

SCORECARD

**A MAN
ABOUT GOLF**
→ BY MICHAEL
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ILLUSTRATION: GARY LOCKE

FLL with a suitcase in one hand and a golf bag on the other, and I was not alone.

This will not shock my bosses: Rory McIlroy wasn't the only person playing stateside golf for the first time in 2015 last week. The world No. 1 managed only two competitive rounds at the Honda. During the week of the Honda, I managed three: the excellent town course in North Palm Beach (green fee: \$105); the ocean-front Palm Beach par-3 course, another public track (\$48); and the West Palm Beach city course (\$21 after 2 p.m.).

The clubhouse at West Palm Beach was recently razed, so the pro shop for now is in a trailer. The course is hard by I-95, and it's noisy. But in my opinion it is a better course by every other measure than the Blue Monster or the championship course at PGA National. Not for them, but for us. TV can make you forget: Our needs and their needs are not at all the same.

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West Palm Beach is easy to walk, and you can carry your bag at any time. The rough is playable. The greens are classic, sensible push-up models with open entrances out of the Donald Ross/Old Scots tradition (designed by Dick Wilson and renovated by Mark McCumber). The holes have shape. They all make sense. The bunker sand is gritty. The bunkers are playable. The green speed is sensible. The fairways are firm. There's not a single water hazard on it. (It was TV that caused water-hazard madness.) A 90-shooter can shoot 88 on it.

Arnold Palmer won the West Palm Beach Open, then a Tour stop, at the West Palm Beach golf course in 1959, by the way. Yes, you can play—for 21 bucks—where Arnold won, and it's really good. How cool is that?

Thank you, golf-on-TV, for showing us fantasyland greener pastures during this Siberian winter. Thank you, City of West Palm Beach public golf course, for keeping it real. ■