

NICK FALDO PLAYS THE OPEN

Argus Press Software, £9.99 cass, joystick or keys

LOOKS
LIKE
ONE OF
MY LEGS!



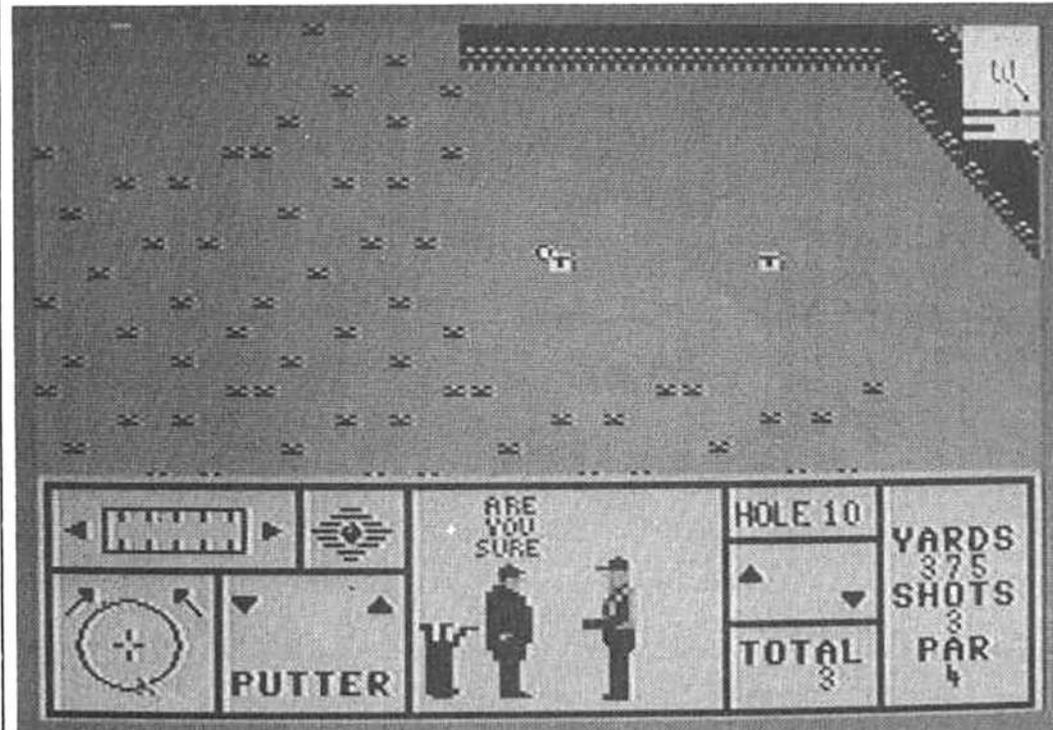
Another from the Argus 'Mind Games' series, this golf simulation is endorsed by the British golfer Nick Faldo, as he takes you for a round on the 114th Open Championship 1985 course at St. George's Club, Sandwich.

The package comes complete with a map of the course showing the relation of tees to greens, and then 10 pages detailing each hole individually. There's also a very short history of the first Open held at Prestwick, a brief outline of the Sandwich course and its local rules. A few lines per hole sets the scene for the tee off and offers a brief pointer on the drive.

Onto the game itself.

NFPTO is easy enough to get into, because it is all icon driven. A little under half the screen at the top is the playing area which scrolls across the course with the ball play. Below it are the various boxes containing the icons, which may be selected by moving a cursor (in fact a small pointing hand). Going from left to right, box 1 is a bar indicator for shot strength. The cursor may be placed on either of the two arrows for increase or decrease of strength. Below it is a compass with central reference point. Again, two arrows allow movement round the circle either clockwise or anti-clockwise, and the final choice should be made bearing in mind the general direction desired and the wind direction and speed which alters all the while and which is shown in the top right hand corner of the display area.

Next comes an icon which switches the display from a local map to a much smaller scale, showing the area all around your current position. Below it,



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You would have to be a right wally not to recognise this as a golfing game from its title, but WAIT, before running and hiding! I know everyone thinks such games are yawn-inducing, but this one puts the record straight, and is a huge improvement on most golf games. The graphics are colourful, well detailed without being confusing and the scrolling is clean and smooth. The use of joystick-driven icons which allow fine-tuning of the various elements takes all the tedious inputting of information away and lets you get on with playing the game. The sound is very limited and might have been improved with some crowd noises, a few oohs and aahs and some applause after a good shot, or at least on holing out, but for the average golfer, silence is probably more realistic!

two arrows allow you to scroll up or down along the club choice available (see panel). Next door are two larger boxes, the first containing a graphic of your caddy and yourself. Activating this icon results in the caddy getting the selected club from the bag, handing it to your player and him taking the shot.

Golf seems to be an ideal sport to simulate on a computer although, oddly, there have been many more on the Spectrum. Nick Faldo's Open is the best I have played both from the point of view of the graphics and from the 'feel' of the game. The icons make it so simple to set up and play shots that it's a delight. Setting it on a real course is also a good idea, and of course it's ideally timed for the TV coverage of this year's Open (even if this review comes out a bit later!) On my first attempt, I did pretty well getting to the green and then took nine puts to get down, beginning to believe that the thing wasn't very playable and (this remains my main niggle) it does seem very hard to get the ball into the hole from close range. However, on three subsequent holes I went down one under par, rather disproving my niggle — one, indeed, was a wedge shot from the edge of the green! The sound is limited, a chunky woosh and thunk when you hit all but a put, followed by a double bounce when the ball lands. Holing out results in a loud squeal — not particularly realistic, but satisfying.

Golf simulations may not be to everybody's taste, but this one, because of its simplicity and reality, rises above the specialist taste and should prove generally popular. But for the armchair golfer, it's excellent.

CLUB CHOICE

Choosing the correct club is vitally important. When you select a club and then return to the golfer/caddy box and press fire to activate the shot, if you have chosen badly, the caddy will ask you whether you are sure. You can now return to the club selection box if you wish, or press fire again and take the shot. However, a poor choice may result in a severe hook, slice or, worse still, a miss hit or short jump shot.

There are 9 clubs in the bag; wood driver, No 3 wood, No 5 wood, irons 3, 5, 7 and 9, a

wedge and a putter.

The wood driver is best used on a tee. Trying to use it on a fairway or in the rough results in disaster! Depending on the length of shot required, the other two woods can be sensibly used on the fairway, but it's important to control the strength of shot well. You certainly wouldn't get far using, say, a No 3 wood or a long iron to get out of a bunker! And once on the green, the caddy will have a fit if you select anything but a putter — after all, he's in the pay of the club!

The last combined box is the score card and hole selection icon, which also gives the par for the hole and its distance in yards. After selection, all the icons are activated by pressing fire.

At the start you can choose to play an entire round or just hole by hole. While running through the hole selection, the display area cuts from tee to tee, and you can cross check with the map either on screen or in the booklet to see the general relationship of the landscape.

- Presentation 84%**
Nice packaging, excellent book and good options.
- Graphics 74%**
Smooth scrolling, reasonable golf course implementation, nice icons.
- Sound 28%**
Very limited to spot FX and no music.
- Hookability 78%**
Easy to get into with the icons
- Lastability 82%**
Good 'feel' makes it worth playing again — especially if you like golf.
- Value For Money 75%**
The tenner makes it a bit pricey, but it is the best around.
- Overall 80%**
Neat simulation for the armchair sportsman.

