the 16th hole at Cabot Cliffs, No. 9 on the World 100, is 176 yards of beauty.
ROYAL COUNTY DOWN (CHAMPIONSHIP) REPEATS AS THE TOP-RANKED COURSE ON THE WORLD 100. THE FOURTH HOLE STRETCHES FROM 202 TO 229 YARDS.
Golf Digest’s third biennial ranking of the World 100 Greatest Golf Courses is truly global, showcasing brilliant layouts everywhere from Abu Dhabi to Vietnam, but not the United States. This is not a slight against courses born in the USA; Golf Digest will continue to produce biennial rankings of America’s 100 Greatest Golf Courses in odd-numbered years. A big part of the reason is that our two rankings are determined differently. America’s 100 Greatest is always based on evaluations by North American panelists judging courses in seven criteria. The World 100 Greatest uses a single criterion of overall greatness scored not just by Americans but also by international panelists organized by our affiliate magazines around the world.

Still, if you’re in a debating mood, allow us to pose another topic. Even a cursory look at our World 100 Greatest, topped again by Royal County Down in Northern Ireland, reveals that a group of big-name golf-course architects are responsible for many of the courses on our list. Here’s the question: Does it take a prominent name to generate a world-class course, or does a great course turn an architect into a big name?

Among living architects, the two with the most designs on this year’s ranking are Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman, both champion golfers long before they transitioned into golf design. Each has five original designs among the World 100. Nicklaus is responsible for No. 28 Jack Nicklaus Golf Club in South Korea, No. 63 Punta Espada in the Dominican Republic and in Mexico, No. 70 Cabo del Sol (Ocean), No 91 Four Seasons Punta Mita (Pacifico) and No. 93 Quivira.

Norman is credited with the ultra-exclusive Ellerston (No. 31) and No. 98 The National (Moonah) in his native Australia, No. 35 The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip and No. 94 BRG Da Nang in Vietnam and No. 82 Jumeirah (Earth) in Dubai, where the European Tour’s Race to Dubai has finished every year since 2009. Norman has also been involved in a bit of renovation at No. 18 New South Wales in Australia.

Close behind those two titans is perhaps the most influential golf architect on the planet, Tom Doak, who designed No. 6 Tara Iti, the highest ranked American-designed course on our list, and No. 17 Cape Kidnappers, both in New Zealand, plus No. 11 Barnbougle Dunes and No. 86 St. Andrews Beach, both in Australia. (The latter two were co-designs with Australian tour pro turned-architect Mike Clayton.) Doak is so respected as a design historian that he also has been engaged in restoring No. 3 Royal Melbourne (West) and No. 19 Royal Melbourne (East), No. 85 Royal Adelaide, all in Australia, as well as No. 80 Woodhall Spa (Hotchkin) in England, No. 54 Mid Ocean Club in Bermuda and, with the assistance of Canadian architect Ian Andrew, No. 20 St. George’s in Ontario.

Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw have three highly placed courses: No. 8 Shanqin Bay in China, No. 9 Cabot Cliffs in Nova Scotia and No. 26 Barnbougle Lost Farm in Australia, but because Crenshaw prefers not to travel much internationally, he was involved only in the design of Cabot Cliffs.

Gil Hanse has one course on the list, No. 53 Castle Stuart in Scotland, co-designed with its developer, Mark Parsinen. Hanse’s acclaimed Rio Olympic Golf Course in Brazil lacked a sufficient number of panelist votes for consideration (25 were needed to make our World 100). If the course survives the Rio economy, we suspect it will be a contender for our 2020 ranking.

Likewise, Pete Dye has one course on the list, No. 27 Casa de Campo (Teeth of the Dog) in the Dominican Republic. Same for Tom Weiskopf: No. 74 Loch Lomond in Scotland, done with the late Jay Morrish. Tom Fazio has two: No. 36 National in Canada, done in the 1970s with his uncle George Fazio, and No. 97 Querencia in Mexico, although Fazio has also remodeled No. 55 Waterville in Ireland and, with his son Logan, No. 90 Kasumigaseki (East) in preparation for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.
GOLFDIGEST.COM | FEBRUARY 2018

GOLF DIGEST’S WORLD 100 GREATEST GOLF COURSES

1 Royal County Down G.C. (Championship), Newcastle, Northern Ireland
2 Royal Dornoch G.C. (Championship), Scotland
3 Royal Melbourne G.C. (West), Black Rock, Australia
4 Muirfield, Gullane, Scotland
5 St. Andrews Links (Old), Fife, Scotland
6 Tara Iti G.C., Mangawhai, New Zealand
7 Royal Portrush G.C. (Dunluce), Northern Ireland
8 Shangri-La Golf Club, Hainan Island, China
9 Cabot Cliffs, Inverness, Canada
10 Trump Turnberry (Ailsa), Scotland
11 Barnbougle Dunes, Bridport, Australia
12 Sunningdale G.C. (Old), England
13 Kingston Heath G.C., Cheltenham, Australia
14 Golf de Morfontaine G.C., Mortefontaine, France
15 Royal Birkdale G.C., Southport, England
16 Ballybunion G.C. (Old), Ireland
17 Cape Kidnappers, Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand
18 New South Wales G.C., La Perouse, Australia
19 Royal Melbourne G.C. (East), Black Rock, Australia
20 St. George’s G. and C.C., Etobicoke, Canada
21 Carnoustie G. Links (Championship), Scotland
22 Royal St. George’s G.C., Sandwich, England
23 The Club at Nine Bridges, Jeju Island, South Korea
24 Cape Wickham Links, King Island, Australia
25 North Berwick G.C., Scotland
26 Barnbougle Lost Farm, Bridport, Australia
27 Casa de Campo (Teeth of the Dog), La Romana, Dominican Republic
28 Jack Nicklaus G.C. Korea, Incheon, South Korea
29 Haesley Nine Bridges, Yeouju, South Korea
30 Kingsbarns G. Links, St. Andrews, Scotland
31 Ellerston G. Cse., Hunter Valley, Australia
32 St. George’s Hill G.C., Weybridge, England
33 Sunningdale G.C. (New), England
34 Lahinch G.C. (Old), Ireland
35 The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip, Ho Tram, Vietnam
36 National G.C. of Canada, Woodbridge
37 Kauri Cliffs, Matauri Bay, New Zealand
38 Fancourt (Links), George, South Africa
39 Swinley Forest G.C., Ascot, England
40 Royal Troon G.C. (Old), Scotland
41 Royal Porthcawl G.C., Wales
42 Valderrama G.C., Sotogrande, Spain
43 Cabot Links, Inverness, Canada
44 Yas Links, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
45 Victoria G.C., Cheltenham, Australia
46 Royal Lytham & St. Annes G.C., England
47 Diamante (Dunes), Cabo San Lucas, Mexico
48 Mission Hills Haikou (Blackstone), Hainan, China
49 South Cape Owners Club, Namhae Island, South Korea
Take in the views and then take a whack at the par-3 17th hole at Tara Iti in New Zealand, No. 6 on our list.

50 Hirono G.C., Hyogo, Japan
51 Capilano G. and C.C., West Vancouver, Canada
52 Emirates G.C. (Majlis), Dubai, United Arab Emirates
53 Castle Stuart G. Links, Inverness, Scotland
54 Mid Ocean Club, Tucker’s Town, Bermuda
55 Waterville G. Links, Ireland
56 Cruden Bay G.C., Scotland
57 Metropolitan G.C., South Oakleigh, Australia
58 Portmarnock G.C. (Championship), Ireland
59 Black Mountain G.C. (East/North), Hua Hin, Thailand
60 Hamilton G. & C.C. (West/South), Ancaster, Canada
61 Machrihanish G.C., Scotland
62 Sheshan International G.C., Shanghai, China
63 Punta Espada G.C., Cap Cana, Dominican Republic
64 Trump International G. Links, Balmedie, Scotland
65 Leopard Creek C.C., Malelane, South Africa
66 Walton Heath G.C. (Old), Walton-on-the-Hill, England
67 Rye G.C. (Old), England
68 Ganton G.C., England
69 Olgiata G.C. (West), Rome, Italy
70 Cabo del Sol (Ocean), Los Cabos, Mexico
71 Royal Aberdeen G.C. (Balgownie), Scotland
72 Royal Liverpool G.C., Hoylake, England
73 Siam C.C. (Old), Pattaya, Thailand
74 Loch Lomond G.C., Luss, Scotland
75 Kawana Hotel G. Cse. (Fuji), Shizuoka, Japan
76 Jack’s Point G. Cse., Queenstown, New Zealand
77 Paraparaumu Beach G.C., New Zealand
78 TPC Kuala Lumpur (West), Malaysia
79 Sentosa G.C. (Serapong), Singapore
80 Woodhall Spa G.C. (Hotchkin), England
81 Anyang C.C., Gunpo City, South Korea
82 Jumeirah G. Estates (Earth), Dubai, United Arab Emirates
83 Old Head G. Links, Kinsale, Ireland
84 Naruo G.C., Kawanishi, Japan
85 Royal Adelaide G.C., Seaton, Australia
86 St. Andrews Beach G. Cse., Fingal, Australia
87 Highlands Links, Ingonish Beach, Canada
88 Spring City Golf and Lake Resort (Lake), Kunming, China
89 Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge G.C., Canada
90 Kasumigaseki C.C. (East), Saitama, Japan
91 Four Seasons Punta Mita (Pacifico), Punt Mita, Mexico
92 The European Club, Brittas Bay, Ireland
93 Quivira G.C., Cabo San Lucas, Mexico
94 BRG Da Nang G.C., Vietnam
95 Prestwick G.C., Scotland
96 Durban C.C., South Africa
97 Querencia C.C., Los Cabos, Mexico
98 The National G.C. (Moonah), Cape Schanck, Australia
99 Banff Springs G. Cse. (Thompson), Canada
100 Western Gailes G.C., Irvine, Scotland
The new 11th hole at Trump Turnberry (Ailsa), No. 10 on our list, plays from 115 to 215 yards.
Some architects deserve more attention but haven’t achieved it, at least by American standards. Consider Martin Hawtree, a third-generation golf architect, now 70, who designed one of Scotland’s most stunning new courses, No. 64 Trump International, and has remodeled several courses for recent Open Championships, including No. 4 Muirfield, No. 5 St. Andrews (Old), No. 15 Royal Birkdale, No. 21 Carnoustie (Championship) and No. 72 Royal Liverpool. Hawtree has also done extensive revisions to No. 32 St. George’s Hill and No. 33 Sunningdale (New) in England, No. 71 Royal Aberdeen (Balgownie) in Scotland and No. 16 Ballybunion (Old), No. 34 Lahinch (Old) and No. 58 Portmarnock (Championship) in Ireland. His involvement in 12 courses among our World 100 is the most by any architect.

Hawtree was also one of the eight finalists for the Rio job. Yet his name often is confused with another British architect, Martin Ebert, who with Tom Mackenzie has done several high-profile remodeling jobs, in particular No. 7 Royal Portrush (Dunluce), site of the 2019 Open Championship; No. 22 Royal St. George’s, the 2020 Open site; No. 40 Royal Troon, which hosted the Open in 2016; plus No. 10 Trump Turnberry (Ailsa) and No. 46 Royal Lytham & St. Annes, which hope to remain on the rota. Mackenzie and Ebert have also renovated No. 41 Royal Porthcawl in Wales, No. 56 Cruden Bay in Scotland, T-68 Ganton in England and No. 60 Hamilton (West/South) in Ontario.

If you believe great courses establish an architect’s bona fides, then Kyle Phillips deserves mention. Phillips served as an associate for Robert Trent Jones Jr. for more than 15 years before establishing his firm in 1997. Since then, he has quietly produced some of the globe’s finest designs. His breakthrough course was No. 30 Kingsbarns near St. Andrews, Scotland, done with Mark Parsinen (who later developed Castle Stuart). Phillips also created No. 44 Yas Links in Abu Dhabi, long considered the best course in United Arab Emirates, and No. 49 South Cape on rocky cliffs of South Korea’s Namhae Island. Some consider it “the Pebble Beach” of Korea.

Like many great architects, Phillips is also a student of the past, and his appreciation of the late, artistic Tom Simpson resulted in his sympathetic remodeling of No. 14 Morfontaine in France. And Phillips’ appreciation of Robert Trent Jones, an icon in golf architecture and father of Kyle’s old boss, is reflected in Kyle’s renovations at No. 42 Valderrama in Spain.

For more on the World 100 and for the country-by-country rankings, please go to golfdigest.com/go/100greatest.