

Texas Golf 2023

WHISPERING PINES

Third time in a row, still a charm

Dallas National remains at No. 2, with Boot Ranch up to 3

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When Corby Robertson began carving what would become Whispering Pines Golf Club out of the dense pines and scrub in the mid-1990s, he wasn't imagining the course would one day become the star.

The co-founder and owner said his vision was to create a course that would attract the best amateur golfers from around the world to Trinity and to use the club as a way to fund charitable donations.

The fact that Whispering Pines became No. 1 in Texas is just icing on the cake.

For the third year in a row and for the 14th time in the last 18 years, Whispering Pines was voted the No. 1 course in Texas by *The Dallas Morning News'* Texas Golf panel. Whispering Pines made its debut at No. 1 in 2006.

Dallas National is No. 2 for the third year in a row. Boot Ranch, the private course in



Whispering Pines Golf Club

An aerial view of the par-4 No. 14 at Whispering Pines, which plays 392 yards from the Spirit tees with a wildly undulating green. The Bush Pine in the foreground on the right is named after President George H.W. Bush.

Fredericksburg, jumped from seventh to third, tying its best finish. Brook Hollow Golf Club dropped one spot to No. 4. Cordillera Ranch in Boerne jumped five spots to No. 5.

Preston Trail slipped a spot

to No. 6, and The Clubs at Houston Oaks was No. 7. Driftwood Golf and Ranch Club made its debut at No. 8, followed by Colonial Country Club at No. 9 and Black Jack's Crossing at No. 10. The resort

course in Lajitas is the only course in the top 20 open to the public.

"Mr. Robertson had a dream to bring the best amateur golfers around the world, and God gave him the perfect

piece of land to create a golf course worthy to host The Spirit International," Whispering Pines head pro Chris Rowe wrote in an email. "Mr. Robertson didn't set out to have the best course in the state. His

intention was to use golf to give back through his charities and host amateur events."

The Spirit International is a biennial competition with international teams of men and women amateurs playing for individual and team titles.

Whispering Pines has one of the most unusual membership structures anywhere. A person who is accepted as a member makes an annual donation to The Spirit Golf Association. That entitles the donor to a set number of rounds and helps fill the 501-c-3's coffers that pay for the Spirit, and helps a wide array of charitable beneficiaries.

Robertson, in an email, said his goal was "to bring the great amateurs around the world for the best competition and have them live and play together at Camp Olympia to form friendships.

"We are very proud of the Spirit participants' contributions to golf as pros and their conduct on their respective tours around the world. Their professional success and character demonstrate the value of The Spirit in many lives."

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TOP 100 COURSES IN TEXAS | 1-50

The rankings are determined by the average score of the ratings by *The Dallas Morning News'* Texas Golf panel. Panel members rated courses on a 1-10 scale. To be eligible for the Top 100, a course needed to be rated by 10 of the 74 voters (13%). (x-original design; y-redesign/renovation; NR-not ranked)

Rank	Course	Location	Type	Designer(s)	Year Open	2022 rank
1.	Whispering Pines Golf Club	Trinity	Private	Chet Williams/Nicklaus Design	1999	1
2.	Dallas National Golf Club	Dallas	Private	Tom Fazio	2002	2
3.	Boot Ranch	Fredericksburg	Private	Hal Sutton	2006	7
4.	Brook Hollow Golf Club	Dallas	Private	x-A.W. Tillinghast; y-Keith Foster	1920	3
5.	The Clubs of Cordillera Ranch	Boerne	Private	Jack Nicklaus	2007	10
6.	Preston Trail Golf Club	Dallas	Private	Byron Nelson, Ralph Plummer	1965	4
7.	The Clubs at Houston Oaks	Hockley	Private	Chet Williams	2017	5
8.	Driftwood Golf and Ranch Club	Driftwood	Private	Tom Fazio	2022	NR
9.	Colonial Country Club	Fort Worth	Private	Perry Maxwell, Ralph Plummer, John Bredemus	1936	8
10.	Black Jack's Crossing	Lajitas	Resort	Lanny Wadkins	2011	13
11.	Bluejack National Golf Club	Montgomery	Private	Tiger Woods	2016	6
12.	Escondido Golf and Lake Club	Horseshoe Bay	Private	Tom Fazio	2006	9
13.	Spanish Oaks Golf Club	Bee Cave	Private	Bobby Weed	2006	16
14.	Champions GC, Cypress Creek	Houston	Private	Ralph Plummer	1957	19
15.	Shady Oaks Country Club	Fort Worth	Private	x-Robert Trent Jones Sr. y-Geoff Ogilvy	1958	11
16.	Austin Country Club	Austin	Private	Pete Dye	1984	12
17.	Northwood Club	Dallas	Private	x-William H. Diddel; y-Tripp Davis	1946	20
18.	Carlton Woods, Nicklaus Course	The Woodlands	Private	Jack Nicklaus	2001	25
19.	Summit Rock Golf Club	Horseshoe Bay	Private	Jack Nicklaus	2012	21
20.	Austin Golf Club	Spicewood	Private	Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw	2001	26
21.	Carlton Woods, Fazio Course	The Woodlands	Private	Tom Fazio	2005	18
22.	Oak Hills Country Club	San Antonio	Private	A.W. Tillinghast	1922	14
23.	TPC San Antonio, AT&T Oaks	San Antonio	Resort	Greg Norman	2010	17
24.	River Oaks Country Club	Houston	Private	x-Donald Ross; y-Rees Jones; Tom Fazio	1923	15
25.	Lakeside Country Club	Houston	Private	x-Ralph Plummer; y-Ron Pritchard	1951	36

26.	Vaquero Club	Westlake	Private	Tom Fazio	2001	22
27.	Miramont Country Club	Bryan	Private	Robert Trent Jones II	2004	24
28.	Trinity Forest Golf Club	Dallas	Private	Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw	2017	31
29.	Lochinvar Golf Club	Houston	Private	Jack Nicklaus	1980	23
30.	Rawls Course	Lubbock	Public	Tom Doak	2003	46
31.	Maridoe Golf Club	Carrollton	Private	Steve Smyers	2017	32
32.	Royal Oaks Country Club	Dallas	Private	x-Billy Martindale, Don January; y-Jay Morrish; Weibring-Wolford; Chet Williams	1969	30
33.	Lakewood Country Club	Dallas	Private	x-Tom Bendelow; y-Coore-Crenshaw	1912	37
34.	Shadow Hawk Golf Club	Richmond	Private	Rees Jones	1999	29
35.	Willow Brook Country Club	Tyler	Private	x-Ralph Plummer; y-Joe Finger; Mark Hayes; Tripp Davis	1922	27
36.	Briggs Ranch Golf Club	San Antonio	Private	Tom Fazio	2002	34
37.	Woodlands CC, Tournament Course	The Woodlands	Private	Robert von Hagge, Bruce Devlin	1978	41
38.	Houston Country Club	Houston	Private	x-Robert Trent Jones Sr.; y-Coore-Crenshaw	1955	48
39.	University of Texas Golf Club	Austin	Private	Roy Bechtol, Randy Russell	2003	42
40.	Pine Dunes Resort	Frankston	Resort	Jay Morrish	2001	51
41.	Omni Barton Creek Resort, Fazio Foothills	Austin	Resort	Tom Fazio	1986	38
42.	TPC San Antonio, AT&T Canyons	San Antonio	Resort	Pete Dye	2010	39
43.	Champions Golf Club, Jackrabbit Course	Houston	Private	x-George Fazio; y-Tom Fazio	1957	63
44.	Deerwood Club	Kingwood	Private	Joe Finger, Ken Dye, Byron Nelson	1982	48
45.	BraeBurn Country Club	Houston	Private	x-John Bredemus; y-Carlton Gipson	1926	81
46.	Westwood Country Club	Houston	Private	x-John Bredemus; y-Ralph Plummer; Keith Foster	1928	28
47.	Omni Barton Creek Resort, Canyons Course	Austin	Resort	Tom Fazio	2000	71
48.	Grand Pines Golf Club at Bentwater	Montgomery	Private	Jeffrey Blume	2005	35
49.	TPC Las Colinas	Irving	Resort	x-Jay Morrish, Byron Nelson, Ben Crenshaw; y-D.A. Weibring, Steve Wolfard	1983	70
50.	Mira Vista Country Club	Fort Worth	Private	Tom Weiskopf, Jay Morrish	1987	52

COURSE RATING CRITERIA

VERSATILITY: Does the course create a good mix for the high and low handicappers? Are better players challenged, while the high handicappers are able to enjoy play through the use of shorter teeing areas, alternate routes, location of hazards and accessible pins?

SHOTMAKING: Does it test accuracy, finesse, length and putting without putting too much emphasis on any of these skills?

DESIGN: Is there a good balance? Differing lengths? Doglegs right and left? Placement of hazards? Contours and shapes of greens?

AFTERTHOUGHTS: How much do you remember about the course? Do one or two holes stand out as great or bad?

BEAUTY: Do the scenic values add to the pleasure of a round? Trees, shrubs, hills, mounds, flowers, etc.?

MAINTENANCE: How would you rate the course conditions, factoring in all aspects — tees, greens, fairways, bunkers? Spring, summer, fall or winter when viewed?

ENJOYMENT: How do you feel about being at the course? What about the amenities? From arrival to departure, was it a good, bad or indifferent golf experience?

PANELISTS

William Aycok, The Woodlands amateur
Mike Bailey, Houston-based golf writer
Robert Banta, Frisco amateur
Brent Blackburn, head professional Corpus Christi CC
Curt Breaux, Montgomery amateur
John Brechin, Dallas amateur
Bruce Burger, superintendent The Quarry Golf Club
Ben Burns, head professional Crown Colony CC, Lufkin
Mark Button, director of business development, Texas Golf Association
Tony Campagna, golf course sands and materials consultant
Miles Carlson, golf course superintendent at Grand Pines GC in Montgomery, Texas
Greg Clark, Frisco amateur
Beth Cleckler, Austin amateur
John Cochran, Texas Golf Association director of competitions for South Texas, Kingwood amateur
Brent Cooper, Dallas amateur
Jacque Cooper, Rowlett amateur
Daniel Coughlan, director of golf Bent Tree CC
Robert Couture, Dallas amateur
Thomas Devanna, assistant professional Tangle Ridge GC, Grand Prairie
Cameron Doan, head professional Preston Trail Golf Club, Dallas
Camm Dougherty, Corpus Christi amateur
Lou Duran, Frisco amateur
Bob Elliott, PGA life member, Dallas
Zane Ellis, Golf course architect, League City amateur
Gilbert Freeman, PGA professional emeritus, Lakewood CC, Dallas
Don Gafner, Sunnyvale amateur
Edward Gatlin, PGA life member, Athens
Bill Hanley, past president of Texas Golf Association, Fort Worth amateur
Mark Harrison, CEO Northern Texas PGA
Danny Jones, head professional, Walden on Lake Conroe
Mark Kazlowski, Texas Golf editor, Cedar Hill amateur
Robbie Kearney, GM Cimarron Hills Golf and CC
Trey Kemp, golf course architect, Dallas amateur
Randy King, Horseshoe Bay amateur
Keith Kirkendall, The Woodlands amateur
Nancy Kromar, Austin amateur
Kellen Kubasak, COO of Golf San Antonio, San Antonio amateur
Phyllis Kwedar, Fort Worth amateur
Ricky Lyons, general manager Westwood

Golf Club, Houston
Katie Manor, executive director Texas Golf Hall of Fame
Cathy Marino, Jesuit golf coach, LPGA professional
James McAfee, Former NTPGA executive director, golf writer, Plano amateur
Mike McCabe, general manager Golf Clubs at the Tribute
Callum McNeil, Hockley professional golfer
Sam Morrow, Houston amateur
Terry Olson, director of sales and marketing, Lajitas Golf Resort
Casey Paulson, president of sales and operations, Driftwood Golf Club
Mike Peterson, PGA Tour senior tournament referee, Garland amateur
Kevin Porter, Dallas amateur, Texas Golf Association director of competitions for North Texas
George Priolo, GM of golf operations, Ross Rogers and Comanche Trail Golf Complexes, Amarillo
Jim Quinn, Golf sales rep, Arlington amateur
Jerry Ransom, Greenville amateur
Jan Rapp, Dallas amateur
Paul Richards, Austin amateur
Corey Roberson, director of golf Cordillera Ranch, Boerne
Robert Rodriguez, San Antonio amateur
Chris Rowe, director of golf Whispering Pines, Trinity
Linda Sackett, San Antonio amateur
Lee Sandlin, Dallas amateur
Zach Sewill, president BestGrips.com, Conroe amateur
Jonathan Shipley, Texas Golf Association president, Katy amateur
Marty Slade Perlman, Dallas amateur
Randy Smith, PGA professional emeritus, Royal Oaks CC, Dallas
Shane Smith, Conroe amateur
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Tom Strueber, PGA professional emeritus Maridoe Golf Club, Carrollton
Eldon Tarver, Austin amateur
Steve Termeer, GM/COO University of Texas Golf Club, Austin
Tammy Trichell, San Antonio amateur
Mark Tylenda, Lewisville amateur
Pat Wheeler, Host of Texas Links on the Air, Dallas amateur
Nannette Wheelis, Waco amateur
Jim Whitten, Arlington amateur
Greg Wille, Belton amateur
Chris Winn, Houston amateur