

THE ROAD HOLE BECOMES A CONTROVERSY:

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The 17th hole at the Old Course in St. Andrews will have a new look next July, when the Open Championship returns to the venue. A new tee box is planned for the Road Hole that will see it play to a maximum 490 yards.

Irishman, Padraig Harrington was recently asked for his thoughts on the idea of something new happening to the Old. "When I stood there on the proposed tee, I actually can't tell you what language I used," the two time Open Champion stated, "but it was intimidating and that's what 17 is meant to be." While his first reaction might lead some to believe Harrington isn't on board with the decision, the opposite is actually the case. "I think the new tee will be exactly what they need," he said. "There's a lot of holes at St. Andrews now with the equipment that give you opportunities," he continued. "You know, the whole reputation is built on the intimidation of the 17th hole and you don't want to see a situation where guys are coming -- some are probably down to hitting not even 3-wood off the tee. Off the back tee, assuming it's not into the wind, it's going to be a great hole."

However, not everyone is thrilled with the change and believe Harrington hit on a point that should be challenged versus the actual course itself. In a scathing piece in the [Irish Independent](#), [Karl MacGinty](#)

asks, "So where here do we go next? Fill the Valley of Sin with water and maybe call it the Pond of Perdition. Now try driving the green at 18, Rory!" His belief is that ruling bodies for equipment standards, the R&A and their counterparts the USGA, should accept responsibility for their past mistakes and handicap the game by other means. "Why not change the 14-club rule? After all, the R&A's decision to go out-of-bounds (literally) with that new tee at the Road Hole suggests absolutely nothing is sacred in golf," he said.

Change isn't something that is often embraced, but especially in the case of the Road Hole when it has remained the same length for more than 100 years.