



Press release  
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## The sixth sense of Mr Wentworth.

How the legendary West Course has been redesigned by its champion-in-residence Ernie Els.

**Wentworth.** Legends like Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player and Severiano Ballesteros have all teed off, battled hard and won here. In short, this undulating course – bordered by thick woods and rhododendrons – is one of the most famous venues in golf. And now it has been given a state-of-the-art makeover by arguably its greatest ever champion.

When, a few years ago, Wentworth Club took the decision to modernise the course designed by Harry Colt in 1926, Ernie Els was truly the only man for the job. Of the illustrious group of players to have celebrated victory at Wentworth, in the World Match Play Championship (1964 – 2007) or the BMW PGA Championship (1972 – 1974 and since 1984), nobody can match the South African's strike rate; seven times he won the World Match Play here. Given that Els also has a house at the course, it is no wonder he is known as "Mr Wentworth".

The three-time major winner had backed moves towards a redesign for a number of years. As with other time-honoured courses, modifications were required not least as a result of the technological advances made within the game of golf and the development of the players as athletes. In an effort to keep the course competitive, sufficiently rich in variety and strategically challenging, Els launched an initial stage of renovation in 2005. This consisted of lengthening the course by 310 yards and putting in 30 new bunkers.

Then, after the BMW PGA Championship 2009, the course was closed for ten months to undergo a major overhaul. The par 5 final hole, among others, was beefed up into a more exacting test. However, Els and his team focused their efforts primarily on the greens. For example, the poa annua grass was replaced with colonial bent, and drainage was also improved. Like the rest of the course, the putting surfaces now meet the very highest international standards.

Even before a ball was hit in the BMW PGA Championship 2010, Els' redesign had elicited a chorus of praise from a number of the players. "I'm very impressed with the changes that have been made and in particular I'm happy to see the way that the greens are now putting," reported Ireland's three-time major winner Padraig Harrington after completing a practice round.

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# BMW PGA Championship 2010



Harrington was one of those not overly enamoured with the West Course before it was overhauled: "But once I heard that they were going to remodel the greens, I said that when that happens I'll be one of the first there."

Like Harrington, Ian Poulter will also be lining up in the BMW PGA Championship field again after two years away. The Englishman, who currently heads the 'Race to Dubai' European rankings, pointed to his excitement about the new course as a major reason for his return. And his compatriot Lee Westwood – now third in the world rankings, making him the leading European – added: "I welcome the changes. I think that we will now have an even stronger field for what is our flagship event, and that can only be good."

However, despite all the changes the West Course has managed to retain its stand-out attributes. This has always been a course that majors in drama and encourages attacking golf, helped in no small part by the pair of par fives at the business end of the round. "With that kind of finish we're going to have fun and excitement," said defending champion Paul Casey. "Anything can happen, and that's the beauty of Wentworth."

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