

I WILL NOT BE TRUMPED

Donald Trump says he owns the best collection of golf

courses in the world. So what's next? Improving them!

WORDS KEVIN BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY HOWARD BOYLAN, GETTY IMAGES

Over the past decade or so brash billionaire businessman Donald Trump has become one of the most influential figures in the world of golf – even though he won't admit it.

He's friends with the stars. He owns some of the best courses in Britain. His courses in the USA are set to stage Majors. But he told us: "Golf isn't my major business... I just love it and have a lot of fun with it."

With 18 prestigious courses across the globe in his portfolio, the outspoken Trump's golfing

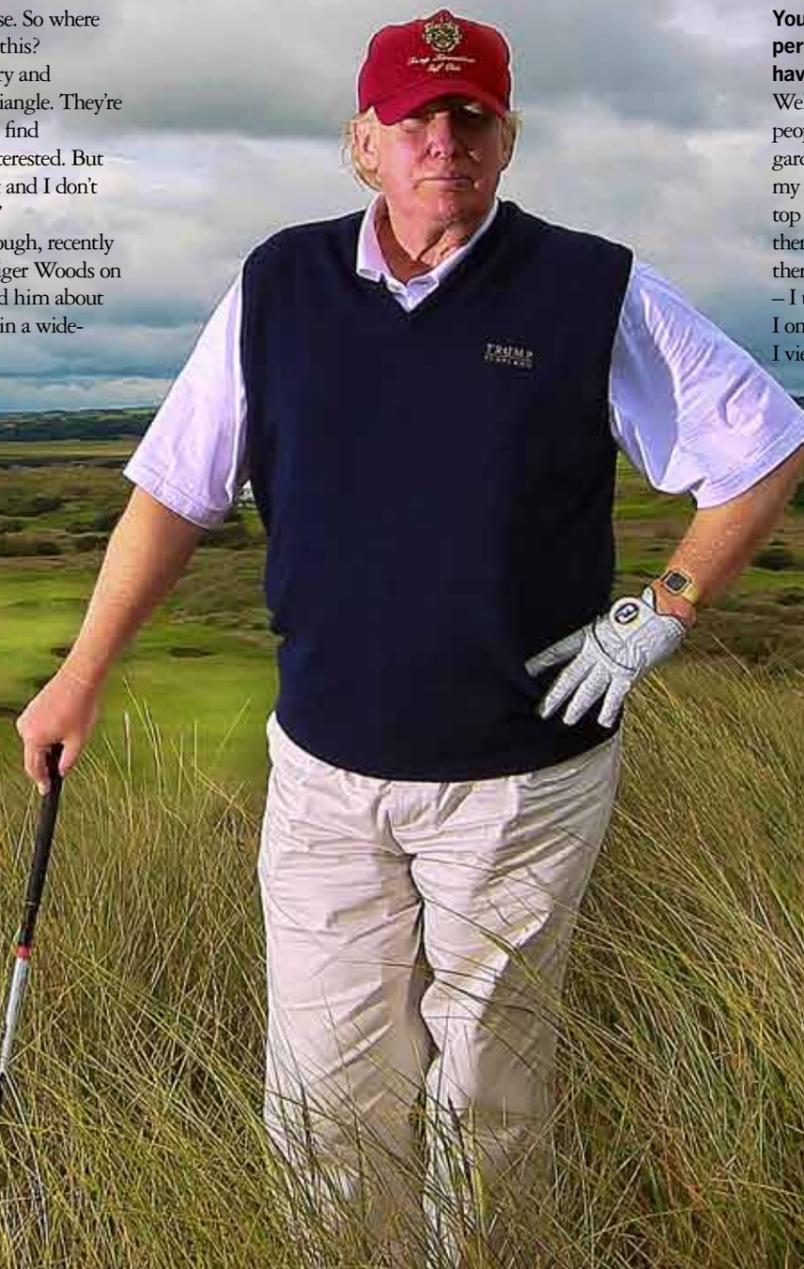
ambition seems to be world domination. But from his office in Trump Tower, New York, the man reputed to be worth nearly \$3 billion told *Today's Golfer* he's more than happy with his golfing lot and isn't currently looking to expand his empire.

He stressed: "I've no interest in taking on any other projects at the moment because I just can't top the threesome of Turnberry, Doonbeg and Aberdeen. Where am I going to find 500 acres on the Atlantic? Where are you going to find another Turnberry? Turnberry is one of the great places of the world. It's just

about everybody's favourite course. So where are you going to find places like this?

"We have Aberdeen, Turnberry and Doonbeg, I call it the Trump Triangle. They're all extra special... though if I can find somewhere else unique I'd be interested. But at the moment I have no interest and I don't think there is anywhere around."

He is spreading his wings, though, recently revealing he's partnering with Tiger Woods on a new course in Dubai. We asked him about that, plus his other UK courses, in a wide-ranging exclusive interview...



You're a successful businessman, a TV personality, a potential politician... so why have you got involved in golf?

Well, I have friends that are very successful people and they love to garden. And I like to garden too – just in a much bigger way! All my courses do very well. They are all winners, top of the line. I started off building them, and then I started buying them. And I like buying them better. But I don't buy everything going – I turn down 10 for every one I buy – and I only buy if it's the best, or can be the best. I view it as a business, while others would be

looking for a quick return. I'm looking to make an amazing place; the return will come.

What are the big factors when you choose a course to build or buy?

I believe in location and great courses. Look, somebody made the statement that Donald Trump has built or owns the greatest collection of golf courses, ever, in the history of golf. And I believe that is 100 per cent true.

Have you got a favourite course you own?

I'm proud of all my golf courses, but Turnberry

The Big Interview

is Turnberry. It's one of the great courses of the world, though the R&A would like to make certain changes to the course so we'll be doing that. For decades they wanted certain changes made to the course, but there's never been an owner of Turnberry who understood golf. Until now.

So how do you plan to change it?

There are plans to turn the 9th hole into a par 3 shooting over the sea – that would be phenomenal – plus moving the 11th hole out on top of the cliffs. Right now it's a little mundane... we want to add even more excitement! Oh, and ideally we'd bring the 18th tee closer to the ocean: if we had it on the cliffs the tee shot and the views of the 18th would be incredible.

There will be people who say don't mess with it – how do you respond to them?

Everybody loves Turnberry, so we'll be careful – we'll be doing the changes in strict co-ordination with the R&A. We're going to get together to make the changes that they've wanted to do for over 30 years and we'll start about a month after the course has hosted the Women's British Open in the last week of July.

Any other plans for the resort?

When I've finished with the Ailsa, we're going to be completely renovating the second course – the Kintyre – which will be turned into a brand new course. It's a good course, but hasn't been maintained properly, so we'll be putting in new sprinklers (on both courses). In addition we'll build a brand new mini course, a par 3, at the base of the hotel. That's under construction now and will be a good, fun place to play when it's done. The work is being carried out by Brit Martin Ebert, a terrific guy, who has been working on Turnberry for 15 years. Mark my words, it will be magnificent when it's all completed.

We're also hearing there might be plans for the iconic lighthouse, too.

We're turning that famous lighthouse into a halfway house which will be the world's greatest: there will be no halfway house like it!

Your first and most famous course in the UK is in Aberdeen. That had a difficult birth – with planning issues and demonstrations from locals. How are things now?

Trump International in Aberdeen has been a great success, and has got phenomenal ratings. Right now I'm building a permanent clubhouse which is going to be beautiful and will be ready to open in time for the new season. We'll be very proud of it.

Anything in the pipeline in Aberdeen?

I will build a second course in Aberdeen.



Turnberry's par-4 9th could be turned into a par 3 over the sea.



Can Doonbeg really be improved that much? Trump says he can.

'WE'RE TURNING TURNBERRY'S LIGHTHOUSE INTO A HALFWAY HOUSE'

I held off building the planned second course and hotel because of the offshore windmills, but that's a battle I'm winning and frankly the recent drop in fuel prices make the windmills totally uneconomic: they were uneconomic at \$100 a barrel; at \$50 a barrel they don't make sense at all. I'm in court to stop them because I don't want them to blight a magnificent landscape like they have elsewhere in Scotland. I did Scotland a big favour, believe me.

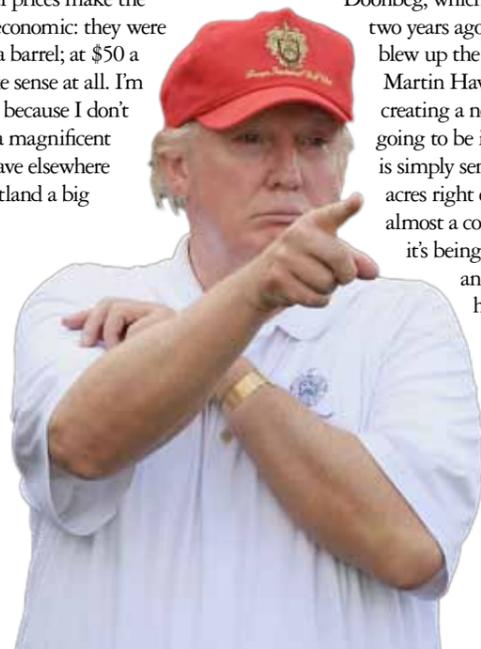
How do you think you're perceived in the city?

I have such tremendous love for the people of Aberdeen and they love what I've done. It's interesting that a

couple of people can create the feeling that what I did wasn't popular, when in fact we have a tremendous popularity. But people don't write about that; they write about some guy who wanted to get more money than his land was worth.

Tell us about your most recent project in Europe, Greg Norman's links at Doonbeg.

I'm very excited about what we're doing at Doonbeg, which I bought nearly two years ago. Basically we blew up the course and I hired Martin Hawtree, who is creating a new course, and it's going to be incredible. The land is simply sensational – 500 acres right on the Atlantic. It's almost a complete rebuild and it's being done in two phases and we're about halfway there. It will be open this summer as we had 22,000 rounds on it last year, so it's hard to just close it. Phase two happens next



winter and when complete in around a year's time it will truly be one of the world's great courses.

How proud are you that your courses in the US have been chosen to stage Major championships? (He's got the 2015 Women's British Open at Turnberry, the 2017 Senior PGA at Trump National GC, Potomac Falls and the 2017 US Women's Open & the 2022 US PGA at Trump National Bedminster.)

It's fantastic. Bedminster is the youngest course ever to get a PGA in 2022. It's a great honour.

Apart from Turnberry, do you think we'll see big events at your other UK courses?

The tours are talking to us about Aberdeen – we haven't decided what to do yet, but we certainly have a lot of options. We want it to be perfect before we do anything. I've got high hopes too that a US Open will be one day played at Ferry Point, a Jack Nicklaus Signature course which has been under construction for 30 years: I took it over 18 months ago and it's right next to Manhattan. It's unique. When completed (it opens this spring) there will be a Championship course just five minutes out of Manhattan.



'WINNING SOLVES A LOT OF PROBLEMS, AND THAT WILL SOLVE THEM FOR TIGER'

Your most recent project is with Tiger Woods in Dubai. How did that happen?

It's great to be working together with Tiger Woods on Trump World Golf Club, Dubai. I've already done one course there with Olympics course designer Gil Hanse and it's been a big success and now we're doing one with Tiger in Dubai. Unfortunately the market crashed on Tiger's previous Dubai course project but that wasn't his fault.

You're friends with him – so where do you think Tiger is in his career right now?

Tiger has now got tremendous pressure on him, but he's been the greatest pressure player, so maybe it makes it better. Pressure makes some people better, so if that's the case, he'll win by 100 strokes because nobody has ever had this kind of pressure. Winning solves a lot of problems, and I think that will solve the problem for him. I think winning is going to be very important for Tiger.

How is your own game at the moment?

To be honest, my own golf game probably isn't as good as my courses (he plays off four) though if you'd asked me that question about a month ago I was playing the best golf of my life. But this month I'm not doing so well. It's a tough game. Having said that, I've played pretty well down the years and have won 18 club championships.

Golf is a unique sport. I've seen a lot of good athletes, great athletes, who are not good at golf and they'll never be good at golf. I know people who practise all the time and they're terrible golfers, too. I think innate ability is more important than practice, though practice can hone ability and make it better. I think you realise you have talent for the game fairly early on.