



## Golfweek's Best New Courses

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The number of new golf course openings in the U.S. has slowed considerably the past few years, but there's been no let-up in quality. Layouts today have to be more impressive than ever on opening day to gain a toehold in a crowded, highly competitive market.

Judging by the leaders in our Golfweek's Best list of New Courses that opened in 2005-2007, a naturalistic, links-style approach to design and play helps the stature of a course. Our No. 1 newcomer, Bandon Trails, a Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw-designed layout in Bandon, Ore., isn't technically a links, but it does emphasize a firm, fast ground game and intensely contoured greens on a site that transitions from windswept dunes to meadowland to wooded Northwest inland terrain and back to dunes.

There's nothing really "natural" about our No. 2 rookie, Chambers Bay Golf Course in University Place, Wash., just outside Tacoma along the shores of Puget Sound. This municipal undertaking, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and Bruce Charlton, along with young design associate Jay Blasi, started with an abandoned sand and gravel quarry and was converted into a stunning, virtually treeless aggregation of manufactured dunes.

A public-access walking trail was then woven through it and a park built alongside. The fescue-laden course still is growing in and maturing but already has attracted a cult-like following that walks and makes extensive use of a caddie corps assembled by KemperSports Management, which operates the golf facility.

At No. 3 on the list is an unusual design collaboration involving two architects normally thought of as being firmly planted in diametrically opposed camps. Yet Sebonack Golf Club

in Southampton, N.Y., works well precisely because of the creative tension between Jack Nicklaus, the ultimate power golfer and modernist architect, and Tom Doak, an apostle of old-fashioned minimalist and naturalist design. Sebonack, which abuts two legendary classic designs, National Golf Links of America and Shinnecock Hills, incorporates Doak-style contours, scruffiness and seemingly random bunker patterns with Nicklaus-style strategic lines of play. It helps that a painstaking (and expensive) program of native roughs and plantings has made the year-old layout look as old and tawny as its distinguished neighbors.

Sebonack's influence on Nicklaus is evident in another of the six Nicklaus designs on this list, Dismal River Club in Mullen, Neb. (No. 42). Routed soon after work at Sebonack started, Dismal River is a marked departure for Nicklaus given its extreme contours, bucking fairways and use of dramatically sloped approach areas into and around the putting surfaces.

When it comes to utilizing a big site with ideal native contours, it's impossible to bypass Erin Hills Golf Club in Hartford, Wis., just west of Milwaukee (No. 26). Owner/developer Bob Lang, whose work in the area embodies the best of small-town smart planning, brought together the design team of Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry with Golf Digest architecture editor Ron Whitten to produce a daily-fee layout over a vast tract unencumbered by housing. It's already being talked about as a future U.S. Open site.

For all the classical naturalism on display, there also are plenty of courses that had to be engineered, carved out and created. Rees Jones' twin Lake of Isles courses in North Stonington, Conn. – the public North Course (No. 34) and the private South Course (No. 35) – arose from a rugged, rocky tree-covered site where wetlands abound and the holes had to be virtually rescued from the land. By contrast, Jim Engh's Blackstone Golf Club in Peoria, Ariz., No. 27, sports the designer's now-trademark punchbowl greens and dunes inspired by the wilds of western Ireland, all of it simply – well, not simply – created from a dead flat desert tract.

As Pete Dye is fond of saying, there's no such thing as a natural golf course. If there's any doubt, just look at two courses that arose on reclaimed waterfront sites along the splendor of New York Harbor. Our No. 6 course, Bayonne (N.J.) Golf Club (pictured), an Eric Bergstol design and construction, looks like someone airlifted traditional dunes onto a working pier.

Up the road, on a similar setting with a far more conventional sensibility to its holes, its grassing and its (newly planted) trees, is No. 19 Liberty National in Jersey City, N.J., a Bob Cupp and Tom Kite collaboration.

Apparently, the key to making a good first impression is to have a distinct identity and run with it. On the facing page are 50 courses that have managed to stand out in a crowded golf market.

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## Golfweek's Best list of New Courses (2005-07)

Course (Location)	Type
1. Bandon Trails (Bandon, Ore.)	Resort
2. Chambers Bay GC (University Place, Wash.)	DF, municipal
3. Sebonack GC (Southampton, N.Y.)	Private
4. Ballyneal (Holyoke, Colo.)	Private
5. Bright's Creek GC (Mill Spring, N.C.)	Private, RE
6. Bayonne GC (Bayonne, N.J.)	Private
7. Concession GC (Sarasota, Fla.)	Private, RE
8. Colorado GC (Parker, Colo.)	Private, RE
9. Pronghorn – Fazio (Bend, Ore.)	Private, RE
10. Boston GC (Hingham, Mass.)	Private
11. Fallen Oak (Saucier, Miss.)	Casino, resort
12. The Territory (Duncan, Okla.)	DF, private, RE
13. Whisper Rock – Upper (Scottsdale, Ariz.)	Private
14. Olde Stone (Bowling Green, Ky.)	Private, RE
15. We-Ko-Pa GC – Saguaro (Fountain Hills, Ariz.)	Casino, DF, resort
16. Forest Creek GC – North (Southern Pines, N.C.)	Private, RE
17. 3 Creek Ranch (Jackson, Wyo.)	Private, RE
18. Creek Club (Oconee, Ga.)	Private, RE
19. Liberty National (Jersey City, N.J.)	Private
20. Lakota Canyon Ranch GC (New Castle, Colo.)	DF, RE
21. Greywalls GC (Marquette, Mich.)	Daily fee
22. Atchafalaya GC at Idlewild (Patterson, La.)	Daily fee
23. Headwaters Club at Teton Springs (Victor, Idaho)	Private, RE

24. Shelter Harbor GC (Westerly, R.I.)	Private
25. Spring Creek GC (Xions Crossroads, Va.)	RE
26. Erin Hills GC (Hartford, Wis.)	Daily fee
27. Blackstone GC (Peoria, Ariz.)	Private
28. Stone Eagle GC (Palm Desert, Calif.)	Private, RE
29. Three Crowns GC (Casper, Wyo.)	Daily fee
30. Tesoro Club (Port St. Lucie, Fla.)	Private, RE
31. Tumble Creek (Roslyn, Wash.)	Private
32. The Classic Club (Palm Desert, Calif.)	DF, private
33. Tuhaye (Tuhaye, Utah)	Private, RE
34. Lake of Isles – North (North Stonington, Conn.)	Casino, DF, resort
35. Lake of Isles – South (North Stonington, Conn.)	Private
36. Osprey Meadows GC (Donnelly, Idaho)	DF, resort
37. Canyata GC (Marshall, Ill.)	Private
38. Grande Dunes – Members (Myrtle Beach, S.C.)	Private
39. The River Club (Suwanee, Ga.)	Private, RE
40. Grizzly Ranch GC (Portola, Calif.)	Private, RE
41. Andalusia CC (La Quinta, Calif.)	Private, RE
42. Dismal River Club (Mullen, Neb.)	Private
43. Pradera (Parker, Colo.)	Private, RE
44. Cliffs at Walnut Cove (Arden, N.C.)	Private, RE
45. Bayside GC (Fenwick Island, Del.)	DF, private, RE
46. Southern Hills Plantation Club (Brooksville, Fla.)	Private, RE
47. Oxford Greens GC (Oxford, Conn.)	DF, RE
48. The Peninsula GC (Millsboro, Del.)	Private, RE
49. Home Course (DuPont, Wash.)	Daily fee
50. Daniel Island – Ralston Creek (Charleston, S.C.)	Private, RE

*Note: DF = daily fee; RE = real estate*

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**HOW WE DID IT:** *Golfweek* defines new courses as those having opened in the past three calendar years (2005-2007). This is done to give the *Golfweek's Best* panel of raters enough time to visit courses, thereby making the rating statistically valid. Input is collected from nearly 400 raters who regularly submit ballots based on 10 criteria, each of which is graded on a 10-point scale. The scores for each course are averaged to get the overall rating.

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