

OFF TO A STRONG START:

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Thursday, 13 November 2008 10:07

While the town of St Andrews isn't considered large by definition of population or geography, it regularly "fights above its weight" since its known as the birthplace of golf. Due to this recognition, the golf world often pays particular attention to comings and goings within the medieval dwellings. Earlier this year, St. Andrews welcomed another golf course amongst its midst when the highly anticipated Castle Course came on board.

It opened for play on June 28th and after only a few months The Castle Course was included in the Golf World Top 100 rankings, an impressive achievement for any new venue let alone one that would be held to a higher standard due its location. By October 31st when it closed down for the winter, 14,000 rounds had been played during its maiden year and despite a challenging world economy, bookings are said to have been coming in for its first full season from April 1 to October 31 next year. The accolades for the final product are also surfacing.

The course has been recognized by Travel & Leisure Golf magazine as the New Course of the Year. It was also named International Development of the Year by Golf Inc magazine pipping the Els Club in Dubai to the title. In August, the course was recognized by the Institute of Groundsmanship, the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) and some leading turf care journalists as the 2008 Turf Professional Project of the Year.

(Courtesy of Russell Kirk/St Andrews Links Trust)

Alan McGregor, general manager of the the St. Andrews Links Trust, said, "For a new golf course to receive this level of recognition at such an early stage is quite remarkable. When we began working with the architects David Kidd and Paul Kimber we knew we were going to create a special course but I don't think anyone realized just how dramatic and eye-catching it was going to be.

"It has been a successful first half-season with many golfers from near and far playing the course. We have received a large amount of positive feedback and, it is fair to say, some questions about the challenging nature of the course. We had always anticipated making some changes as the course matures and we will be working on it over the winter. But overall we are absolutely delighted with how the course is progressing and we are looking forward to next season."

The Castle Course sits on a spectacular cliff top location overlooking the ancient town of St Andrews. It has been designed as a links-like course with undulating fairways and landforms and crisp, sandy lies. Over the winter some of the mounds in the fairways will be cut back and reduced and some adjustments will be made to the green surrounds on a few holes.

Along with adding to the golf offerings in St Andrews, The Castle Course has provided some economic benefits to the town by creating 40 jobs across the greenkeeping, reception, retail and food and beverage departments. It also happens to be another reason to encourage visitors to stay longer and enjoy more golf.