

Foreword

by Gil Hanse

When I first read about Bob McCoy’s feat of playing the Top 100 courses in 100 consecutive days, I thought he was crazy. I have known Bob for a long time – I first met him while I worked for Tom Doak – so I knew he wasn’t crazy. What I did know was that he had an insatiable desire to explore the landscapes of golf and a passion for golf course architecture. Through our many discussions on the topic, I came to the realization that Bob was indeed a serious student of our craft, and anything he had to say was worth listening to. We have had a wonderful long standing friendship, and he was a supporter of my career well before it took off. But after reading about his journey, I thought to myself: a book about logistics and golf course experiences – what could be closer to home for me. Although his pursuit of the 100 in 100 is only one chapter in a well-lived life, it is a story worth telling and one that will enthrall travelers and golfers alike. His odyssey began with the persistent objective to play the various “lists” of Top 100 courses around the world. After accomplishing those goals, he looked for a higher mountain to climb, and the idea of playing the Top 100 in 100 days became his holy grail. With the planning of a great military exercise, the help of some good friends, and some good old-fashioned luck, this is the story of how he accomplished that amazing feat!

I am truly a road warrior and have spent millions of miles – and seemingly millions of hours – traveling the world. I can commiserate with George Clooney’s character, Ryan Bingham, in “Up in the Air” – at least the travel part. Accumulating miles and status certainly makes my travel life easier. However, to attempt what Bob did, not even I, with all my status and travel privileges, would entertain that type of odyssey. Yet I found it fascinating to read about the planning, the details, how everything needed to come together. And when you are entrusting your dream (let’s face it, playing the Top 100 in 104 days is just not the same) to airlines, hotels, and club policies – well, the game is on. I suppose I should have been much more interested in the golf part of Bob’s book, but as someone who still organizes and books his own travel, I was captivated by the planning and execution of his odyssey.

As with any good story, the focus of Bob's book is enhanced by the depth, interest, and entertainment of characters appearing along the way – old friends, playing partners, golf pros, course superintendents, and club staff. They move in and out of the story seamlessly because of his efficient pace. As Bob says, “Unfortunately, the nature of the trip meant that I had to say goodbye almost as soon as I said hello. It was literally here today, gone tomorrow. Or in many cases, gone today.” However, he makes it clear that there were many friendships rekindled or new one's begun on this trip, and in some cases unexpected characters turn out to be the heroes in keeping Bob on track.

As for the golf, Bob makes insightful comments and observations about every place he visits and makes them human and relatable even if you have never been there. I have been fortunate to have played and / or visited many of them, and Bob's travelogue brought back a flood of memories for me. It's just wonderful to see these old friends through the eyes of someone so passionate and knowledgeable about the nature of golf course architecture. Interestingly, Bob's journey began at Colonial Country Club and ended at Merion Golf Club, two courses I am intimately involved with professionally. His path between those two was not as easy as the many American Airlines flights that now operate daily between DFW and PHL. Instead, his path circumnavigates the world and takes us to places many golfers have never or, more likely, will never visit. The best courses, and the ones that would land on a Top 100 list, appear impossible to separate from their landscapes and provide such diverse beauty and playing experiences that a pursuit like Bob's could never get old.

Since Bob completed his odyssey, based on the 1995 *GOLF Magazine* list, I thought it would be interesting to see how many courses on that list still appear on the most recent 2021 *GOLF Magazine* list. The answer is 61, and of the 39 courses new to that list, 24 of them – nearly a quarter of the Top 100 – have been created and opened since the 1995 list came out. They include modern masterpieces like Sand Hills, Pacific Dunes, Friar's Head, and many more, and some great old courses that have garnered new-found respect like Sleepy Hollow, Myopia Hunt Club, and Old Town. The great thing about these lists is that they are ever-changing, and with this type of turnover, Bob can set out on the road again to tackle his next quest. By way of his storytelling, I know I would happily go along for the ride!