

Summer at the Edge of the Map

Hickory golf, hard ground, and a long journey worth taking

By the time the bagpipes begin, the wind has already arrived.



It moves quietly in from the Pacific, pressing against the flags, brushing the bent-grass greens of Christchurch Golf Club and tugging at tartan and plus fours.

There is a particular quality to summer light in Canterbury. It arrives early, lingers late and seems to stretch across the landscape as though reluctant to leave. The air is dry, the turf firm and the wind, when it chooses to speak, does so with purpose.

At the far edge of the map, where the Pacific meets the Land of the Long White Cloud, golf feels closer to its origins.

Eight thousand miles away, much of North America is deep in winter. Courses are closed, practice bays hum under fluorescent light and golf is often reduced to something simulated.

In Christchurch, it is high summer and the fairways run long and hard.

From Wednesday, January 27, 2027, players will again gather at Christchurch Golf Club for the New Zealand Hickory Open. For North American golfers who understand that hickory is not simply nostalgia, but lineage, this is more than another tournament.

It is a journey into the deeper traditions of the game.

And in 2027, Sunday will matter more than ever.

Where the Ground Decides

Founded in 1873, Christchurch Golf Club is one of the Southern Hemisphere's historic custodians

of golf. Its Shirley course has been carefully restored to reflect its traditional links character. It does not overwhelm. It asks.

The fairways are firm. The greens are cut tight and run true. The ground rewards imagination and exposes uncertainty. The low punch, the running approach and the well judged bounce are not recovery shots here, they are part of the intended game.

You play angles rather than yardages.

With hickory in hand, the architecture feels honest.

For players accustomed to the aerial demands of modern North American target golf, Christchurch offers a different examination. It is not a step backward. It is a rediscovery of how the game was designed to be played.

A Deliberate Journey

Travel to New Zealand is not casual.

You do not stumble into this tournament. You decide to come. That decision becomes part of the experience.

The week begins with an official practice round on the championship course, followed on Thursday afternoon by the Harry Vardon Challenge, a relaxed nine-hole event pairing visiting competitors with local members.

Distance dissolves quickly. Conversations replace introductions. By the time the first scorecards are signed, dinners have been planned, stories exchanged and friendships formed.

The New Zealand Hickory Open remains deliberately intimate: large enough to provide a legitimate international championship, but small enough that no player becomes anonymous.

There is now a genuine opportunity for North American players to become part of the tournament's next chapter.

Played for More Than Score

Friday belongs to the Nations Cups.

The format, nine holes of singles and nine holes of foursomes, demands adaptability from the outset. There is no gentle introduction. National pride becomes personal, and every match carries meaning beyond the scorecard.

In 2026, New Zealand again defended the historic Anzac Flask against Australia, continuing a rivalry built upon a shared history stretching back to Gallipoli. China pushed its contest to the narrowest of margins, while South Korea made its Nations Cup debut and immediately signalled its intention to return with a larger team.

2027 sees the emergence of a new Trophy, the Americas Cup, a bond between two countries competing in fellowship.

By the final green, the competition is intense.

By evening, the rivalry has softened into conversation around shared tables in the clubhouse.

That is the character of the New Zealand Hickory Open. The golf is taken seriously, but never at the expense of fellowship.



Alternate Shot, Exposed

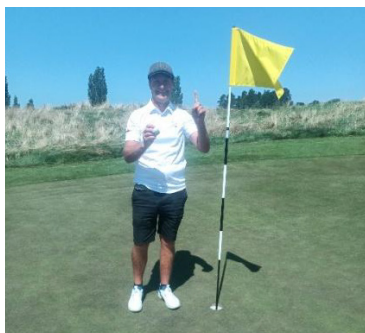
Saturday's Foursomes Championship is where the week sharpens.

Alternate shot with hickory reveals everything: rhythm, trust, patience and the ability to accept what your partner leaves behind.

During the 2026 championship, Anthony Doyle and Jason Tilley produced one of the most memorable rounds in the event's history. On the short seventh, Tilley struck a niblick that disappeared into the cup for a hole in one.

For a moment, the course seemed to pause.

The pair went on to record a remarkable gross 67 and secure the Foursomes title.



Jason Tilley with his long-awaited hole-in-one, and with Anthony Doyle following their outstanding gross 67 Foursomes victory.

It was not the only ace of the week.

Andy Gordon, a first-time hickory competitor using hired clubs adjusted to suit him, also holed out on a 145 yard par three in swirling wind. It was proof that the tournament leaves room for both mastery and magic.

Sunday Wind

Championship Sunday arrives with ceremony. Bagpipes. Player announcements. A gathering breeze.

In 2026, Sir Bob Charles adjusted several tee placements to bring long dormant hazards back into play. By midday, the wind had strengthened and the course became what links golf courses are meant to be....Alive.

When the final putts fell, Anthony Doyle claimed his third New Zealand Hickory Open title, further establishing his place among the Southern Hemisphere's leading hickory players.



New Zealand Hickory Open Champion Anthony Doyle with Sir Bob Charles—Patron, past champion and fellow competitor.

Across the Open, Senior, Reserve and Women's divisions, the champions reflected the tournament's growing international character, with strong representation from throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Yet the leaderboard tells only part of the story.

What remains is the walk between greens beneath the Southern Hemisphere sun. The firmness beneath your feet. The quiet weight of a well-struck mashie. The conversations that begin on the course and continue long after the final round.

The Long Road to Sunday

The 2027 championship has been deliberately structured around a principle that is becoming increasingly rare:

A proper Open should test both skill and endurance.

The decision to stage the Open over 36 holes in a single day is deliberate.

When the original Open Championship was played at Prestwick, competitors contested three rounds of 12 holes on the same day. Stamina was assumed. Resolve was required. Victory depended upon enduring the walk as much as mastering the strike.

The New Zealand Hickory Open will echo that spirit.

Contenders for the full championship will play 18 holes in the morning and return for a second round in the afternoon. Other competitors will join the afternoon field for the Senior, Reserve and Women's divisions, ensuring every player remains part of the championship story.

It restores something elemental to the event. The understanding that Sunday must be earned.

Why Make the Journey?

January in North America is a season of patience. In Christchurch, it is summer.

The New Zealand Hickory Open offers firm, authentic championship golf on one of the Southern Hemisphere's historic courses; an intimate international field where names and stories matter; and a mid-winter escape into sunlight, wind and competitive rhythm.

Beyond the course lies the wider South Island: mountains, coastline, wineries, open roads and landscapes that make the journey worthwhile even before the first tee shot is struck.

This is not the easiest championship to reach. That may be precisely the point.

Because when you finally stand on the first tee, with wind in your collar and hickory in your hands, the distance feels justified.

You will not simply measure yourself against another field.

You will measure yourself against the ground, the wind and the traditions of the game. Golf was meant to be played on turf like this.

In conditions like these.



Michael Mason (Australia), Stephen Ward (NZ)

Among people who understand why that matters.

The New Zealand Hickory Open is not simply another event. It is a long way to travel for something real.

Some championships are scheduled. Others are experienced.

At the edge of the map, in the height of a New Zealand summer, the long road to Sunday is waiting.

Will You Be Part of It?

North American players, partners and travelling groups are invited to register their interest for the 2027 New Zealand Hickory Open.

Come for the championship.

Stay for the people, the country and the experience of playing the game on ground that still remembers how it began.

New Zealand Hickory Open

January 27–31, 2027

Christchurch Golf Club, New Zealand

Register your interest and begin planning the journey at **NZOHG.org**