

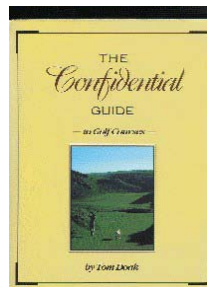
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### **The Confidential Guide to Golf Courses**

The Confidential Guide to Golf Courses published by Tom Doak has developed a cult status among golfers, for good reason we believe. The book is prized for its honest assessment of various courses around the world. It is tough to get an honest assessment of most golf courses since the articles published by most golf magazines or newspapers are done under the 'comp' system. 'Comp' stands for complimentary or in plain English for free, sometimes including airfare, meals and lodging as well. Given such a big conflict of interest, you can see how it would be tough to write a critical review.

Tom Doak, who wrote these books when he was a budding golf course architect, had little reason to be anything but honest. We find in this day and age of constant spinning of facts it is refreshing to get the real deal. It also doesn't hurt that Doak has a good eye and his assessments are built on a strong knowledge base. If you're going to be bold, you had better be good. And Doak has proven that he is good. We offer as proof three outstanding golf courses Doak has designed since setting up his own design company Renaissance Golf Design: Pacific Dunes in Bandon, Oregon; Barnbogle Dunes in Tasmania, Australia; and Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand. The man is obviously a design genius.



In any event, back to his book. The most widely circulated edition of the book is the one published by Sleeping Bear Press in 1996. It is assumed by many that this is the first edition of the book. What most don't realize is that Doak published three earlier versions of the book. As honest as the 1996 edition is, the earlier versions are even more direct and to the point. Each subsequent edition got nicer, with the comments being softened and toned down. The books are a treat to read and we especially enjoy the Doak Gazetteer at the end of each volume which are a group of over fifty eclectic lists such as the best lunch, best logo, least-played courses, clubs most likely to require a family history before letting you play. Everyone should be this quirky.

### **First Edition, published in 1986. Self-published by Tom Doak.**

As Doak states in Volume III, “Eight years ago, in 1986 I put the first edition of this tome together for forty friends who were always asking me where they ought to go to play golf. At the time, there wasn’t anything else like it; no golf writer or magazine would have the ‘bad taste’ to write something negative about someone who gave them a freebie, or better still, a potential advertiser. So every course was great.”

He goes on to add, “In the first edition of this book I made some throwaway-funny/insulting comments about other architects, and I apologize if any of them were taken in the wrong light – there were a lot of pirate copies, but I really did intend it only for 40 friends who understood my sense of humor. This time, I’ve tried to confine my criticism to the courses themselves.”

### **Second Edition, published in 1989, limited edition of 20 copies, self-published by Tom Doak.**

Both the first and second editions are self-published. Genuine copies are difficult to authenticate and as Doak states, there are many boot-leg copies since the book was not bound in a hard cover. Doak obviously worried about the content in the book, stating: “as the title implies, the information in this book isn’t intended for just anybody. Only a few copies will ever be published, and only for a select group of friends who I think are smart enough not to take my comments too seriously. I wouldn’t want the member of Champions, for instance, to get hold of a copy for their locker room. [You’ll see why later.] Should the book fall into the wrong hands, I will deny all responsibility for its contents”. We won’t publish the comment here, but needless to say it is biting. Tom probably doesn’t get a warm greeting when traveling to Houston. These particular comments along with other very harsh or insulting comments were taken out in future editions.

### **Volume III, published 1994, Renaissance Golf Design, limited edition of 1,000, signed**

This book was published by the course design company Doak established, Renaissance Golf Design. Major editorial changes were made between the publication of the second and third editions. Most notable, the Gourmet’s Choice which are courses Doak highlights in the book was reduced from 33 ‘flavors’ to 31 and many substitutions were made. Presumably, some of these changes were made based on new courses Doak had been exposed to, but not in all instances. For some reason, The Creek on Long Island, which was only rated a 6 in the first editions is added to the Gourmet’s Choice in this edition. In one instance, Sand Hills, in Mullen, Nebraska, was included on the list even before the course was completed. Given its status in the world rankings, his early assessment is difficult to argue with. Personally, we prefer the original list based on it containing such gems as Cruden Bay, Lahinch and Royal Portrush. The table below summarizes the changes made to the Gourmet’s Choice between these two editions:

<u>Remained on List</u>	<u>Added</u>	<u>Dropped</u>
The Addington	Commonwealth	Cape Breton
Ballybunion	The Creek	Cruden Bay
Casa de Campo	Desert Highlands	Cypress Point
Crystal Downs	Durban Country Club	High Point
Royal Dornoch	Forest Highlands	Lahinch
Merion	Garden City	Long Cove
National Golf Links	High Point	Machrihanish
North Berwick	Kawana	Royal Melbourne
Pine Valley	Lancaster	Muirfield, Scotland
Prairie Dunes	Pinehurst #2	Royal County Down
Riviera	St. George's	Pennard
Rye, England	St. George's Hill	Royal Portrush
St. Andrews, Scotland	Sand Hills	Royal St. George's
St. Enodoc	Shadow Creek	Seminole
San Francisco Golf Club		Swinley Forest
Westward Ho!		Whitinsville/Mildenhall
Woodhall Spa		

In this edition of the book, Doak worries that publishing such honest criticisms of courses would prevent him from being allowed membership in the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Given his design work since we don't think he has to worry.

He also talks about the informal nature of the book, "It would have been fun to do this up nicely, with photos of all my favorite venues, but the value of the book is in its recommendations and I didn't want a publisher to compromise its substance." He does eventually get his wish with the last edition.

"By limiting the sales of this book to 1000 copies, hopefully I won't change any of the places I recommend. At the same time, the limited printing gives this volume the added value of being a collector's item as well"

This book is maroon in color and hardcover and on the title page Doak has hand written in the limitation number and signed each one.

#### **Fourth Edition, Sleeping Bear Press, 1996.**

Clearly, the most polished of the four editions; this volume includes photographs and a dust jacket. The list price on the dust jacket is \$45.00 US and \$55 Canadian. Although this volume is very hard to obtain a copy of (as they all are), it actually had a print run of 12,000 copies. Considering there are between 50 and 60 million golfers in the world, you can see that even if one-tenth of one-percent are as obsessed with the game as we are, why the book is scarce.

We highly recommend any edition of the book. It is a reference book to keep in your library and continually refer to as you play new courses and explore the game.

*If you would like to be added to our mailing list or receive a copy of our catalog please contact us at [valuable-book@comcast.net](mailto:valuable-book@comcast.net). Thank you for you continued support.*