

Tales from the Tee

How Bing Crosby made Pebble Beach a golfer's paradise

In 1937, Bing Crosby gathered friends for a California golf outing and clambake that became today's AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. The event has since raised more than \$120 million for charity while attracting celebrities and professional players. The 2015 tournament, Feb. 9-15, promises appearances by actor Don Cheadle, baseball star Matt Cain and world surfing champion Kelly Slater.

As competitors prepare to play three prestigious courses, including the legendary Pebble Beach Golf Links (roughly 80 miles south of San Jose), course historian Neal Hotelling shares his favorite tournament tales.



On golf's arrival in Pebble Beach: Pebble Beach Company founder Samuel F.B. Morse commissioned the course to entice potential buyers — and then purchased the property himself. "He saw golf as a way to keep the coastline open for everyone," Hotelling says.

How Bing Crosby legitimized golf: "In those days, professional golfers were not well respected. They were often seen as hustlers," Hotelling says. So, Crosby and his celebrity pals filmed clips designed to promote and popularize the game.

On Clint Eastwood's first AT&T invite: When asked, in the 1960s, why he hadn't played in the tournament, Eastwood joked that perhaps Crosby didn't like cowboys. "The next year," Hotelling says, "Clint got an invitation with a note from Bing that said, 'P.S. — I do like cowboys.'" —RENEE BRANCIS