



"We had to look it up to see where Adelaide was."

John Sabino

After playing five of Australia's finest layouts, American John Sabino is within reach of playing the Top 100 golf courses in the world.



The obvious question is, why?

Somebody gave me a board a few years ago with the Top 100 on it that had spots for pins for all the golf courses you had played. There was a group of us who used to travel a lot to Ireland, Scotland and England to play so by the time I got the board I'd already played maybe 25 of them, most of the British Open courses. So I thought it would be a good idea to try and do all of them and it's gotten pretty serious [Laughs]. I've done a lot better than I ever thought I would.

How does the tally stand now having played New South Wales, Royal Melbourne, Kingston Heath and Royal Adelaide?

I came in with 88 and so I'll fly out with 92 completed. We also played Barnbougle Dunes. One of the three guys on this trip is doing the 2005 list [Sabino is doing the '03 list] so he needed to go to Barnbougle and we loved that, that's a really great course.

Did you have expectations of what our courses would be like?

You hear a lot about Royal Melbourne back in the States because of the Presidents Cup and Kingston Heath we saw on the Golf Channel last year when Tiger was down here. So I knew a lot about them but the other ones, NSW, Barnbougle and Royal Adelaide, were kind of unknown.

Kingston Heath looked a bit like Merion to us and Royal Melbourne looks a little like Pine Valley.

So which was your favourite of the Australian courses?

My own personal favourite was Royal Adelaide. I really liked it. That doesn't mean it's the greatest. Royal Melbourne is by far one of the top-10 courses in the world, it deserves to be ranked that high but I just really enjoyed Royal Adelaide. It is more subtle, there are holes such as the third and the 11th where you have those greens set into the mounds and it doesn't kill you.

NSW is hard. We played five courses that are in the top 50 in the world so for the size of your country, both in land mass and population, you have 10 per cent of the world's top 50 courses. You have phenomenal golf here.

Where has the list taken you that you never expected to visit?

Adelaide, Australia would be one for you [Laughs]. I actually had to look it up to see where it was. Japan is another one, I probably would never have gone to Japan if not for the list. And then there are some really funky places in the US such as Kansas where Prairie Dunes is and Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is where Southern Hills is. Americans never go to those places.

Which courses have you visited during your travels that have been underwhelming?

There are a number of courses that are underwhelming, such as Medinah at Chicago. There are three courses there and we actually thought we had played the wrong course, we just didn't think it was that great a course. Similarly, Royal Birkdale, up in England, totally underwhelmed by that. I've played other courses in the British Isles that were a lot better than that.

Two-part question: What sort of job and what sort of wife lets you set out on something like this?

[Laughs] I work for a big global financial company so I tend to travel a lot, so if I had to go to all of these cities on separate trips I probably would never even have started it. And I'm married with two kids and my wife, Karen, is very understanding.

Obvious question No.2: Favourite course thus far?

Cypress Point. Best golf course in the world. It's got everything. The other two that I really like are Sand Hills in Nebraska, which is unlike any place you'd ever play, and the National Golf Links out on Long Island, Charles Blair Macdonald. Royal Adelaide is actually a little bit like that.

And finally, is there any apprehension that the journey will one day soon come to an end?

Yep. Like with anything, and it's kind of a cliché, but it's more about the journey than actually doing it, the people you meet, the places you go to. It's getting a little sad... what the hell am I gonna do? That's why I'm not in a huge hurry necessarily to finish it.

For more on John Sabino's travels, and to find out the eight courses still on his list to play, visit his blog at top100golf.blogspot.com.