.”



GILSON'S 50 FAVOURITE COURSES

1 St Andrews (Old course)
Fife, Scotland

2 Cypress Point
California, US

3 National Golf Links of America
New York, US

4 Pine Valley GC
New Jersey, US

5 Cruden Bay
Aberdeenshire, Scotland

6 Oakmont CC
Pennsylvania, US

7 Golf Club de Morfontaine
Morfontaine, France

8 Bandon Dunes Resort (Pacific Dunes)
Oregon, US

9 Garden City Golf Club
New York, US

10 Royal Dornoch
Sutherland, Scotland

11 New South Wales GC
Sydney, Australia

12 Sunningdale Golf Club (Old course)
Berkshire, England

13 Shoreacres
Illinois, US

14 Chambers Bay
Washington, US

OLD COURSE, ST ANDREWS



15 Cape Wickham Links
King Island, Australia

16 Merion Golf Club (East course)
Pennsylvania, US

17 Fisher's Island Club
New York, US

18 Whistling Straits (Straits course)
Wisconsin, US

19 Bandon Dunes Resort (Bandon Dunes)
Oregon, US

20 Kawana Hotel Golf Course (Fuji course)
Shizuoka, Japan

21 Ballybunion Golf Club (Old course)
Ballybunion, Ireland

22 Hirono Golf Club
Hyogo, Japan

23 Diamante Resort
Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

24 Crystal Downs CC
Michigan, US

25 Tobacco Road Golf Club
North Carolina, US

26 Royal County Down
Newcastle, Northern Ireland

27 Cabot Cliffs
Nova Scotia, Canada

28 Kingston Heath GC
Melbourne, Australia

29 Prairie Dunes CC
Kansas, US

30 Royal St George's GC
Kent, England

31 Chicago GC
Illinois, US

32 Royal Melbourne GC (West course)
Melbourne, Australia

33 Trump Turnberry Resort
(Ailsa course), Ayrshire, Scotland

34 Lahinch GC
Lahinch, Ireland

35 Sand Hills GC
Nebraska, US

36 TPC Sawgrass
Florida, US

37 Cape Kidnappers
Napier, New Zealand

38 Swinley Forest
Berkshire, England

39 Camargo Club
Ohio, US

40 Shinnecock Hills GC
New York, US

41 Tara Iti Golf Club
Mangawhai, New Zealand

42 Royal Cinque Ports GC
Kent, England

43 Machrihanish GC
Argyll, Scotland

44 Ocean Dunes
King Island, Australia



MACHRIHANISH

45 Nanea GC
Hawaii, US

46 Kiawah Golf Resort (Ocean course)
South Carolina, US

47 Friar's Head GC
New York, US

48 The Olympic Club (Lake course)
California, US

49 Casa de Campo (Teeth of the Dog)
La Romana, Dominican Republic

50 The Island GC
Dublin, Ireland

This ranking is based on the following criteria ...

50 percent: Quality of the course architecture
25 percent: Quality of the atmosphere, history, conditions and clubhouse
25 percent: How much fun was had and the desire to return

5 MOST UNDERRATED COURSES

1. Shoreacres, Illinois, US
2. Tobacco Road, North Carolina, US
3. Royal Cinque Ports, Kent, England
4. Western Gailes, Ayrshire, Scotland
5. St Germain, Wisconsin, US

5 MOST OVERRATED COURSES

1. Medinah (No.3 course), Illinois, US
2. Ditavos Dunes, Cascais, Portugal
3. Valderrama, Sotogrande, Spain
4. Southern Hills, Oklahoma, US
5. Scioto CC, Ohio, US

NEW SOUTH WALES GC



WHISTLING STRAITS

