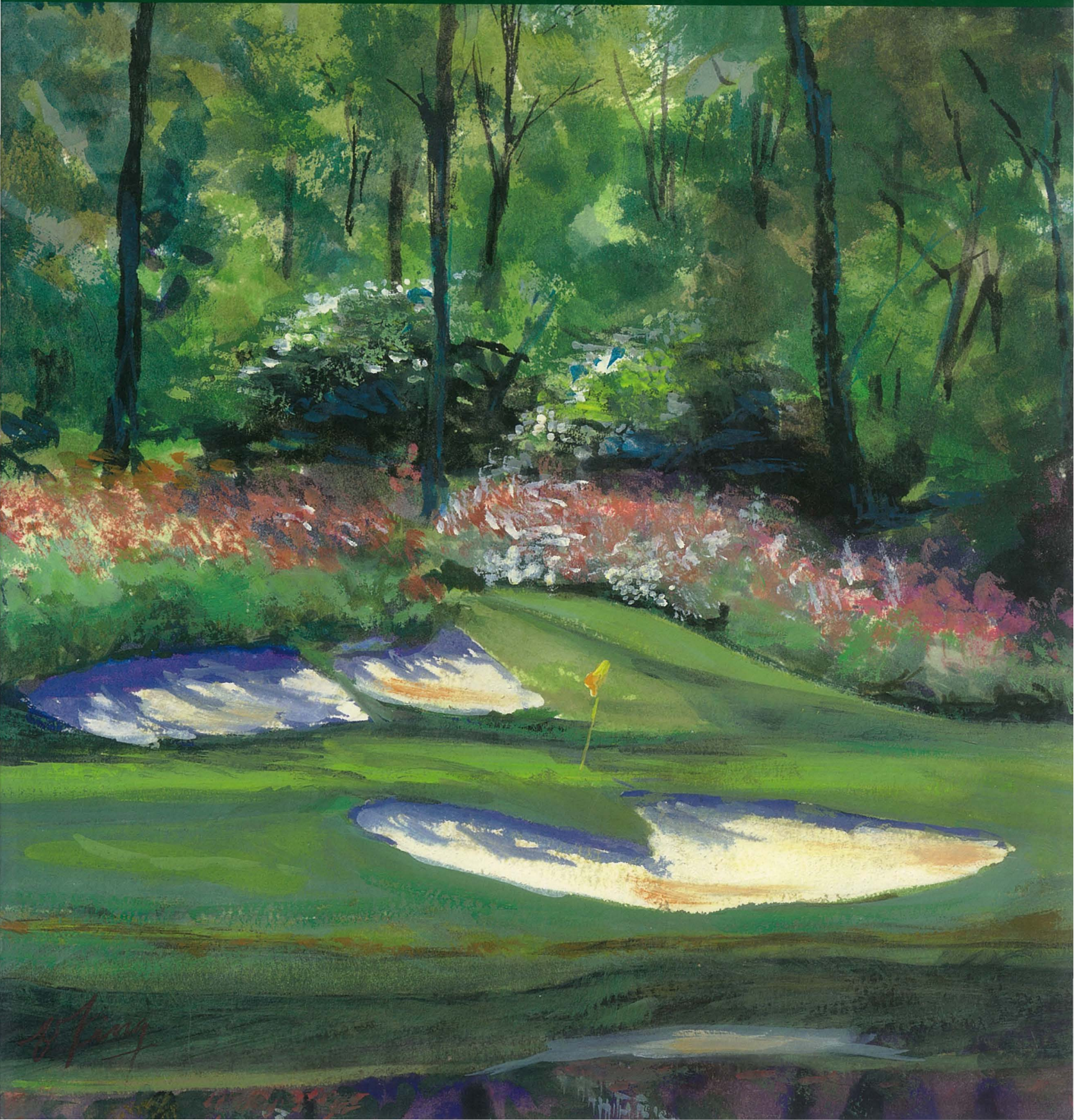


FAVOURITE HOLES BY DESIGN

THE ARCHITECT'S CHOICE PAUL DALEY



St. Andrews, Scotland

Second hole: The Old Course Tom Doak

The Old Course at St. Andrews includes several of the most renowned holes in the game. For me, though, there is one hole—often overlooked—that could serve as a model for golf course designers looking to counter the adverse effects of equipment technology: the Old Course's par-four, second hole. It rewards tactical play and the player who can control the trajectory of their approach shot, and it rewards imagination in the short game. On top of all that, it's unlike any other hole.

Like many of the outward holes at St. Andrews, the strategy of the second hole is profoundly simple: the more the hole is cut to the left side (or middle) of the double green, the more the tee-shot needs to be played to the fairway's right-hand side, close to the fairway bunkers and gorse along the boundary of the New Course. Every foot you play closer to the right yields a slightly better approach angle. If you don't drive the ball quite where you intended, it may be wise to adopt new tactics completely and play a defensive second shot—even from a good lie in the fairway.

The fairway is ample, but the second tee is jammed flush against the boundary, making it awkward to aim down the right-hand side. The wind tends to blow shots toward the middle of the course, so you can usually only hug the right-hand side by hitting a controlled left-to-right tee-shot back toward the 'danger' zone. At the same time, Cottage bunker, and the corner of the wall on the seventeenth hole, prevent long-hitters from merely bailing out to the left when driving.

The key feature of the hole is the unique contours at the front, left of the green, where a series of sharp ridges lie in front of the left-hand flagstick locations. If a high approach shot lands among these ridges, there is no telling where the ball might carom. The masterstroke is not to fly the ball close to the hole, but to land well short of the green and let the ball release; if played with the proper pace the ball will roll up and over the guardian ridges as if they didn't exist. For players whose talent or imagination limits them to hitting high approaches, their cause can be bolstered by playing to the right from the tee; even so, the approach

must still be directed safely to the right side of the green to avoid the possibility of a bad bounce.

The ridges in front of the green have remained a talking point, and a strategic relevancy, for the longest time. One hundred years ago, the best players of the day had to hit the equivalent of a three-wood short of the ridges, and roll their ball over them, while short-hitters were forced to play their second shots safely to the right. Today, the green is much more receptive to short-hitters' long approaches, yet it coerces better players to hit a low shot from close in, instead of the high pitch they would normally elect to play. The ridges are a much more discerning hazard than a frontal bunker, which would extract the greatest penalty for a ball that came up short of the green. Ingeniously, the ridges serve as a hazard for the good player without bothering the average player too much.

Upon such a landscape, and considering the St. Andrews wind, it is easy to misjudge the approach and have your ball finish short of the green. When this occurs, golfers face the perplexing prospect of putting or chipping over the ridges, to try to get close to the hole. These ridges are quite severe, and I still remember Herbert Warren Wind's classic description of them: they are so abrupt it is possible that you could stand up to your putt and not see a man lying between you and the hole. It is a shot best played close to the ground, calling for a different kind of touch than most courses now require.

To be sure, the second hole at St. Andrews is not marked by the sort of terrific hazard—Strath, Hell bunker, the Principal's Nose, or the Road—which makes its more famous siblings so memorable. It is a hole brought to life by simple things, namely, the firmness of the ground, and the rippling undulations of the Old Course. In short, it is the quintessential links golf hole, and the perfect antithesis of the more Americanised pitch over the Swilcan Burn at the opening hole.

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'Dyke'
Par-4
MEN'S: 411 Yards
WOMEN'S: 375 Yards (Par-5)
DESIGNER: Unknown