

# GO FOR IT

Rio course will tempt Olympians with risk/reward options

By Bradley S. Klein

It's too bad they're not using match play on the Rio 2016 Olympics Golf Course. The layout, designed by Gil Hanse and consultant Amy Alcott, finally is ready after months of delays amid political and economic infighting in Brazil. It would have been ideal for classic head-to-head competition, given its dazzling array of windswept, half-par holes and risk/reward alternatives.

Instead, the 60 men (Aug. 11-14) and 60 women (Aug. 17-20) who qualify for the Rio Games will contend in separate stroke-play events, four rounds

each. Medaling will take a lot of discipline amid what is shaping up to be an Olympiad fraught with logistical turmoil and controversy.

The Olympic course site is a 242-acre parcel along saltwater marshes and lagoons 22 miles southwest of downtown Rio de Janeiro and five miles south of the Athletes Village. Only a thin barrier stretch of dunes protects it from the Atlantic Ocean, with the wind prevailing from the southeast. The course comprises three distinct micro-ecologies: open rolling terrain in the north-central part of the property;

## CARD OF THE COURSE

HOLE	PAR	MEN	WOMEN
1	5	604	536
2	4	486	435
3	4	351	321
4	3	191	155
5	5	547	493
6	3	196	177
7	4	493	409
8	3	172	154
9	4	369	324
<b>OUT</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3,409</b>	<b>3,004</b>
10	5	590	526
11	4	488	420
12	4	514	430
13	4	479	408
14	3	229	190
15	4	412	374
16	4	303	264
17	3	133	120
18	5	571	509
<b>IN</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>3,719</b>	<b>3,241</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>7,128</b>	<b>6,245</b>



reclaimed lowlands to the southeast; and forestland to the southwest.

Hanse designed the par-71 course with match play in mind, as he does all of his courses. The routing scheme is a reversal of Muirfield's famous formula, with Olympic GC's front nine cocooning counterclockwise on the inside of the land and the back nine wrapping clockwise around the perimeter. Hanse was onsite for much of the time overseeing the shaping operation by his own team at Caveman Golf, including capable restoration designer Kyle Franz, along with Neil Cameron and Ben Hillard.

The half-par concept is evident in the nine par 4s. For the men, the four shortest average 359, and the five longest average 492. Depending upon the wind, one of two holes on the front (Nos. 3 and 9) could be a drivable par 4. The course ends with a stirring trio: the downwind, drivable 303-yard 16th; a tightly bunkered half-shot 133-yard par-3 17th; and a 571-yard par-5

18th into a headwind with a fairway that looks like it's dotted with sand mines in the first and second landing areas.

Rules mavens, take note: the layout's 79 bunkers might have stones in them, which will be deemed movable obstructions (Rule 24-1) during play. As for the men and women playing the same course, they'll also be well calibrated to hit the same clubs. With the men's tees set at 7,128 yards and the women's tees at 6,245, the 883-yard difference corresponds to data collected at the 2014 U.S. Open and U.S. Women's Open at Pinehurst No. 2, where the setups from one week to the next varied by 800-900 yards each round.

As for Rio, the revival of Olympic golf is on firm ground. The Rio Games might well be controversial, but there can be little second guessing about the quality of the golf course. If there were a gold medal for course architecture, Hanse would win it in a runaway. **Gwk**

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Rio's Olympic Golf Course awaits the world stage.