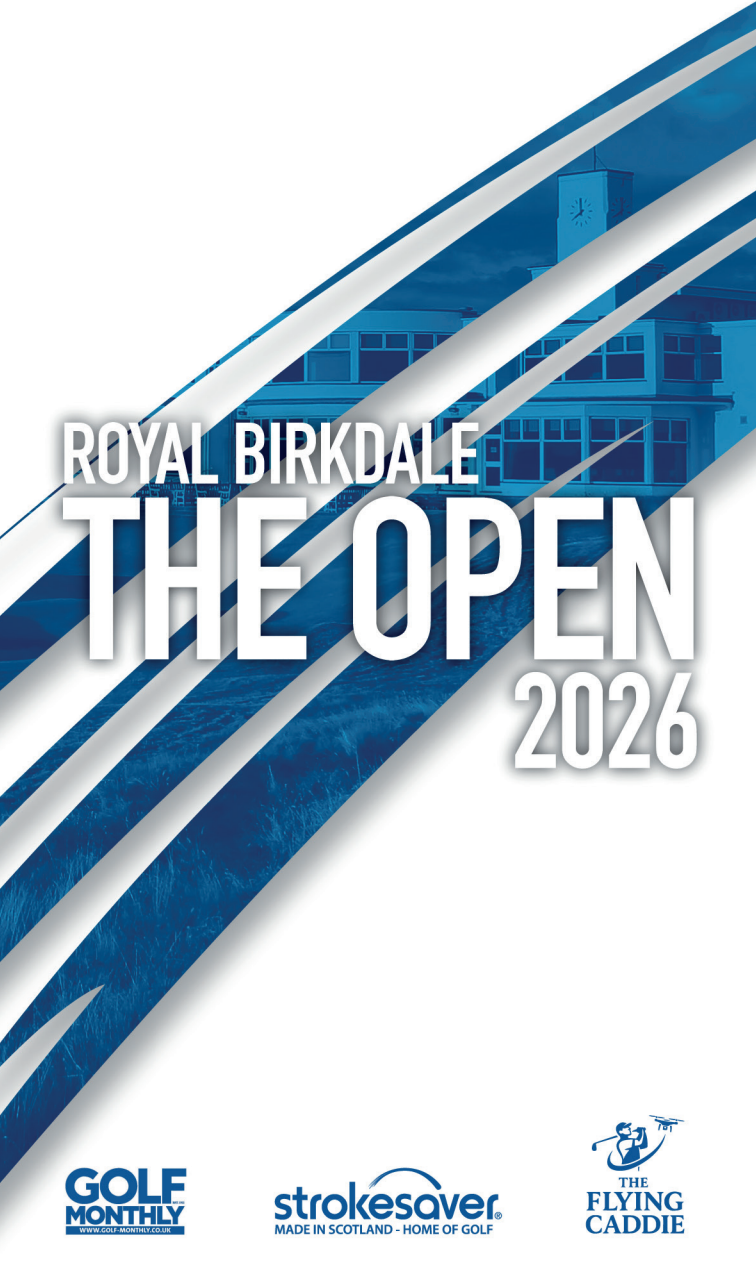




ROYAL BIRKDALE THE OPEN 2026

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YOUR GUIDE TO GOLF'S ULTIMATE TEST

NEIL TAPPIN, EDITOR, GOLF MONTHLY

Every two years, *Golf Monthly* publishes a list of the Top 100 UK and Ireland golf courses. Ever since my first involvement in this process, well over a decade ago, I've been consistently impressed by the continual improvements made by many of the golf courses we feature. Quite simply, the top courses never stand still.

Royal Birkdale is the highest ranked of the English layouts in our Top 100 and for those who have been lucky enough to have played it, you'll know exactly why. It is both ruggedly beautiful and exquisitely challenging. It is also a great example of a classic links that has been improved whilst staying true to its original design. There have been a series of changes, some subtle, some more drastic, ahead of the 2026 Open that I think are likely to add to the drama of the Championship.

The first of these is a brand new par 3. The old downhill par-3 14th has gone and in its place is a devilish new test. The par-3 15th can play long or short, depending on how the committee set up the course. Importantly, it has a very narrow entrance – there are some deep, cavernous bunkers on the left and some runoffs on the right. Any slightly errant shot will be expelled from the putting surface and leave a tough up and down.



15th hole

Another hole worth highlighting is the completely redesigned short par-4 5th. This was always a good risk-reward hole and now the players can see the green (and all the trouble) from the tee. Get it right, and you can certainly set up a birdie or eagle opportunity, but make a mistake, and there are bunkers and water that can certainly catch you out.

Another hole that has been more subtly changed is the 18th. The tee has been moved to the left and, as such, it now plays straight back towards the clubhouse. To my mind, it makes for a much more intimidating tee shot. Everything stretches out in front of you, and it requires an arrow straight drive into a fairway that feels claustrophobically narrow. Even a slightly skewed drive right or left is likely to find one of the yawning bunkers, and given the length of the hole, makes a bogey the most likely outcome. With a one-shot lead, the 18th represents a fearsome test of skill and courage.

Royal Birkdale is a worthy host for the greatest Championship in the game. It has evolved to test the best players to the limit, and I'm delighted that *Golf Monthly* has partnered with Strokesaver to deliver a guide that brings you even closer to the action. Enjoy the Open.

Neil Tappin

18th hole





During Open Championships and other tournaments, Pros rarely play a shot without first checking their course guide. Every *Strokesaver* combines GPS and drone technology for the very best in mapping and distance information. All Amateurs, like Pros, should want to know the layout of each hole and the exact distance to the green front.

A *Strokesaver* has been exclusively produced for the Players at all Open Championships for the past 46 years, where the precise measurement of every shot can make the difference between winning or losing.

ALL MEASUREMENTS ARE IN YARDS

From Zero Tee in **Red**

To Green Front in **Black**

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1

447
YARDS

PAR
4





Championship Links

on the Causeway Coast



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Visitors are warmly welcomed to play the famed Dunluce Links and its hidden gem, the Valley Links - both delivering an unforgettable test of true links golf.

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2

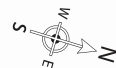
419
YARDS

PAR
4

103
298
END OF
MOUND

77
324
END OF
MOUND

168
234
START OF
MOUND



37

0

25

376

87

319

94

312

106

301

101

73

30

0



3

450
YARDS

PAR
4

171

119

74

41

22

0

39

0

28

33

395

101

332

107

326

128

308

124

304

BOTTOM
OF RIDGE

167

265

TOP OF
RIDGE





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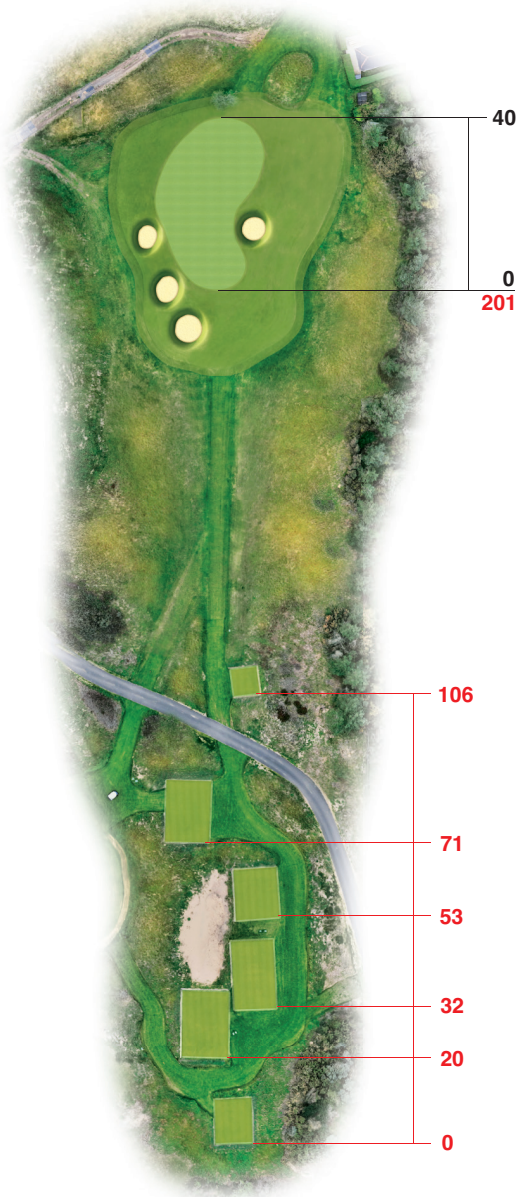
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Where every round is a story

4

219
YARDS

PAR
3





**Refined by Tom Simpson into one of
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strategy matters more than strength.**

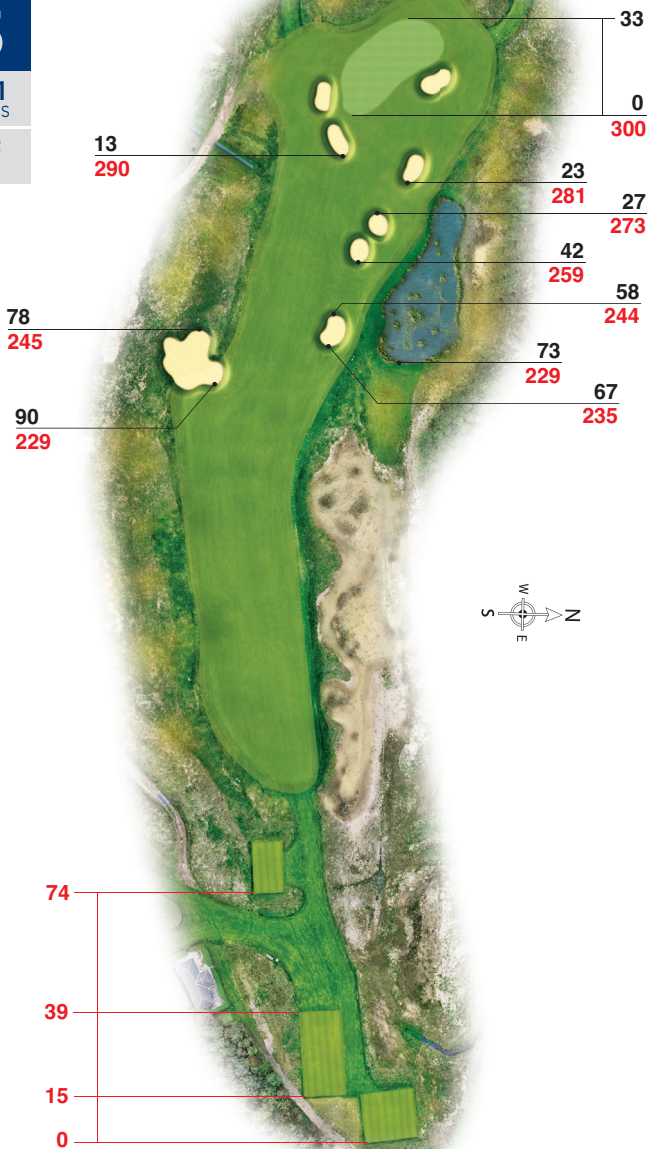
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County Louth Golf Club, Baltray, Ireland

5

321
YARDS

PAR
4

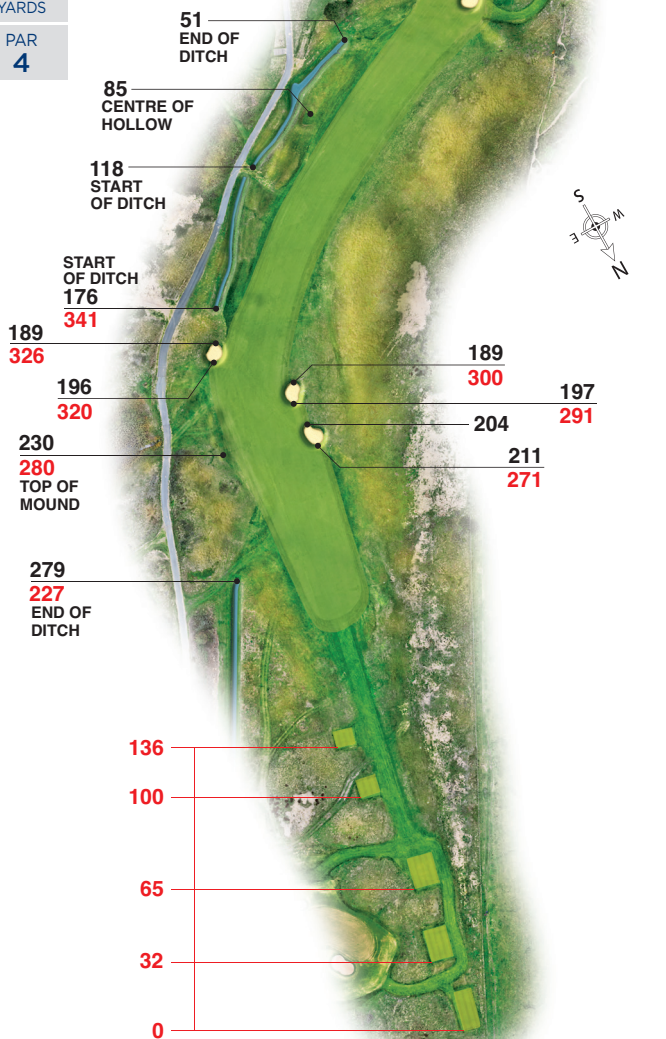




6

514
YARDS

PAR
4





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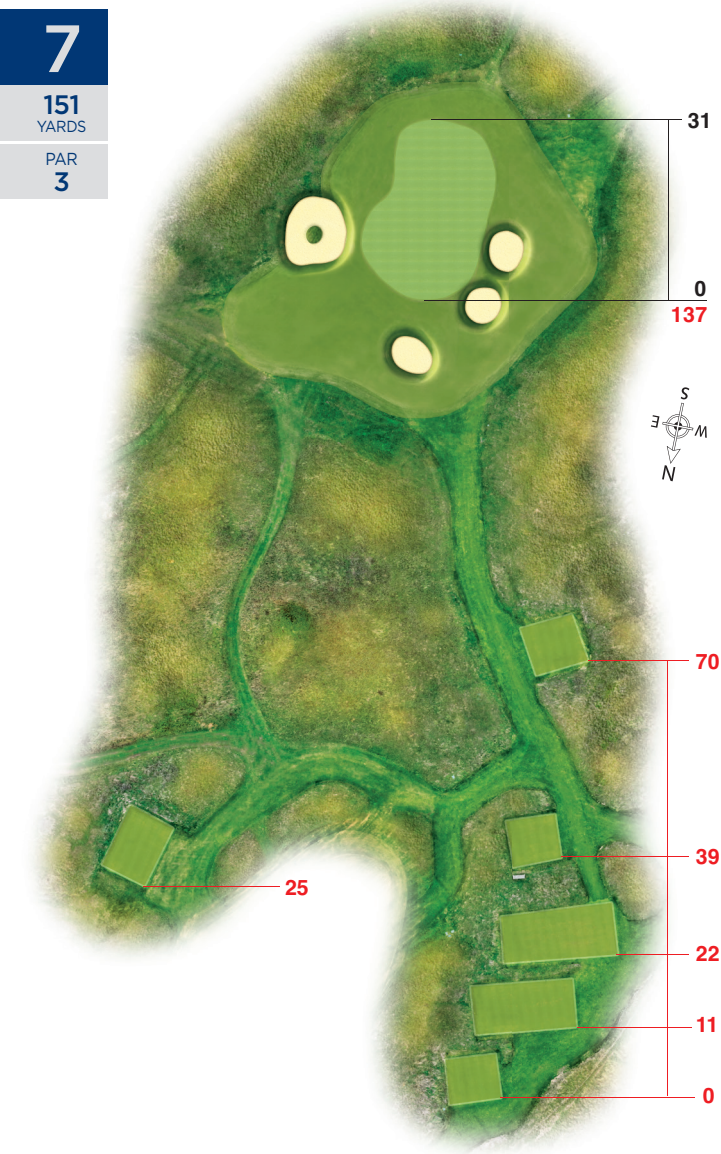
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7

151
YARDS

PAR
3



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8

459
YARDS

PAR
4



43
TOP OF
MOUND

42

0

57
END OF
DITCH

91

348

99

341

117

125

318

139

306

159

272

165

265

179

269
START OF
DITCH

211

237
END OF
DITCH

156

101

61

43

0

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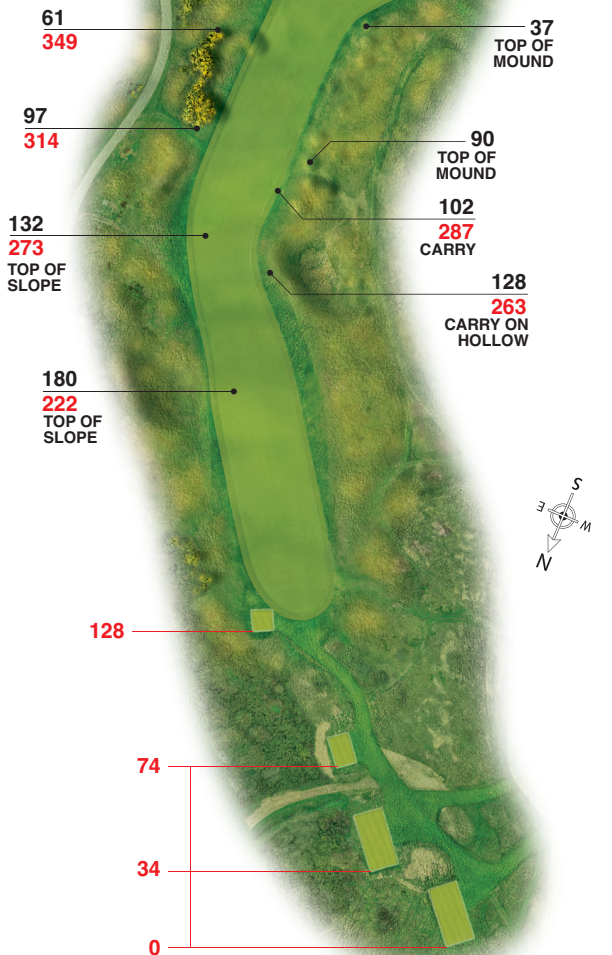
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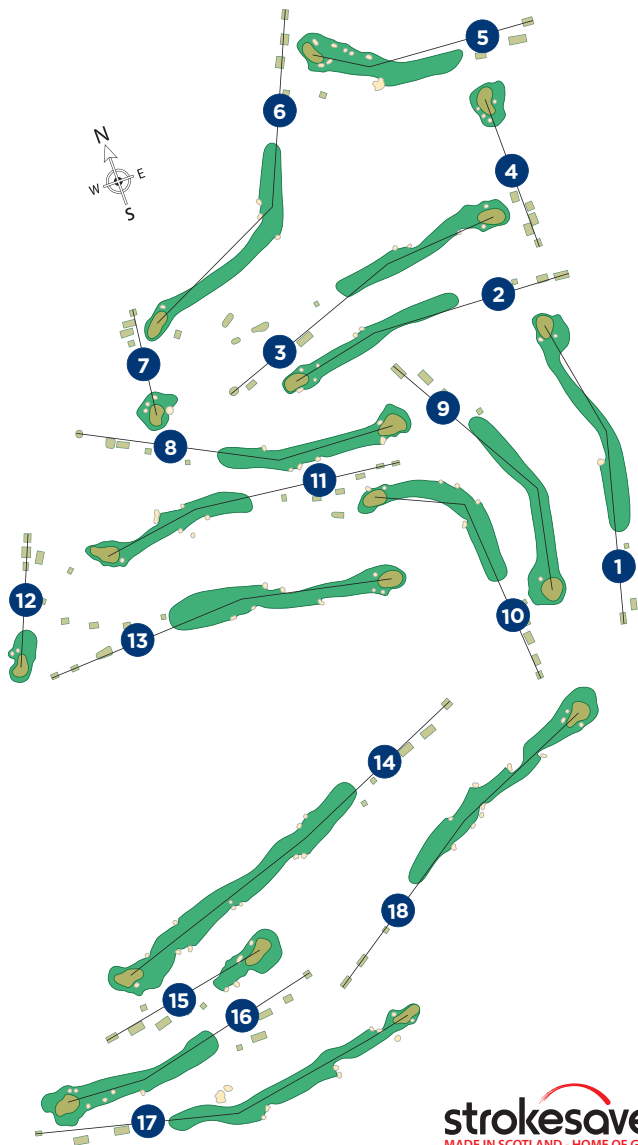
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9

414
YARDS

PAR
4





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10

397
YARDS

PAR
4

103

78

51

20

0

62

296
END OF
MOUND

80
TOP OF
MOUND

116
249

120
240

34

0

79

83

312

103

296

131

271

132

264

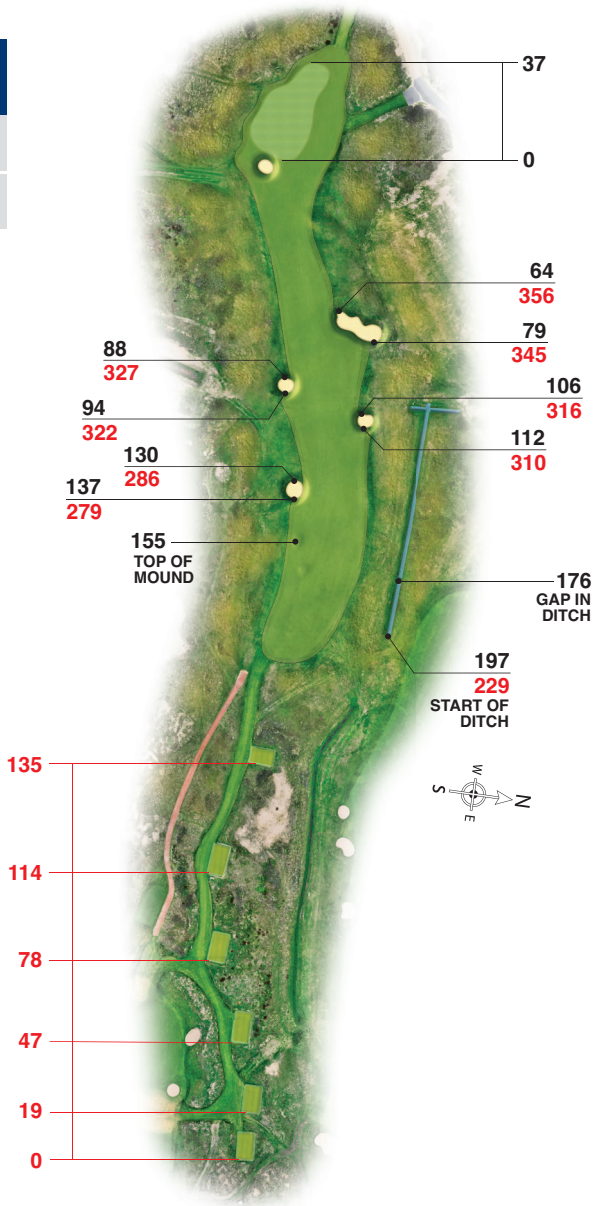




11

434
YARDS

PAR
4





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12

186
YARDS

PAR
3

33

0

171



86

29

23

40

18

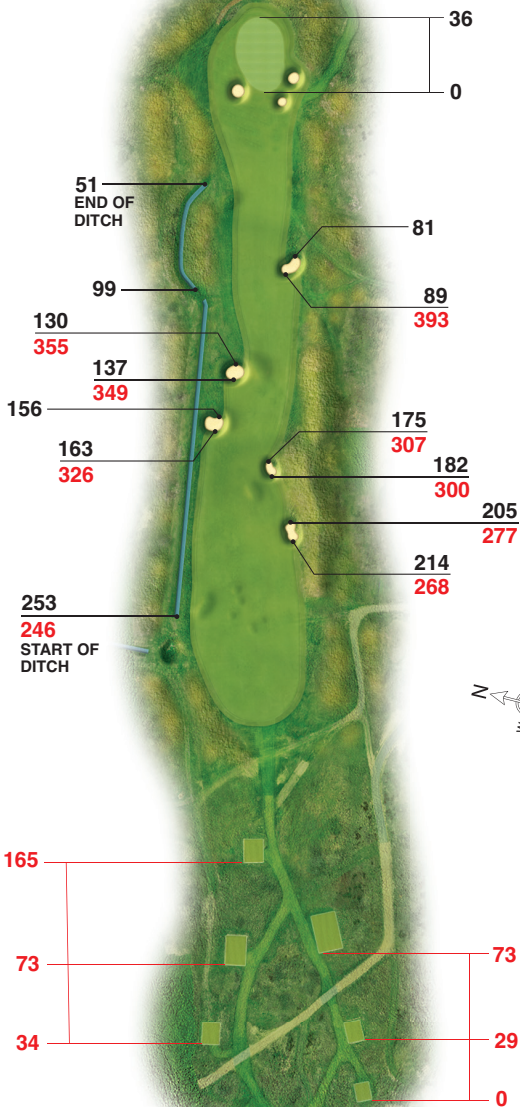
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13

502
YARDS

PAR
4





*Three Wonderful Courses,
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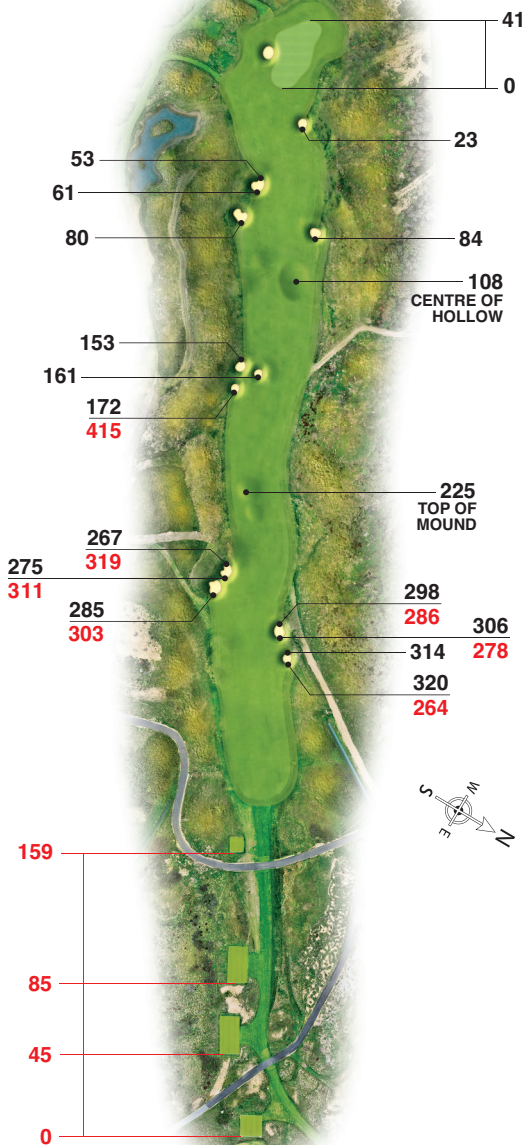
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14

602
YARDS

PAR
5



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Seville?



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15

241
YARDS

PAR
3





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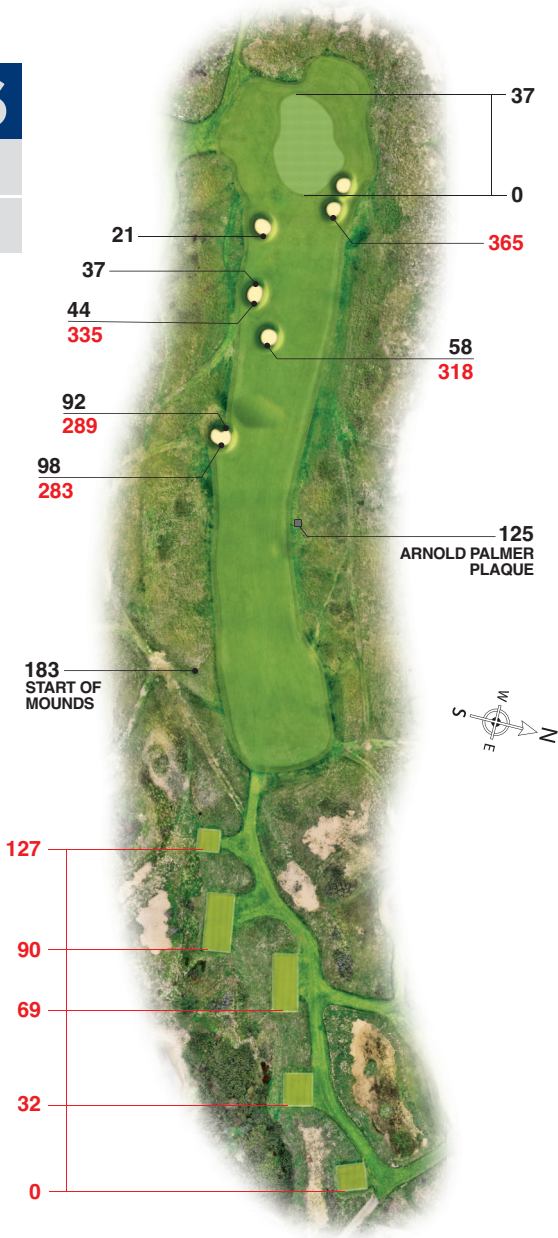


WALK THE PATH OF LEGENDS

16

393
YARDS

PAR
4

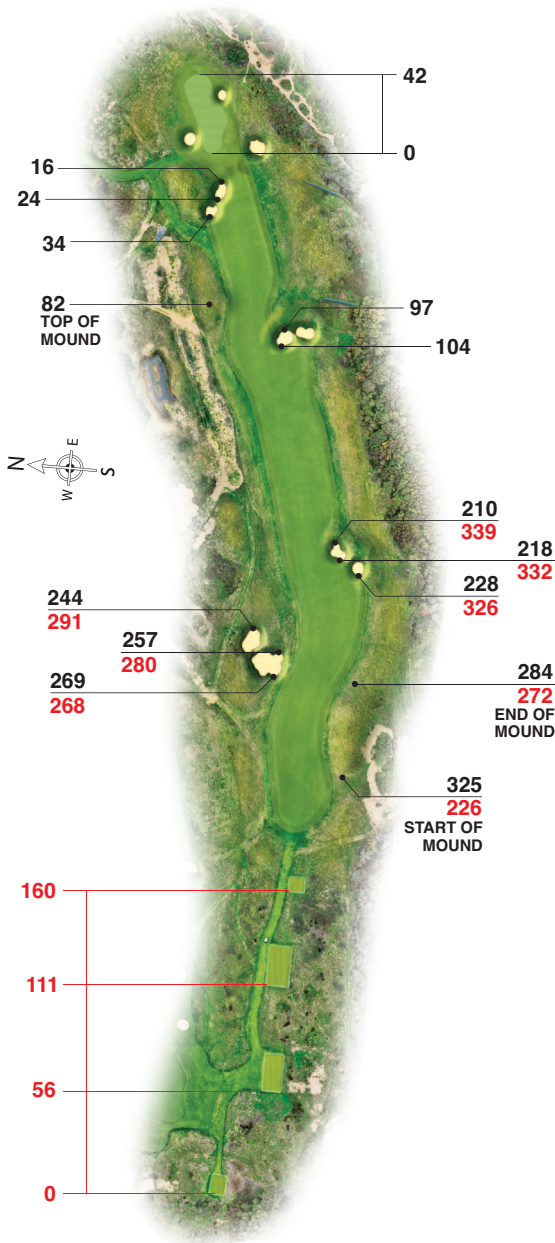




17

566
YARDS

PAR
5



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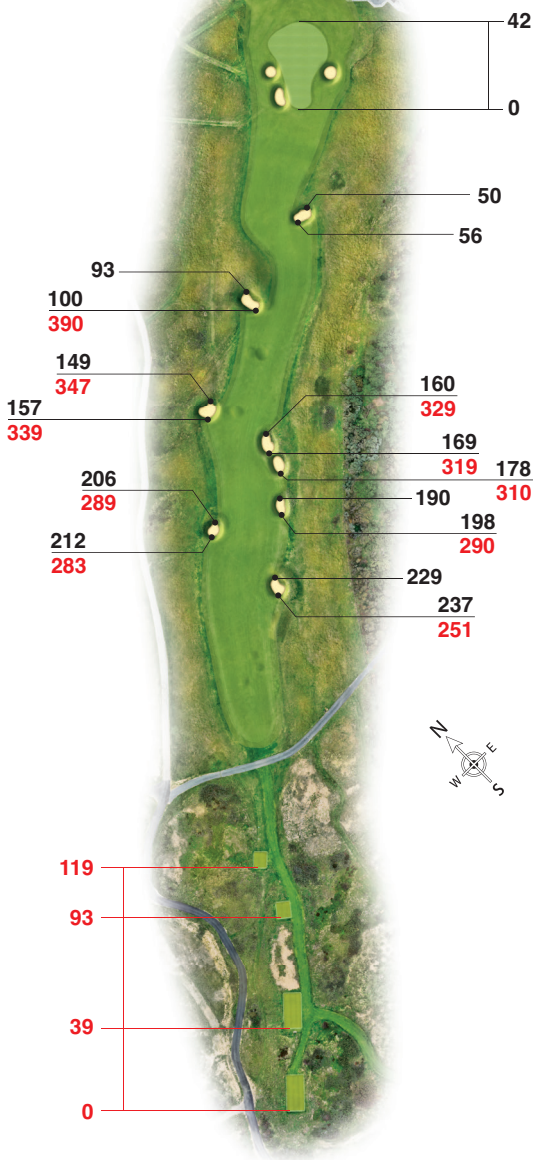


carnoustie.com

18

508
YARDS

PAR
4



ROYAL BIRKDALE

2026

SCORECARD

HOLE	YARDS	PAR
1	447	4
2	419	4
3	450	4
4	219	3
5	321	4
6	514	4
7	151	3
8	459	4
9	414	4
	3394	34
10	397	4
11	434	4
12	186	3
13	502	4
14	602	5
15	241	3
16	393	4
17	566	5
18	508	4
	3829	36
TOTAL: 7223 YARDS - PAR 70		

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