

Rubenstein: Oregon courses offer golf as it was intended

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Globe and Mail Update

BANDON, ORE. — PGA Tour players are calculating precise distances while playing by yardages in the Chrysler Championship near Tampa, but golfers here are immersed in traditional golf. The three beguiling, walking-only courses at the much acclaimed Bandon Dunes Golf Resort invite golf that tells the player to throw away the yardage book.

"I don't know how far it is, but this is the club," a Bandon caddie is likely to say. Golfers can consult inconspicuous markers on the fairway, but most learn not to bother. The ground game matters, because the firm, fast fescue fairways welcome a bouncing ball. The golf's about more than the aerial game, into the fescue greens and the fairways.

So it was that a group of golfers from Vancouver, and one from back east, have been taking to Bandon Dunes, which opened in 1999, Pacific Dunes (2001) and Bandon Trails (2005). A fourth course will open in 2010. First-time Bandonistas realize quickly why the place has become the golf resort of choice for anybody who loves the game the way it should be played. Creatively, that is.

That's why Mark Burke and Tom Monaghan, who recently left their positions as assistant pros at Vancouver's Stanley Thompson-designed Capilano course, chose Bandon to introduce their clever new venture. They're calling it The Next Golf Adventure (www.thenextgolfadventure.com).

Each trip involves plenty of golf, some on-course instruction, and an extracurricular activity. This week's off-course recreation is today's fishing expedition on the Coquille River, which will take place Saturday following golf at Pacific Dunes.

Golf, of course, is the main thing, and the golf here is extraordinarily interesting. To cite one example of a typical Bandon situation, Jerome Rak found himself in an awkward but fascinating position. Rak works in the financial world in Vancouver and is used to figuring things out with mathematical precision, or at least trying to.

