

GOLFChicago

Chicago's Premier Multimedia Golf Source & Authority

Summer 2024, Vol. 28 No. 4

**STUNNING
SEDGE VALLEY**

**GRAND GENEVA
REBORN, AGAIN**

**DESIGNER
TOM DOAK**

DRIVE FOR SHOW

PUTT FOR FUN

GOLFChicagoMagazine.com

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OPENING SHOT

Dave Silbar

Unity.

It's a word that we as a society have been hearing a lot lately. Whether it's political parties, our nation, and even across golf tours, unity is about finding common ground so that we can be better humans.

Golf has always been a great unifier between people of all races and sides of the political spectrum. When we're playing golf, our differences in culture and even our beliefs get tossed aside for a few hours so that we can, together, enjoy the greatest game there ever was in a peaceful, relaxing, and fun environment.

Maybe that's why it was so refreshing when newly appointed U.S. Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley was quick to go on the record saying that he's looking for the best players to represent our country, period. There was no back and forth about the PGA Tour vs. LIV Golf, it was simply about going out and finding the best U.S. players to represent our country, giving us the best chance to beat Europe.

Speaking of bringing people together, the new and improved Bryson DeChambeau was on display for all to see at this year's U.S. Open, helping close the gap on public opinion (on the Tour vs. LIV debate), but also between competitors on both sides.

Let's now turn our attention to this month's issue of *GOLFChicago* magazine, which features our cover story on Sedge Valley, the grand addition to the golfers' paradise we know as Sand Valley Resort in Rome, Wisconsin. Senior writer Neal Kotlarek will introduce readers to this new course which serves as a great contrast to its far brawnier colleague championship courses at Sand Valley—the long and challenging Sand Valley course; the spectacular and massive Mammoth Dunes; and the visually stunning but intimidating Lido course that opened in June of 2023.

Neal goes one step further with his exclusive interview with Tom Doak, widely considered one of America's premier golf course architects. Already leaving an indelible imprint on Sand Valley with both his work on the aforementioned Sedge Valley and the construction of Charles Blair Macdonald's Lido course, Doak is also the prolific designer of some of the world's greatest golf courses—including Pacific Dunes at Bandon Dunes, Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand, and The Loop at Forest Dunes in Michigan.

When it comes to instruction, we all know how important putting can be when it comes to lowering your score, and we've put together a pair of articles which offer tips on how to not only perfect your putting but also on how to make your practice more fun and engaging.

As always, our Good Stuff department shares the latest and greatest niceties to hit the golf market, while Sweet Home Chicago uncovers the latest course renovations and other area news that we think you should know about.

Our travel features will take you up north to legendary Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, as well as to Northern Michigan's Island Resort & Casino, where unbelievable golf awaits.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of *GOLFChicago* magazine as much as we did putting our best foot forward for you.

Enjoy the rest of your summer rounds. Remember, it's a friendly competition and only golf, not the end of the world.

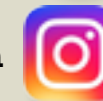
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THE GOOD STUFF



Rolling the Rock

If you are looking for a fresh putter style to put in your bag then you should check out Evnroll's Neo Classic models in the new 38 Tour Spec line. Their three different styles feature a 38-inch shaft with 17" grip, making it a one size fits all that counterbalances smoothly with the 370 to 400-gram head weight. The ER2 model won MyGolfSpy's Best Blade Putter of 2024. They all come from the brilliant mind of CEO and chief designer Guerin Rife, who you may remember from the popular line of Rife Putters. **\$399 - \$499 www.evnroll.com**

Chi-town Polo from johnnie-O

Capturing the spirit of The Windy City in a golf shirt does not get any better than this. Chicago is where johnnie-O founder John O'Donnell grew up, so he wanted to come up with something that embodies the city. The Bean, the Hancock Building, a hot dog, an EL train, and the Chicago Theatre marquee are just some of the items featured. You will be a hit on and off the course with this lightweight breathable polo that also has UPF-50 sun protection. **\$98 www.johnnie-o.com**



Go Ahead, Throw Shade

If you haven't discovered Goodr sunglasses yet, your summer is incomplete. These sunglasses cost less than a walking 9 and are packed with premium features like polarized high-contrast lenses and a no-slip, no-bounce design. We love this golf-specific OG frame design, named Three Parts Tea. **\$25 www.goodr.com**



Net Pars, Assemble!

Whether putting is the weakest part of your game or you're a superhero with the flat stick, SuperStroke's new licensed Marvel grips are a fun pop of character for your bag. Featuring Spider-Man, Hulk, or Iron Man, these super designs are available in the Zenergy Tour 2.0 line. **\$34.99 www.superstrokeusa.com**



A New Dimension

The world of 3D printing has entered the golf stratosphere, and Cobra Golf is diving in with its new Limit3D irons. This compact player's blade pushes beyond the limits of traditional casting to make, truly, one of the most unique clubs you'll ever play. The first run is only 500 sets and has a makeup of a 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 iron, plus a pitching wedge. **\$3,000 www.cobragolf.com**



A Good Walk for All

The offspring of an incredibly popular sneaker, the new Phantom golf shoe from Under Armour has the makings of the most comfortable spikeless design this season. Weighing only 12.3 oz, the Phantom is perfect for walking or riding, especially because it's water-resistant. The hardest part is picking from the four awesome colorways. **\$140 www.underarmour.com**



Summer, Don't Leave Us

While we can't control Mother Nature, we can buy polos like the Always Summer design from Travis Mathew to keep us in a warm mindset. Purple with an all-over design, you can expect this ultra-soft polo to look new, no matter how many washings. It's wrinkle-resistant, enhanced stretch material, and ready for the first tee. **\$99.95 www.travismathew.com**



THE GOOD STUFF

Spoiler Golf is revolutionizing putting with Spoiler OG's unique design, inspired by the pure roll off a wedge's leading edge. It minimizes backspin and skid for improved accuracy, distance control, and putting confidence. Founded by father-son duo Jeff and Dan Landman, and launched in late 2023, Spoiler OG's innovative design was born out of putting with a wedge, and learning how pure and true the ball rolls off the leading edge. Spoiler OG's Lead Edge Roll face profile promotes earlier and more forward roll upon impact, thereby minimizing skid, backspin, and sidespin, and ensuring a purer roll. The result is improved accuracy, distance control, and consistency on the greens. The putter is designed to work like a belly wedge, and while its design is different from anything else we've ever seen, it really does produce a consistent roll coming off the clubface.



Stars and Stripes Down the Fairway

The Patriot 3.5 LS bag from Sun Mountain incorporates a stars and stripes design so you can show off your national pride as you stroll the fairway. The Patriot offers additional pocket storage and a lightweight feel so that you can expect a comfortable walk on the links. **\$269.99** www.sunmountain.com



The Ol' Spinaroo

Callaway delivers fresh, new wedges here in the midseason with its new Opus lineup. Featuring Spin Gen Face Technology, Opus is designed to optimize spin whether you're opening the face or blasting out from a greenside bunker. Available in four grind options and seven lofts. **\$179.99** www.callawaygolf.com



Skulled It

It doesn't matter if your game is deadly or if it's ready to R.I.P., the Skull Pack from Volvik is to die for. Included in a sleek black box you'll get four limited-edition matte-finish three-piece performance golf balls. Each ball has a skull logo to match a hat clip ball marker, also included. **\$19.99** www.volvik.com

Burgers and Birdies

Waggle isn't a company that embraces boring designs, and this Grill Master Hat celebrates two of the best summer activities, grilling and golfing. This snapback design is made from a polyester and spandex blend so it breathes and flexes. The high-quality embroidery pops from two fairways over. **\$35** www.getyourwaggleon.com



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Have Fun While Sharpening Three Key Putting Skills

There are three skills you need to master if you want to be a good putter: green reading, controlling the speed of your ball, and starting the ball on the intended path. Now, raise your hand if you have shown up to a round of golf, missed five or six 10-foot putts on the practice green and then had far too many three-putts on the course.

I thought so.

During lessons with my students, I have them hit five to 10 putts from a relatively straight line from about 10 feet. Depending on the pattern their misses take, I'll then determine which of those three skills we are going to work on over the next half hour. Once we discuss mechanics with important items including setup, grip, eyeline, etc., I'll then set up a series of games that not only focus on the single skill we are trying to improve, but also make the lesson (i.e. practice) a fun experience.

The following are some of my favorite games to set up for improving green reading, controlling the pace of your roll, and making more three to six footers (Starting Direction).

SKILL #1: Green Reading Play Above the Apex

A lot of golfers feel like they miss a lot of putts that they should have made. An easy place to start is just by changing your intent of where you're aiming. When you read a green, what you're trying to do is to find the apex of the putt, that is, the point in the putt where it's going to break the most.

Set Up: Put a tee in the ground between the ball and hole that represents the apex, on the high side (i.e. 'pro side').

Objective: The objective now becomes to aim *higher* than that point, playing more break than you think you should. Even with reasonable speed, you're going to see that putt miss low and begin to work farther away from the hole. By making a better decision and aiming above the apex, you'll make more putts and have the ball always rolling *towards* the hole, not away from it.

Scoring: Hit five to 10 putts, scoring

one point for finishing on the high side of the tee and hole and three points for every putt made.

Variation: Start with shorter putts and continue to move farther away to help with your speed control skill.

Random Spot Putting

Set Up: Scatter balls randomly around a hole, ensuring a variety of distances and slopes.

Objective: Read the green and putt each ball. This simulates real-game conditions with different lies.

Scoring: Track how many putts you make. This drill enhances your adaptability and green-reading skills.

Variation: Place a tee in the ground, directly in front of the hole. This forces you to bring the ball into the hole from the high side. Any putt missing low will either be blocked by the tee or miss the hole on the low side.

SKILL #2: Controlling the Speed of Your Putts

Nine-point Game #1

Set Up: Put four tees one putter's length from one another to form a square. The first two tees are placed horizontally on each side of the hole. The third and fourth tees are placed one putter's length behind the hole. The area between the tees is considered the scoring zone.

Objective: Three putts per game, trying to hole out or finish in the scoring zone.

Scoring: Three points for a holed putt and one point for a putt that finishes in the scoring zone (nine total points possible).

Variation: Start at 10 feet and expand to 15 and 20 feet. Start with a relatively straight putt and then expand to uphill and downhill putts as well as those with slope.

Putting Ladder

No hole is needed in this drill as you are simply working on controlling the speed of your putt based on the distances you are trying to reach.

Set Up: Take three golf clubs and

align them parallel to one another at approximately 10, 20, and 30 feet away from your starting point.

Objective: Hit two golf balls, the first finishing between the second and third club handle and the second putt finishing between the first and second club handle. Once both putts finish between the clubs, make the distance between the first and third club closer to the second club (making your scoring zone smaller).

Scoring: Count how many times you squeeze the scoring zone tighter before you putt either short or long of the intended scoring zones.

Variation: Incorporate additional clubs to add more putts and distances to the equation.

SKILL #3: Starting Direction Nine-point Game #2

This game helps golfers practice consistency and pressure putting, simulating the need to make crucial putts during a round.

Set Up: Place nine golf balls around the hole in a circle, with each ball positioned about three feet away from the hole.

Objective: The goal is to sink as many of the nine putts as possible.

Scoring: Each successful putt counts as one point, so the maximum score is nine points.

Variation: To increase the difficulty, expand the circle, placing the balls farther away from the hole.

Tee Gate

The basic tee gate drill is a straightforward putting practice exercise aimed at improving stroke accuracy and consistency.

Set Up: Place two tees in the ground just wider than the width of your

putter head, creating a "gate" through which your putter must travel. Use with hole only five to six feet away with a relatively flat slope.

Position a second gate about 12 inches in front of the ball along the target line. Ensure the gate is aligned with your intended putting line but using an alignment rod.

Objective: Address the ball with your putter. The ball should be positioned such that when you make your stroke, the putter travels through the gate without hitting the tees, while the ball should clear the

second tee gate as well.

Scoring: One point for making it through the second tee gate and three points for a holed putt. Start with five balls for a total possible score of 15.

Variation: Vary distance from the hole, moving as far away as 25 to 30 feet, building a bit wider "scoring zone" as described in the Nine-point Game #1 above.

Three in a Row


This is a great pre-round drill to give you the confidence you'll need, especially with

the first few holes.

Set Up: Place three ball markers on the ground and in a row, from three, six, and nine feet from the hole. Place a ball next to each mark.

Objective: Starting from the shortest mark, make all three putts in a row. Any putt that is missed requires you to start over.

Scoring: Keep track of how many strokes it takes you to complete this drill.

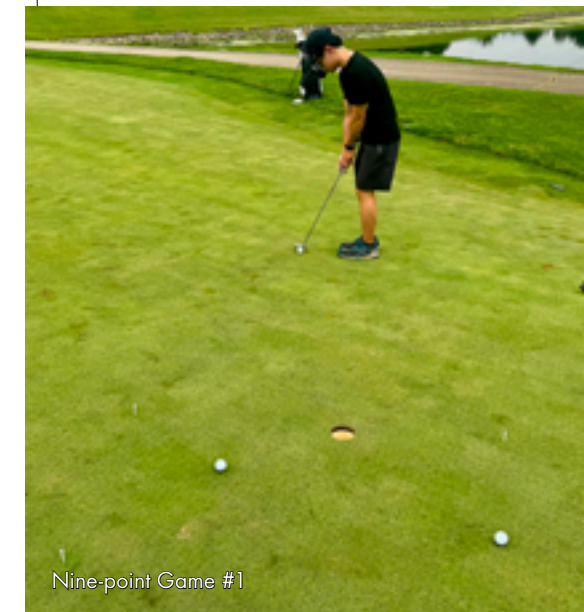
Variation: Move in a circle around the green as you work your way through this drill, keeping tally of strokes taken. 



Putt Above Apex



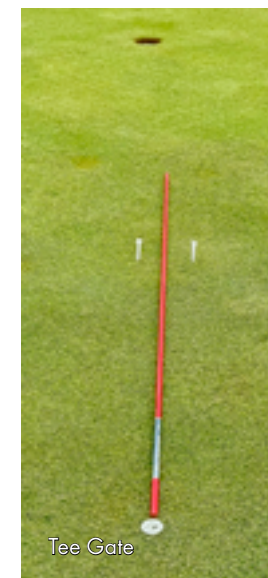
Random Spot Putting



Nine-point Game #1



Ladder Game



Tee Gate



Tee Gate



Mastering Your Putting Stroke with a Yardstick

Putting is often considered the most critical aspect of golf — for good reason. On the green is where the game is won or lost, making a solid putting stroke essential for lowering your scores. Although there are many tools and techniques you can use to refine your putting, one of the simplest and most effective is a yardstick. This unassuming tool can significantly enhance your alignment, stroke path, and consistency. Here's a detailed guide on how to use a yardstick to improve your putting stroke.

Understanding the Basics

A yardstick is a straight, flat measuring tool that is 36 inches long. Its primary function for putting practice is to serve as a visual and physical guide for your stroke. By practicing with a yardstick, you can achieve a better sense of direction, ensure a more consistent stroke, and develop a reliable putting routine.

Step-by-Step Guide to Using a Yardstick

Setting Up
Start by finding a flat, even surface to practice on. Ideally, this would be a putting green, but a carpeted floor at home can work as well. Place the yardstick on the ground, aligning it with your intended target line. The yardstick will act as a guide for your putter, helping you visualize the straight path needed for a successful putt.

Alignment

Place the golf ball on one end of the yardstick, ensuring it is centered. This positioning will help in aligning your putter face correctly. Stand over the ball and line up your putter so that it is square to the yardstick. Your eyes should

be directly over the yardstick so as to promote proper alignment and posture.

Stroke Path

Using the yardstick as a guide, make your putting stroke. The goal is to keep the putter head moving along the length of the yardstick. This practice helps in maintaining a straight stroke path, reducing the chances of an inside-out or outside-in swing. The yardstick's edges serve as a tactile reference, providing immediate feedback if your stroke strays off line.

Feedback and Adjustment

One of the key benefits of using a yardstick is the instant feedback it provides. If your putter deviates from the straight path, you will feel and see it. This feedback is crucial for making the necessary adjustments to your stroke. Practice repeatedly until you can consistently keep the putter moving along the yardstick without veering off.

Benefits of Yardstick Drills

Improved Alignment

Using a yardstick helps you develop a keen sense of alignment. By consistently setting up and practicing with this tool, you train your eyes and body to recognize what

proper alignment looks and feels like. This skill is transferable to the course, where precise alignment can make a significant difference.

Enhanced Stroke Path

A straight stroke path is essential for accurate putting. The yardstick drill encourages a linear motion, which is particularly beneficial for shorter putts where a straight back-and-through stroke is most effective. Over time, this practice can lead to a more natural and reliable stroke.

Consistency

Consistency is the hallmark of a good putter. By incorporating yardstick drills into your practice routine, you will develop muscle memory and a repeatable stroke. This consistency can breed confidence, allowing you to approach each putt with the assurance that you have a solid, dependable stroke.

Advanced Yardstick Drills

Distance Control

Once you have mastered the basic yardstick drill, you can incorporate distance control into your practice. Place several balls along the yardstick at different intervals and practice putting to a specific distance.

This drill will help you fine-tune your feel and control, which is crucial for varying lengths of putts on the course.

Breaking Putts

To simulate real course conditions, practice with the yardstick on a surface with a slight slope. This setup will help you understand how to adjust your stroke for breaking putts while still maintaining a straight path. It will challenge you to balance the straight-line stroke with the necessary adjustments for break and speed.

Conclusion

The simplicity of a yardstick belies its effectiveness as a putting practice tool. By providing a clear visual and tactile guide, it helps golfers of all levels improve their alignment, stroke path, and overall consistency. Whether you are a novice golfer or a seasoned player looking to refine your skills, incorporating yardstick drills into your practice routine can lead to significant improvements on the green. Remember, the key to becoming a great putter lies in consistent practice and attention to detail, and the yardstick offers a straightforward yet powerful way to achieve that.




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Located right off of Interstate 55 in Channahon, IL, The Bluffs, also known as Heritage Bluffs Golf Club, offers both a challenge and composure across its rolling acres. With scenic beauty unlike most Chicago-area courses, The Bluffs is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary and has received a 4-Star rating from Golf Digest Magazine.

In addition to an award-winning course, The Bluffs also features a large all-grass practice range, putting green, separate chipping green and bunker, and a newly renovated clubhouse.

The clubhouse is open 7 days a week and features a full dining room and bar as well as indoor golf simulators for year round fun!



It's Easy to Fall for Elgin Country Club. Trust Me.

by Todd Mrowice



I've been a public golfer since my early days of picking up clubs. However, I graciously accept when the opportunity to live the private country club life for a day presents itself. It would be rude not to, after all.

I've had the good fortune of being asked to experience Elgin Country Club several times. For many reasons, it's one of my favorite courses (public or private) in the Chicagoland area. The course is spectacular, yes, but for me, it's always the totality of my day at ECC that fills my inner golf tank. No matter what the scorecard says, after my round I'm the elated fellow at the clubhouse patio, sipping my Old Fashioned.

Allow me to take you through a day at Elgin Country Club, with my hope that you will also have the pleasure of teeing it up at this incredible property.

Background

Elgin Country Club was established in 1901 and was the first course in the city of Elgin. After the first 32 charter members announced the initial idea for the club, merely a week later they had over 80 members. After leasing 80 acres of land, Tom Bendelow was enlisted to design the original 9-hole course. The choice of architect should come as no surprise seeing that over one hundred of Bendelow's estimated seven hundred courses are located in Illinois (also see Medinah CC and Beverly CC).

Fast-forward to 1928 and '29 when the other nine holes were built, in addition to the existing clubhouse.

With some tweaks to the original design along the way, the course has withstood the test of time. In recent years, Elgin Country Club has hosted the 2020 and 2022 Illinois PGA Match Play Championships, the 2019 Women's U.S. Open qualifier, the 2021 and 2022 National PGA Junior Championship qualifier, and the 2021 U.S. Girls Junior Am qualifier.

Arrival

The first time I went to Elgin Country Club, I realized that I had likely driven past the entrance dozens of times in my life and never noticed it. Two very unassuming flagstone pillars and a black gate are visible from US-20. Once you pull in, a long driveway takes you past the practice areas and to what appears to be a fairly modest clubhouse.

Staff and Clubhouse

The interior of the clubhouse had an older charm to it, that is, until this year. In speaking with GM and COO Doug Stewart, significant interior renovations wrapped up in June, and now members have a revamped, modern look to pair with a classic course.

"The biggest thing for me is that our members are proud of their golf course. The course speaks for itself, and now that

we've made improvements to the clubhouse it's a place that wows their guests," said Membership Director Joe Leskis.

Within the clubhouse, the staff is welcoming and lacks the stuffiness that you run into at some private clubs. From the pro shop staff to the locker room attendants, Elgin employs good people.

Practice Facilities

In addition to a sprawling driving range, you'll find a professional short-game area. An additional practice green is located adjacent to the first tee and it's a good indicator of the greens that await you.

The Course

In many ways, Elgin Country Club embodies a true Chicago-style golf course, particularly its stately trees that line several fairways. What you won't expect is the elevation change that happens throughout the course. Several holes have sloped fairways that you desperately need to be on top of to have any shot at par. With that elevation change also comes several false front green complexes. You chuckle the first time your 30-yard pitch rolls back to you, but not the second, or the third.

Overall, the course is beautifully mapped out. Some revamping since 1901 has helped, but in large part you'll find alternating challenges and opportunities. Don't get me wrong, the course can be a beast, especially if you're not hitting it particularly well. The

back tees play at 6,450 yards with a 135 slope and 72.2 rating (par 72). For bombers that see that yardage number and think they'll just pound the driver and hit flip wedges all day, do let me know how that works for you.

Elgin Country Club is also home to my favorite back-to-back holes in the area. No. 12, "Sunset," is a beautifully designed par 4 that doglegs right. Your approach shot has water left, but I always aim right and the terrain guides the ball to the center of the green. No. 13, "Slippery Knoll," is the number one handicap hole on the course. It's an uphill par 4 that tapers as you get closer to the green, which has to be the smallest complex on the course. For some reason, I always play it well.

Post-Round

When your round is over it's a short stroll to my favorite area, the Centennial Patio. Sure, you can head inside and get just about anything you want to eat or drink, but the patio is where the action is. It's where members sit, settle bets, lick wounds, and watch the unfortunate souls on the closing hole attempt to claw their way out of a gullied fairway to save par, if they're lucky. Lots of laughs on the patio, all good-spirited.

The Members

I can't overstate how laidback the members are at Elgin Country Club. Of course, I'm on my best behavior as a guest, but never once have I felt unwelcome or out of place. Members



are engaging, friendly, and genuinely care about their facility.

"The membership at Elgin Country Club is predominantly successful, working people," said Stewart. "Everyone here is very down-to-earth and friendly. That goes beyond the members, I'll add [that] our staff is the same way."

The club heavily promotes itself as a family-friendly environment, and rightfully so. If you have kids, I can't imagine a better club to belong to. Between the swimming pool, activities, family golf lessons, pickleball courts, tennis courts, fire pits, and live music nights, it's the place to be.

Don't Skip the Chance

It should go without saying, but if you do get invited to Elgin Country Club, don't pass up the opportunity to go. All of the private club experience is there, but it's packaged in a way that fits better with today's lifestyle, golf needs, and family dynamic.

More information at www.elgincc.com.



Stand on the 4th tee of the Sedge Valley course and take a deep breath. Before punching your wooden peg in the ground, look off into the distance in front of you and then slowly turn to your right. You will take in a serene panorama that melds rolling fairways with sand-splotched prairie and the occasional rugged bunker. Your view of this splendid prairie is uninter-

rupted by carts or cart paths or buildings of any kind. And the only sound you hear is the rustling of the winds through some overgrown brush and bushes framing the holes. If he ever builds a golf course in heaven, Saint Peter will surely consider this glen for divine inspiration.

While Sedge Valley may reside a fair distance away from the pearly gates,

this course is a grand addition to the golfers' paradise we know as Sand Valley Resort in Rome, Wisconsin. Designer Tom Doak and his team at Renaissance Golf Design drew from some of the classic heathland courses of London and the English Coast built in the early 1900s. Formally opened on July 1, the 6,159-yard Sedge Valley should in no way be considered a

"short course," as it incorporates four par 4s of over 400 yards and a single par 5 that stretches to 550 yards. While the acreage used for the course could easily accommodate additional length, Doak opted to build holes around preferred green sites located across the expanse. When tees and fairways were incorporated afterwards, the result was a brilliant collection of five

par 3 holes, twelve par 4s and the aforementioned par 5 to play to a total par of 68.

Sedge Valley serves as a great contrast to its far brawnier colleague championship courses at Sand Valley — the long and challenging Sand Valley course; the spectacular and massive Mammoth Dunes; and the visually stunning but intimidating Lido course that opened in June of 2023. While all of those dazzle with length and huge tee shot landing areas, they tend to appeal to highly-skilled players who hit towering drives. Not so at Sedge Valley.

"A lot of architects don't seem to get that not everyone is out on the golf course to grind and compete, that they're just out there to enjoy themselves," said Doak. "And clients had the same mentality back then —

that they needed to make a tough course to be respected and attract attention. I think places like Bandon Dunes impact on our perspective of the customer and their interests, and I'm glad to have had a hand in that."

Doak and his team at Renaissance Golf may just have ushered in a renaissance of golf architecture that places a premium on approach shot values over length off the tee. Three of the par 4s are under 300 yards, and only two of the par 3s are over 200 yards. The modest length of all those holes is instantly forgotten when staring down the fairways and green sites from off the tees. Sprawling bunkers have been cleverly placed to reduce tee shot landing areas or to demand precise shots to the flagstick. "Sedge Valley

is about risk/reward," said Brandon Carter, marketing and communications manager of Sand Valley. "On many of the shorter holes, the more risk you take to get your ball in position for birdie, the more you are challenged to avoid some pretty dramatic bunkers. Plus, on most days wind will play a huge factor on club selection."

Built fast and firm over rolling fescue turf, the course winds across, down, and over rolling topography that is vastly different from Sand Valley's other three championship layouts. Even though many holes are only sparsely populated with trees, a number of holes are framed by forests that are not necessarily in play but allow for a more intimate experience with nature. "This is a golf course intended to engage

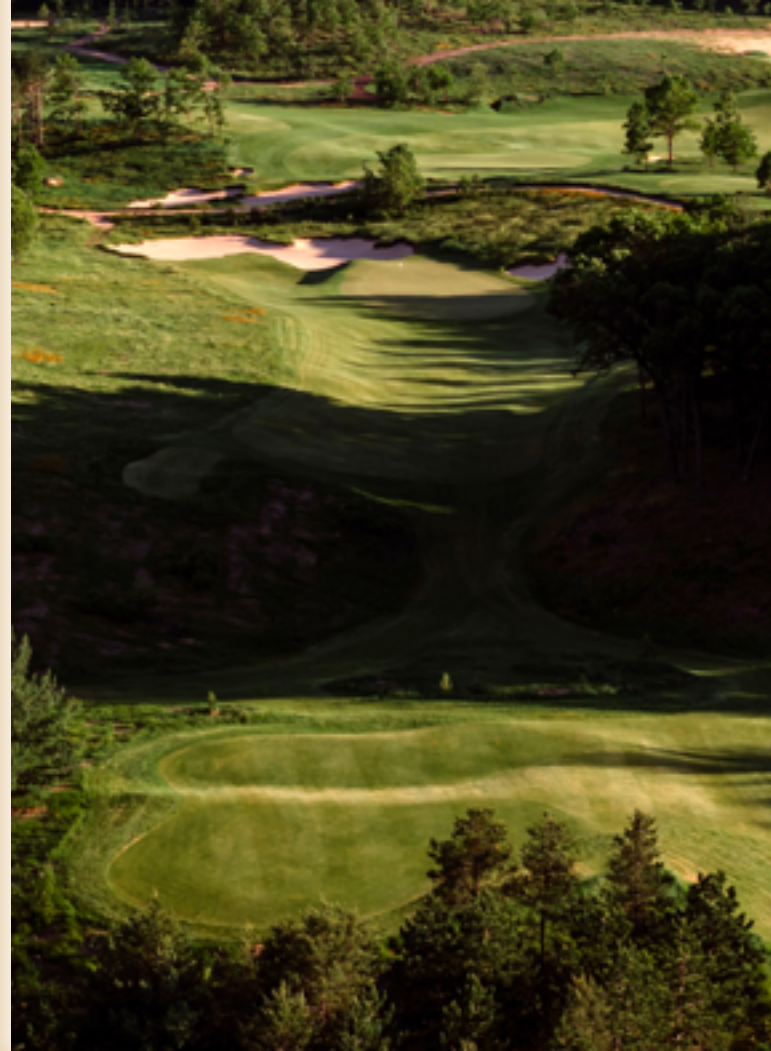
your imagination and decision-making at the game's most visceral levels," said resort co-owner Michael Keiser, Jr. "You will re-think some of your assumptions — in a great way." To assist in that re-thinking process, I highly recommend hiring one of the property's skilled caddies before tackling the layout. Keen local knowledge will both verify club selection and steer you away from areas that can result in lost strokes and perhaps even lost balls. As with all other courses at Sand Valley, the Sedge Valley layout is walking only.

The course appropriately begins with a short par 4 that establishes the rules of engagement. A wide-open fairway leads to a slightly elevated green that is protected on the front right and left by deep and devious bunkers. The key to par on this

Wisconsin's Sand Valley Resort Adds the Spectacular Sedge Valley Course

By Neal Kotlarek





and most every other hole is to avoid at all costs close encounters with the sand.

The teeth of the course are displayed on two long par 4 doglegs, Nos. 3 and 4. The former begins from an elevated tee and then drops into a valley before rising dramatically toward massive bunkers that protect the green to the left of the fairway landing area. A tee shot on the left side tempts one to smash a long-iron or 3-wood over those bunkers to a mid-sized green. Take the conservative approach and aim your approach to the right for an easy chip. No reason to tangle with those foreboding fairway bunkers that can evolve an easy bogey into an uneasy “X” on the scorecard!

As mentioned earlier, the ensuing 447-yard par 4 is easy on the eyes if not that easy to reach in

two strokes. A tee shot that needs to avoid a strand of trees bisecting the fairway leads to a tricky approach to a medium-sized green protected by bunkers. Find a way to get through this hole and you are home free to enjoy a sequence of fun and thrilling short holes beginning with a short par 3 over a valley to a green perched on a knoll protected front right and back left by bunkers.

The 303-yard No. 6 is the highlight of the front nine for reasons that are obvious once you walk on the tee. This gorgeous downhill par 4 can very well lead to eagle opportunities for long hitters as the fairway opens to a landing path to the green. Asked to name his favorite hole on the course, Doak remarked that this slightly angled hole was near and dear to

his heart. “The 6th hole was the first one I found on the map,” he said. “The narrow shelf for the green was always there, and the way the fairway sloped to the right was going to make it hard to leave yourself a straight-in approach.

“But there was a long walk from the previous hole to get over to the perfect spot for the 6th tee, and eventually, we decided to combine two holes to make the 11th, and add a little par 3 in the nook between 4 green and 6 tee. The green site was very steep and we had to create a shelf for the green, with a bunker eating into the back middle ... it has a little bit of the 12th at Augusta to it, with bunkers in the place of Rae’s Creek.”

The back nine is a far more conventional length of 3,292 yards—much of that in the form of the formida-

ble 569-yard par 5 No. 11. Two of the three finishing holes are over 400 yards and call for long approach shots to tricky greens.

Like the Vanessa Williams song, Doak saved the best for last in the form of the fascinating 328 yard par 4. From the tee, the steeply elevated landing area to the right provides a direct line to the green. The lower tier landing area to the left is easier to reach, but then requires a daunting short-iron to a hidden target. Whichever your decision, you confront a putting surface with multiple intricacies. Approach shots directed from the upper right side may spring forward as the landing area just short of the green is severely sloped. Approach shots from the lower tier have a restricted angle to the hole, particularly when

the flagstick is tucked on the far backside of the green. All that said, a par on this short hole is in all likelihood a winning score.

Sedge Valley is the centerpiece of Sedge Village at Sand Valley Resort. When completed, the village will incorporate dozens of home sites of various acreages featuring tennis, dining, and entertainment venues along with a massive, man-made lake completed last fall. The 13,000-square-foot Tennis Center incorporates a bistro-style restaurant and a fully stocked pro shop. The tennis court is built under the specifications of “court” or “royal” tennis—a version of the game that incorporates pear-shaped racquets, walls, and cloth balls.

Cottage construction began last spring with a handful of cottages already built and occupied. Each

cottage design follows various elegant floor plans inspired by the Sedge Village sites. Estate homes that offer owners more architectural design flexibility will add variety and scale to the project. Owners of both the cottages and estate homes can participate in the Sand Valley Rental Program that provides a shared rental split when resort guests use those facilities.

The positive response to the village has already spurred the construction of still another course — a 12-hole layout called The Commons — which is ready to be seeded later this summer, and includes the possibility of additional holes at a future stage of development.

The rapid expansion of both the Sedge Valley golf course and Sedge Village almost obscure the fact that

Sand Valley Resort opened a mere seven years ago. The vision of Bandon Dunes founder Mike Keiser and now owned and managed by sons Chris and Michael, the resort has evolved from a relatively modest footprint of a single golf course with limited lodging on 1,700 acres of tumbling sand dunes to a vast recreational community that caters to active lifestyles.

The actual origins of Sand Valley Resort date a little further back to the early 2010s when golf construction executive Craig Haltom came across a parcel of sand, trees, and wild vegetation that he sensed would make for a great golf property. Haltom shared his discovery with the Keiser family who very quickly shared his enthusiasm. After the land acquisition from the Plum Creek Timber

Company, the Keisers hired acclaimed architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw to shape the land into a championship course unlike any other in Wisconsin. From an emptied lake bed and forested dunes emerged the humble beginnings of what would quickly evolve into one of America’s premier golf destinations.

Honored as the Best New Course of 2017 by multiple national golf magazines, the Sand Valley championship layout appears at first glance to have been designed by Mother Nature. Sand dunes flow into wide expanses teeming with red pines, native grasses, and even prickly cacti. The course design is amazingly varied and dramatic. Fairways play hard and fast; thus, tee shots spring forward by 10, 20, and even 30 yards if the ball catches the back end of



a hill. Greens are large and massively undulating as they challenge players to consider angles and pin positions on every approach shot.

While it is tempting to compare Mammoth Dunes to its sister course, the fact is that the layouts reside on completely different landscapes. The first course is wide-open with saplings and shrubs lining the layout's perimeters. Trees are a prominent feature on Mammoth Dunes — not necessarily as obstacles but to frame holes. Named Best New Course of the Year by multiple national golf magazines in 2018, Mammoth Dunes was inspired by David McLay Kidd's earlier work at Bandon Dunes in Oregon. The stated philosophy of Kidd's design firm is to create courses "as natural as possible, as seamless as possible, and as sustainable as possible."

Given 500 acres of pristine land, the architect produced a feast for the eyes, complete with remarkable panoramas, extravagantly wide fairways, contoured greens, and even a pair of drivable par 4s. The end-result is a course that is unique, fun, and visually thrilling.

The course's logo is a woolly mammoth, which serves as a reminder that the sand base of the property was a result of the end of the Ice Age. Far more fascinating to golfers is the mammoth sizes of the sand dunes which tower as high as 80 feet; the greens which stretch to over 75 yards from front to back; and landing areas — some as wide as a football field. Most note-worthy is the ingenious separation of holes which provides utter solitude.

No visit to Sand Valley Resort is complete without a

romp in The Sandbox. Opened in 2018 and built by the team of Coore and Crenshaw, the course is an ingenious 1,757-yard 17-hole creation that serves up loads of fun in a fraction of the time it takes to play a regulation course. Laid out over 25 acres of sandy soil, The Sandbox features holes that vary in length from 40 yards to 150 yards. The green complexes are the featured attractions on the course, with undulations and tiers challenging players to calculate landing areas sometimes far away from the flagstick locations. Depending on the greenkeeper's inclination, some flags on the course have to be ignored, as their position just behind a greenside bunker basically eliminates any chances of landing the tee shot anywhere near the hole.

One of the most talked-about projects among the national golf community

over the past few decades, the aforementioned The Lido is a faithful re-creation of a New York course repurposed as a WWII military base in the early 1940s. Golf historian Peter Flory studied old photographs and source materials to create 360-degree models of each hole. In the midst of working on Sedge Valley, Doak and his Renaissance Golf team suspended that operation to adapt Flory's meticulously reproductions into physical reality right down to every hump, hollow, and hummock of the original Lido Club. What made this massive engineering feat even possible is that the original course had been laid out on a parcel of flat, rectangular shoreline property using two million cubic yards of sand and topsoil. Thus, the course was far easier to replicate than one placed atop rolling land that

had been shaped by nature for 16,000 years or so.

In December of 2023, Sand Valley Resort was selected by the USGA to host four prestigious USGA championships. The Lido will be the primary host of the 2026 U.S. Mid-Amateur and of the 2029 U.S. Junior Amateur. In 2030, the resort will host the U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur and will follow that event in 2034 with the U.S. Girls' Junior Amateur.

With all of the additional golf courses, the resort is also in the middle of a revamp of Sand Valley's practice area. A 50-acre practice facility will include a driving range that stretches out to 500 yards, target greens, and expansive short game and putting green areas.

Dining options across the property beyond The Gallery include Bill's BBQ

at The Sandbox; rustic indoor or outdoor dining at the clubhouse's Mammoth Bar; and scrumptious food sourced from local farmers and purveyors at Aldo's Farm-to-Table Restaurant. Looking for a quick bite before or after your round? Craig's Porch overlooking the 1st tee on the Sand Valley Course serves up \$1 egg-bacon and egg-sausage sandwiches in the mornings and phenomenal \$1 carnitas tacos in the afternoons. These are both can't-miss treats.

Four years ago, Sand Valley Resort transitioned into a four-season resort complete with holiday and wellness events as well as cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking, and snowshoeing during the winter months. "The transition from a seasonal resort to a full-season property was

the result of demand from our guests, many of whom consider Sand Valley Resort their home away from home," said Carter. "The obvious benefit is that our resort staff can stay in-place year round."

Carter stated that one of the Keiser brothers' proudest achievements of the property is the number of jobs attributable either directly or indirectly to the resort's presence. "Heavy and light construction work; members of our superintendent's crew; hotel, golf course and tennis court management; chefs, cooks and restaurant service members; caddies and residential architects have all played an integral role in our success," said Carter. "And business buildings and cafes in nearby communities that were vacant before we got here are now occupied. We are con-

fident we've played a role in improving people's lives."

Once the golf season ends, the resort quickly transforms into a recreation haven that welcomes couples, groups, and families. Active experiences include fishing, hiking, yoga, and star gazing in autumn months; and ice-skating, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing in the winter months. Popular events include regularly scheduled wellness weekends, whiskey tastings, and a Brews & Brats festival. Last year's events calendar was highlighted by a Snow Valley weekend which included sledding, tubing, snowman building, and pond hockey.

For more information on golf packages, accommodations, and the resort's fall and winter calendar, visit the Sand Valley Resort website: www.sandvalley.com.

ISLAND RESORT & CASINO CASHING IN WITH GREAT GOLF, GAMING, AND SCENERY IN MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

Reference either of the top-tier golf courses at Michigan's Island Resort & Casino and I will immediately think of one hole and one shot. Two years ago, I found myself in the middle of the fairway on the long, tricky 9th hole at Sweetgrass G.C., some 230 yards to the pin while participating in the pro-am leading into the Epson Tour's Island Resort Championship. The format for the event was a scramble. With a pond protecting the front of this uphill par-5, none of the amateur members of our foursome had that particular shot in his bag. Then up to the ball stepped our pro teammate, New

Zealand's Amelia Garvey. A former All-American at USC, Garvey was in her rookie year on the futures tour, working toward a singular goal of earning her LPGA Tour card. Garvey coiled all 5'9" of her body and proceeded to launch a 3-wood shot across the fairway, over the pond, above and onto the green with a fair amount of backspin. It was the most awesome shot I had witnessed in all my decades of playing golf. "Not bad!" Garvey said humbly as she marked her ball.

Garvey was one of 156 players from around the world who played in the 54-hole Island Resort Champion-

ship June 21 – 23. The tournament and its \$39,375 purse was won by Soo Bin Joo. Each player earned points towards one of those coveted slots on the LPGA Tour roster. Over the years, future stars including Nelly Korda, Karrie Webb and Lorena Ochoa have used the Epson Tour as a launching pad towards their LPGA Tour successes.

The Island Resort Championship has been played annually since 2011 at the resort's Sweetgrass G.C., an award-winning design by Paul Albanese. Named "National Course of the Year" in 2022 by the National Golf Course

Owners Association, the rolling layout features wide fairways in pristine condition. The architect employed a variety of fun green complexes across the 18 holes, including a slanted Biarritz green, a Redan hole (narrow green with bunker in the middle), and an island green. Albanese serves up unique stretches of holes that fit the eye perfectly and flow effortlessly. Added flourishes to the design are plaques and symbols to honor the rich history of the Hannahville Indian Community which owns and operates this resort casino.

BY NEAL KOTLAREK

PHOTOS: BRIAN WALTERS



The highlight of the front nine is the beautiful, aforementioned 9th hole. A long drive on this par 5 provokes the player to consider a heroic second shot over a long stretch of flowing ponds leading to the green along the left side. The smarter choice is a layup, playing short of a massive fairway bunker to set up a pitch to a large, sweeping green. Unless, of course, your name is Amelia Garvey!

In many ways, Albanese found the perfect parcel of land upon which to build the Sage Run course that is part of the resort but is located eight miles off property. Isolated from civilization on a rocky ridge fostered by a receding glacier, the course perfectly parallels the surrounding Michigan Upper Peninsula landscape. Picturesque, rugged, and tranquil are adjectives that come to mind when surveying the property from off the first tee. Starting at Hole #1 and proceeding through No. 18, golfers are reminded of the property's farm-land roots as thick fescue grasses protect the fairways and rock outcroppings are located in unexpected areas around the vast acreage. While a number of holes are gently rolling — similar to the Sweetgrass course — others are built atop, below, or across the ridge (geologically called a drumlin).

The par-3 No. 5 might look short on the scorecard, but the green rests atop the ridge and is protected by fescue and sand. Use at least one extra club to ensure your tee shot carries all the way to the top. The 15th hole, on the other hand, plays far shorter as the par 4 dives down the ridge steeply off the tee before rising again slightly while leading to the putting surface. Ever played over a rock creek before? The 18th hole calls for players to avoid one on the left side of this massive par 5 finishing hole.

Sage Run and Sweetgrass G.C. serve as marquee attractions at the constantly evolving Island Resort & Casino which opened in 1981. The idea for the casino evolved from car bingo games that were used as fund-raisers to help the reservation's baseball team buy uniforms. Once known as Hannahville Bingo and Casino, the property evolved into a full-service resort in 2007 with the opening of the hotel. The Sweetgrass championship course was unveiled a year later. The layout was immediately heralded as a "Best New Public Course in America" by *Golf Digest*. Three years ago, a \$30 million tower added 100 new hotel rooms to the original 11-story 325-room hotel. The elegant Horizons Steakhouse, Splash Island waterpark, and a convention space now at-



tract families and business groups.

"Golf will always be a key aspect of our property," said resort general manager Tony Mancilla in an interview. "There are a lot of great courses across Michigan, so when we began planning our courses we knew the bar was set high. The goal was to not just offer fun and challenging golf. We also wanted to offer tournament quality conditions that make playing our courses a special experience."

This commitment to golf is supported by the July announcement of a \$19 million investment in continued expansion of the property. Highlighting the investment is a new 9-hole Cedar Course (Kishki in Potawatomi) designed by Albanese and to be built on the Sage Run property. The course will be paying tribute to the golden age of architecture with a focus on natural landscape features and strategic play. Along with the course project, a new expanded pro shop will be built along with an expansion of the resort building's convention space.

"The course is going to have a variety of different-length holes," said Mancilla. Short par 4s inspired by holes like No. 10 at Riviera, maybe a short par 3, and even church pew bunkers like Oakmont."

Island Resort and Casino's emphasis on golf extends beyond the property's boundaries. Along with providing stay & play deals on Sweetgrass and Sage Run, the resort offers the popular "Perfect 4-Some Package" which provides guests discounts and access to the UP's other two acclaimed nearby courses — Timberstone Golf Course in Iron Mountain, and Greywalls at Marquette Golf Club. Although all four courses have distinctly different characters, taken as a whole they reflect everything that makes golf in the Upper Peninsula so great: breathtaking scenery, great conditions, and solitude far, far away from maddening crowds. Along with highly affordable hotel and green fee rates, "The Perfect 4-Some Package" includes a certificate for \$10 off a \$50 or more apparel purchase at either Sawgrass or Sage Run.

The resort has also grown its gaming options significantly since its days as a bingo destination. Table games are offered alongside slots, poker, and even a sportsbook. The Island Showroom is a 1,315 seat theater that regularly attracts headline acts including rock, country, and comedy.

Island Casino & Resort is a scenic lakeside 3.5 to 5-hour drive from Milwaukee and Chicago respectively. For reservations, package deals, virtual tours of the golf courses and more information, visit www.islandresortandcasino.com.

The GOLFChicago Interview

Widely considered one of America's premier golf course architects, Tom Doak has already left an indelible imprint on Sand Valley Golf Resort with both his work on the newly opened Sedge Valley golf course and the construction of Charles Blair Macdonald's "lost" The Lido course. The prolific designer of some of the world's greatest golf courses—including Pacific Dunes at Bandon Dunes, Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand and The Loop at Forest Dunes in Michigan—Doak, 63, is also the author of the influential *The Anatomy of A Golf Course*, *The Confidential Golf Guide* and *Tom Doak's Little Red Book of Golf Course Architecture*, among others.

Following is our exclusive interview with Doak just days after the opening of his Sedge Valley course at Sand Valley Golf Resort.

GOLFChicago (GC): Sand Valley Resort has quickly evolved into a unique property as the landscapes and design concepts of each course are surprisingly diverse. When you were in the early stages of designing Sedge Valley, were you consciously building holes that offered shot values that differed dramatically from those served up at Sand Valley and at Mammoth Dunes? Or were the holes just organically different based upon the acreage you had to work with?

Tom Doak (TD): When I started out at High Pointe and The Legends I started building wider and more playable fairways than what others were doing back then, and the trend has continued ever since. I just thought a bunch of recent courses [including Mammoth Dunes] had gone too far in that direction, making it playable no matter where you hit it, and too encouraging to the long and wrong crowd. And I felt partly responsible for that trend, so I wanted to find a project where we could try to dial things back.

I never expected that would be at Sand Valley! But when Michael [Keiser, Jr.] contacted me about doing a course there, he said that other architects had tried to do a routing on that site and it just didn't seem to fit a big course well, and he wondered if a much shorter course would fit better. He was thinking



Up Close And Personal With Designer Tom Doak

by Neal Kotlarek

about something 5000 yards long! But I responded that I'd always wanted to do a course like the 6000-yard par-68 courses I'd seen in the UK, and I would see if something like that would fit. So we went into it with that in mind. It's actually a big piece of land, you just can't fit the holes too closely together without creating some blind shots, so we stretched the course out in a zig-zag line.

While all of my writer colleagues like to talk about the short par-4 No. 6, I am most intrigued by the split fairway No. 18. From the tees I played, I never even considered trying to land on the shelf to the right. But from the left side, I've already learned that a pin position deep in the back is basically unreachable. How did that hole come about?

The 18th was originally going to be the 17th, there was only room for a short par 4, and the ground all sloped hard from right to left. I tried to think of a similar hole that I liked, and what came to mind was my 4th hole at Barnbogle Dunes in Australia, one of my favorite holes I've ever built. So we sharpened the slopes and created the big fairway bunker, and moved some dirt up by the green to create the same sort of boomerang green that existed naturally at Barnbogle. Michael Keiser had worked for a summer at Barnbogle when he'd just got out of college, and loved the hole, so it was an easy sell for him. It's a little easier in Wisconsin, because if you slice your tee shot up the hill at Barnbogle there is a bunch of marram grass and wallabies and poisonous snakes, and you're going to abandon that ball and make six ... you shouldn't make six on the last hole at Sedge.

GC: What is your favorite hole

on Sedge Valley from a design perspective?

TD: I have two types of favorite holes ... the ones that I pretty much found in place and didn't have to do anything to build, and the ones where I had no idea what I'd do but came out well after a bunch of hard work. The 6th hole was the first one I found on the map; the narrow shelf for the green was always there, and the way the fairway sloped to the right was going to make it hard to leave yourself a straight-in approach.

But there was a long walk from the previous hole to get over to the perfect spot for the 6th tee, and eventually we decided to combine two holes to make the 11th, and add a little par 3 in the nook between 4 green and 6 tee. The green site was very steep and we had to create a shelf for the green, with a bunker eating into the back middle ... it has a little bit of the 12th at Augusta to it, with bunkers in the place of Rae's Creek.

GC: The putting surfaces on Sedge Valley are much more subtle and in great contrast to your greens on The Loop (at Forest Dunes in Roscommon, Mich.), for example. Did the context of Sedge Valley as a shorter, more accessible course play into the green construction?

TD: Michael's dad (Mike Keiser, founder and developer of Bandon Dunes and The Dunes Club) was always concerned about my fondness for interesting green contours, partly because he thinks other people hate to three-putt, and partly because he does, too [laughs]. So at Pacific Dunes we decided to keep the contours softer but make the greens as small as we could. You can't make them too small at a busy

resort, or they'll get worn out.

For Sedge, my idea was to make the targets long and skinny, or occasionally wide and shallow, to make the approach shot more testing one way or another. We weren't trying to make it easy ... the course is short overall so it's not exhausting, but we wanted it to have an edge to it. The greens aren't surrounded by trouble, but there's a place on nearly every hole where you'd better not miss, so you have to pay attention if you want to make pars.

GC: Way back in the 1980s, property owners like Paul Nine at Grand Traverse Resort in Michigan asked Jack Nicklaus to create "the toughest course he could imagine." All these years later, I sense that short par 4s and mid-length par 3s are in vogue on new course design. Is that a concession to the older boomer generation or am I just imagining a trend that doesn't exist?

TD: A lot of architects don't seem to get that not everyone is out on the golf course to grind and compete, that they're just out there to enjoy themselves. And clients had the same mentality back then, that they needed to make a tough course to be respected and attract attention. I think places like Bandon have had an enormous impact on our perspective of the customer and their interests, and I'm glad to have had a hand in that.

A good short par 4 is a chance for the average guy to make par or even birdie, but the low-handicap player expects to make birdie, and that's never that easy, so he may walk off the green feeling frustrated. That's exactly what a golf course architect wants to do ... to get the good player frustrated without making the average player want to give up the game.

Sweet Home Chicago

Chicago Adaptive Open

In late June the first ever Chicago Adaptive Open tournament took place at Cog Hill Golf & Country Club's Course No. 3. Jonathan Snyder, the Director of Golf Operations at United States Adaptive Golf Alliance was instrumental in collaborating with the Chicago District Golf Association



Jarrett Fultz

in making this monumental event happen. The 36-hole tournament brought together men and women athletes from around the country who have various disabilities in sixteen different categories. Jarrett Fultz who hails from Queens Park, Arizona, who has Neurological & Coordination



Impairment was the champion. The 23-year old shot a sterling 1-under par in the final round (the only player to post a red number in the tournament) combining for 4-over par total. Rynne Jackson who went to Eastern Illinois University and resides in Madeira Beach, Florida, finished in second place carding rounds of 72 and 77. Kirk Holmberg of Hutchinson, Kansas, earned the Overall Senior distinction following rounds of 81 and 74. Additionally, up to three places were awarded, with a total purse of \$15,000 being distributed accordingly.

Cog Hill Upcoming Events

August 29th Wine Night: Two-person scramble. 5pm shotgun start. Nine holes on Dubsdread. \$170 team entry fee. September 13th Night Golf at 8pm: Two-person scramble. Walking only. Go to www.coghillgolf.com to sign up for these events.

John Deere Classic

Another PGA Tour first-time winner was crowned at the John Deere Classic in Silvis, Illinois. 25-year old Davis Thompson started the final round with a two-shot lead. Six holes into the final round Sunday, Thompson had five birdies and had stretched his lead to six shots and was on his way to a four-shot victory, a spot in the next three majors, and the lowest 72-hole score in the John Deere Classic. "I'm just thankful it worked out. I got off to a great start today and was able to just kind of cruise on the back nine," Thompson said after closing with a 7-under 64. "Getting off to a good start was crucial, and I was just able to ride the momentum coming in."



Thompson made a 45-foot birdie putt on the first hole for a three-shot lead, and no one got closer to him the rest of the way.

He finished at 28-under 256 to break by one the John Deere Classic record set by Michael Kim in 2018.

The victory gets him into the next three majors, starting with the British Open in two weeks at Royal Troon. He also will make his Masters debut next April. Thompson, 25, is a University of Georgia product and lives on Sea Island, Ga. His father Todd was a two-time golf captain for the Bulldogs and is a good friend of Zach Johnson, the JDC's ambassador on the tour and

the most recent U.S. Ryder Cup captain. He is the 24th player to get his first PGA Tour win at the John Deere Classic, the most of any tournament dating to 1970.

The victory was worth \$1,440,000 in the only regular PGA Tour stop in Illinois.

LIV Golf Chicago

If you want to see the booming drives and charismatic style of 2024 US Open Champion Bryson DeChambeau then you'll want to head out to the southwest suburb of Bolingbrook, Illinois, in September. He will be joined by a slew of fellow "LIVins" including Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, and Dustin Johnson. This marks the first time the LIV Tour will be teeing it up at the public-accessed Arthur Hills designed Bolingbrook Golf Club. Last season the event was held at Rich Harvest Farms where DeChambeau came home with a final round 63 that included a sizzling 6-under par 28 on the back nine in winning by a stroke over fellow teammate Anirban Lahiri and South Africa's

Marc Leishman. The 54-hole LIV Golf Chicago tournament is September 13-15. www.livgolf.com/events/chicago-2024

New Short Game Area on Tap at Vernon Hills Golf Course

The 9-hole Vernon Hills Golf Course recently began a renovation project that includes the installation of a 16,000 sq. ft. putting green and short game practice facility with multiple chipping areas. A huge upgrade to a facility that up to now only had a few cages for players to warm up and small strangely tilted practice green, the project is designed by golf course architect Todd Quitno. The short game facility will be located adjacent to the first tee and clubhouse. The renovation project started in late June with completion being eyed for Spring 2025. Last winter, Quitno presented two similar options, one with a sand trap and one without. The Vernon Hills board opted for the design without a sand trap, as they thought it would require more space and present potential issues with errant shots.

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A True Wisconsin Classic: Grand Geneva Resort & Spa

By Joe Aguilar

More benign than brutish, junior golfers occupy the putting green outside the golf shop at Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, home of 18-hole monster The Brute and original Jack Nicklaus / Pete Dye-designed Highlands golf courses.

The tiny golfers, more than 100, are here on a late June morning for a Wisconsin junior outing. Few things are small here, however.

Consider the grandeur of the property itself, which is nestled on 1,300 acres of rolling hills amid Wisconsin woodlands. Less than 15 minutes from the Illinois border and about 40 miles southwest of Milwaukee, Grand Geneva Resort & Spa celebrated its 30th anniversary in May.

The facility boasts 358 newly renovated guest rooms, a water park, ski hill, villas, airport for small planes, three restaurants, a spa, a spacious lounge, and two of the most memorable golf courses the state offers. A free trolley brings guests wherever they want to go on the property.

The aptly named Brute measures more than 7,000 yards from the tips and is so grand that it can make even

burly Jon Rahm feel the size of one of those junior golfers. Some sand traps are big enough to land a flying saucer.

"It lives up to the name," Ryan Brown, who is in his fourth year as director of golf, said of the Brute. "It's a tough golf course, with a lot of elevated tee shots. You have big features across the board, from the fairways to the bunkers and the greens ... everything's giant on the Brute."

The Highlands features wide fairways but can be savage too, playing as long as 6,800 yards. The links-style course was originally designed by Pete Dye and Jack Nicklaus and transformed in 1996 by Bob Cupp.

Brown is particularly fond of the par-4 13th, which features an elevated tee shot tucked in the back portion of the property. The hole is tree-lined with a slight dogleg to an elevated and bunker-guarded green, which slopes.

"It's kind of underrated," Brown said. "It's just a beautiful visual tee shot."

What neither course has on it is homes, providing golfers an experience of playing in nature. Each hole is its individual hole, with no worries of spraying a shot



The Brute Holes #16 and 17



The Brute Holes #4 and 6



The Highlands Hole #12



The Brute Hole #18

onto an adjacent hole or a homeowner's patio.

The two golf courses have undergone renovations, too, albeit not on the level as the hotel. The bunkers and tee complexes were recently fully rebuilt, and some trees were removed to "open up some views and vistas," Brown said.

Outings are also big here. If it's not junior golfers, maybe it's Gary Con, a gaming convention that has been coming to the resort for 50 years. It celebrates the life and works of Gary Gygax, co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons, who was raised in Lake Geneva.

This summer, Grand Geneva will host the Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame outing, featuring former Green Bay Packers greats Jordy Nelson and Donald Driver.

More than 200 outings take place at Grand Geneva Resort & Spa annually.

"Our hotel can accommodate any size," Brown said. "We can max out two golf courses at 288 golfers and have unique indoor and outdoor options. Our culinary team is top-notch and can customize anything your group might want. We also have a full-service spa and fitness center here at the resort with recovery programming before or after your round, massages, tennis, pickleball, and some great fitness classes."

Right after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Marcus family, which has owned the property since 1994, made a grand investment in Grand Geneva Resort & Spa,



Abbey Springs

262-275-6113
One Country Club Dr.
Fontana, WI 53125
abbeysprings.org
Abbey Springs has been rated 4.5 Stars by *Golf Digest*. With spectacular views of Geneva Lake, Abbey Springs underwent a major green renovation in 2021, featuring state of the art 007 bent grass on all greens. Make your reservation at the web site above.



Arrowhead Golf Club

630-653-5800
26W151 Butterfield Rd.
Wheaton, IL 60189
arrowheadgolfclub.org
Arrowhead Golf Club is recognized for its beautifully maintained course and inviting atmosphere.
Arrowhead is a public course which offers impeccable golfing conditions at affordable rates on three separate par-72 18-hole layouts surrounded by forest preserve. The West, East, and South Courses feature new bunker renovations and enhancements. The practice area includes a lighted driving range, putting green, and chipping green. Group and individual golf lessons are available.



Balmoral Woods Golf Club

708-672-7448
26732 S. Balmoral Woods Dr.
Crete, IL 60417
balmoralwoods.com
Balmoral Woods offers a demanding, superbly conditioned, magnificent round of golf.
Laid out over 280 acres of wooded, rolling hills, the course will test the skill of golfers with its 6700-yard, 72.6 rated, 133-slope layout. It is a public 18-hole golf course, has hosted many local and state events and tournaments, and is the annual home of the Will County Amateur Championship. Check out our website for new rates, reservations, and more information. Follow us on Instagram for the latest updates and events.



Belmont Golf Club

630-963-1306
2420 Haddow Ave.
Downers Grove, IL 60515
belmontgolfclub.org
The historic Belmont Golf Club is a scenic 9-hole par-36 course featuring mature trees, natural areas, elevation, and water hazards. A driving range with 24 hitting stations, a practice putting green, sand trap, and chipping area includes a 10-station covered shelter.



Fox Bend Golf Course

630-554-3939
3516 Route 34
Oswego, IL 60543
foxbendgolfcourse.com
Fox Bend Golf Course, Oswego Park District's fun and challenging public course, boasts lush fairways, mature trees, and challenging greens. This 6,925-yard par-72 course tests skills of all levels with well-positioned bunkers and water in play on 11 holes. Fox Bend has hosted three Illinois Opens, USGA Qualifiers, Illinois State Amateur Qualifiers, and is home to the annual Fox Bend Amateur. Visit foxbendgolfcourse.com for more information or to book your next tee time. Visit Christina's Pub & Grill before or after your round to enjoy spacious outdoor seating with great course views and American fare done right!



Game of Irons

630-303-9454
3041 Butterfield Rd.
Suite 104
Oak Brook, IL 60523
gameofirons.com
Game of Irons is Chicagoland's most exciting virtual golf experience! Be transported to over 200 world-famous courses in the comfort of a premium indoor facility with 16 hitting bays in over 18,000 sq. ft. - perfect for corporate events, parties, and club meetings. We offer a full bar with craft cocktails and amazing food. We invite you to try out our #1 rated simulators with moving floors that adjust to the course contours, auto ball tee and multiple turf types (fairway, rough and bunker).



Grand Geneva Resort & Spa

262-248-8811
7036 Grand Geneva Way
Lake Geneva, WI 53147
grandgeneva.com
Tee off on two award-winning 18-hole courses that make Grand Geneva Resort & Spa one of the Midwest's favorite golf destinations. Enjoy individual tee times offering dynamic pricing, private instruction led by certified PGA staff and fully customized group outings.



Harborside International Golf Club

312-782-7837
11001 S. Doty Ave. East
Chicago, IL 60628
harborsidegolf.com
Harborside International Golf Center, home to the Port & Starboard Courses, is Chicago's home for golf. Located minutes from Chicago's Loop, Harborside offers a premier golf experience in the Chicagoland area. Harborside is the only facility with two of *Golfweek's* "Best Courses You Can Play in Illinois" and is home to an expansive practice facility. Harborside is owned by the Illinois International Port District and managed by KemperSports.



The Bluffs Public Golf Club

815-467-7888
24355 W. Bluff Rd.
Channahon, IL 60410
heritagebluffs.com
18 Holes: Par 72
Yardage: 5,035 - 7,171
Located near the intersection of Interstates 80 and 55 just south of Joliet, Heritage Bluffs is the pride of the Channahon Park District. The tranquil surroundings make a day playing golf fun and relaxing.
Along with our award-winning course we also feature a large all-grass practice range, along with a large putting green and a separate chipping green and bunker. After your round you can relax in our Grille Room or out on the patio, enjoying a full menu of delicious food and beverage choices.



Bullseye Golf Club

715-423-2225
2800 Ridgewood Trail
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
bullseyegolfclub.com
Designed by Larry Packard featuring towering pines giving a feel of the Carolinas right in Central Wisconsin. The Wisconsin River provides a picturesque view for the finishing holes across our rolling terrain. Warm up before your round on our new 30,000 sq. ft. bent grass practice tee!



Cantigny Golf

630-668-8463
27W270 Mack Rd.
Wheaton, IL 60189
cantignygolf.com
Part of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Cantigny Golf opened in 1989 and is managed by KemperSports. A renovation of Cantigny's highly rated 27 holes begins in June 2024 with the Hillside nine, followed by the Woodside and Lakeside nines. Eighteen holes will remain open for play throughout the three-year project. Cantigny Golf Academy offers TrackMan Range technology, installed in 2023, plus club fitting and repair services, junior clinics, private lessons and climate-controlled hitting bays. Cantigny Youth Links is a 9-hole, par-3 course for families.



Cog Hill Golf & Country Club

866-264-4455
12294 Archer Ave.
Palos Park, IL 60439
coghillgolf.com
Cog Hill Golf & Country Club, a Jemsek Golf Facility, is a historic 72-hole public golf facility located 30 miles southwest of Chicago. The year-round facility includes a driving range equipped with lights and heated Toptracer stalls, two golf shops, patio dining, and a pavilion for events, along with a 280-seat banquet hall.
• Rated in "America's 100 Greatest Public Golf Courses" by *Golf Digest*
• 2020 GRAA Top 50 Public Range in the Nation



The Haven Indoor Golf

708-671-8052
12317 S. Harlem Ave.
Palos Heights, IL 60463
thehavenindoorgolf.com
The Haven Indoor Golf & Bar is the only indoor facility in the Southwest Suburbs using Foresight GC Hawks! Our simulators are true game improvement simulators making us the premier facility in the Southwest suburbs.
Foresight Sports launch monitors use exact photometric measurements and image processing taken with a clear, direct view of the critical ball launch condition and club head into impact. The result? Our launch monitors measure – not estimate – club head data based on the club's triangulated face plane, delivering vastly more accurate results.



Heritage Oaks Golf Club

847-291-2351
3535 Dundee Rd.
Northbrook, IL 60063
heritageoaksgc.com
Conveniently located between the Edens Expressway and Interstate 294, 30 minutes north of Chicago. Featuring 27 holes of tree-lined golf, a practice range equipped with TrackMan® technology, our golf academy, and indoor golf simulators, Heritage Oaks offers something for everyone. With the elevated Acorn Grill + Terrace overlooking courses certified by the National Audubon Society, Heritage Oaks Golf Club welcomes you for golf, for a meal, or for a timeless experience.



The Highlands of Elgin

847-931-5950
875 Sports Way
Elgin, IL 60123
highlandsofelgin.com
The Highlands of Elgin has become a premier destination for thousands of golfers throughout the region. Nine new holes reclaim an old stone quarry, and take maximum advantage of the unique and dramatic landforms that were left behind, including a twelve-acre quarry lake. Four holes hug the top of the bluff thirty to forty feet above the water, providing golfers with incredible views and numerous shot options on each hole. The prairie-style clubhouse features an expanded golf shop, locker rooms, event rooms, and a full-scale food and beverage operation.



Kankakee Elks Country Club

815-937-9547
2283 Bittersweet Dr.
Saint Anne, IL 60964
elksgolf627.com
The Kankakee Elks Country Club is an 18-hole par-72 course. It is one of Illinois' premier Langford @ Moreau design courses, featuring some of the best green complexes in Illinois, 40 miles south of Chicago along the beautiful Kankakee River with very affordable rates.
Chose from one of our four tees to accommodate all levels of play.
Driving range, chipping area, and putting green with newly remodeled bar and snack shop.





Klein Creek Golf Club

630-690-0101
1N333 Pleasant Hill Rd.
Winfield, IL 60190
kleincreek.com

Klein Creek Golf Club is an 18-hole public golf course located one mile south of North Avenue and easily accessible from I-355. Designed by Dick Nugent, the layout features an open design in which water is present on 15 holes. Trees frame the layout's gentle doglegs, and tall prairie grasses border the fairways. Contoured mounding frames the fairways and greens, allowing a variety of approach options and great risk-reward opportunities.



The Club at Lac La Belle

262-567-7833
6996 Pennsylvania St.
Oconomowoc, WI 53066
clubatlaclabelle.com

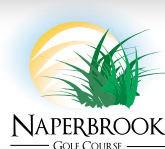
The newly renovated Club at Lac La Belle is now open for public play! If the club's original founders and its legendary Scottish golf professionals were alive today, our hope is that they would recognize our new course as fun "sporting" golf, which was a fundamental part of the game in 1896. We invite you to come see why Lac La Belle is the birthplace of the Wisconsin Golf Trail



Lake Arrowhead

715-325-2929
1195 Apache Lane
Nekoosa, WI 54457
lakearrowheadgolf.com

Located in the heart of Central Wisconsin, Lake Arrowhead boasts two of the Midwest's elite 18-hole golf courses. Here you have the rare opportunity to enjoy not just one, but two 4½ star championship golf courses in one incredible experience.



Naperbrook Golf Course

630-378-4215
22204 W. 111th St. / Hassert Blvd.
Plainfield, IL 60585
golfnaperville.org

Located in Plainfield, scenic Naperbrook Golf Course is a "links style" course that features rolling hills and wide fairways. Challenges in the way of ponds, a double green, and hidden bunkers await golfers of all levels. Additional amenities include a recently updated and expanded practice area featuring a one-acre turf range tee, large practice green, and practice bunker. Enjoy post-game refreshments on the picturesque patio. Naperbrook also offers lessons, outings, a well-stocked golf shop, and much more.



Purdue's Ackerman-Allen Course

765-494-3139
West Lafayette, IN
purduegolf.com

The Ackerman-Allen Course, a Pete Dye design, is an 18-hole, parkland-style, par-72 championship golf course featuring large bent-grass greens, fairways and tees. The layout presents a challenge for golfers of all abilities with rolling hills, tree-lined fairways, white sand bunkers, and minimal water hazards. Ackerman-Allen offers five sets of tees with the championship tees playing over 7,500 yards and the forward tees playing at 5,300 yards.



Purdue's Kampen-Cosler Course

765-494-3139
West Lafayette, IN
purduegolf.com

The Kampen-Cosler Course, a Pete Dye design, is an 18-hole, links-style, par-72 championship course features large bent-grass greens, fairways, and tees. The layout is a challenge for golfers of all abilities with vast sand bunkers, native grasslands, ponds, and a natural celery bog. There are five sets of tees with the championship tees playing over 7,400 yards and the forward tees at 5,300 yards.

Kampen-Cosler, one of the top collegiate courses in the nation, has been awarded 4.5 stars on *Golf Digest's* "Places to Play." It receives high marks as one of the most difficult golf courses in Indiana.



Sand Valley

888-398-8671
1697 Leopold Way
Nekoosa, WI 54457
sandvalley.com

Sand Valley is known for its three award-winning golf courses, Sand Valley, Mammoth Dunes, and the Sandbox, which were modeled after the great heathland courses of London. Enjoy dramatic views, a magnitude of strategic playing options, modern lodging, and a culinary experience to match.



The Shack Indoor Golf

847-904-2905
1717 Chestnut Ave.
Glenview IL, 60025
theshackgolfclub.com

The Shack Indoor Golf Club features TrackMan® simulator technology for an immersive golf experience. Enjoy delicious food and drinks from our full bar while practicing your swing. Perfect for socializing or improving your game, come and tee off at our state-of-the-art facility.



Northern Bay Resort and Marina

608-339-2090 ext. 2
1844 20th Avenue
Arkdale, WI 54613
northernbayresort.com

Play where the pros play.

Experience our unique replica golf course inspired by the most celebrated holes in the game and situated on the shores of Castle Rock Lake.

Northern Bay offers all the amenities of a Wisconsin Dells resort without all the hustle and bustle. Bring your golf buddies to play our one-of-a-kind replica course, or relax around the lake with your family. However you choose to stay, we look forward to greeting you at Northern Bay. Get started and book your tee time.



Pine Meadow Golf Club

847-566-4653
1 Pine Meadow Ln.
Mundelein, IL 60060
pinemeadowgc.com

Pine Meadow Golf Club is known for our beautiful 220 acres of fairways, greens, pine trees, and meadow areas.

Golfers of all abilities and ages enjoy the serene setting and fun playable design of the "Pine."

The Pine, due to its challenging design, has been host to all types of competitive events ranging from PGA Jr. League, to Men's and Women's State Ams, to Illinois PGA Championships.

This is truly a golf facility for everyone.



Prairie Landing Golf Club

630-208-7600
2325 Longest Dr.
West Chicago, IL 60185
prairielanding.com

Prairie Landing Golf Course is a prairie links style 18-hole course designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr. The course has been rated 4.5 Stars by *Golf Digest* for "Best Places to Play." Prairie Landing Golf Club prides itself on offering the quintessential golf experience of the Chicago-land Area.



PrairieView Golf Club

815-234-4653
6734 N. German Church Rd.
Byron, IL 61010
prairieviewgolf.com

Recognized by many suburban golfers as a hidden gem, PrairieView Golf Club boasts beautiful views of restored dolomite prairie land that is well worth a short drive west out to Bryon, Ill. (south of Rockford). With challenging greens, dramatic bunkering, and supreme conditioning, the course will test the skills and nerves of every golfer. PrairieView is also home to PrairieFire Golf & Grill, a year-round Toptracer Range® with heated bays, lounge seating, and great food and drink selections.



Shepherd's Crook Golf Course

847-872-2080
351 North Green Bay Rd.
Zion, IL 60099
www.shepherdscrook.org

Shepherd's Crook has earned rave reviews as a course that is both challenging and exciting to play. Keith Foster, who has designed some of the most interesting courses built in the last 10 years, created a links-style course that feels like playing Ireland's Ballybunion or Waterville courses. The design reflects the golden era of golf course architecture of the 1920s and 30s, with bentgrass fairways, tees, and greens.

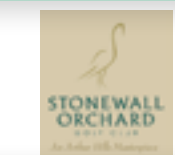
"Shepherd's Crook is routed with classic and strategic design principles that cut features naturally to the terrain. The vision of Shepherd's Crook returns golfers to the game's past." – Keith Foster, Architect



Springbrook Golf Course

630-848-5060
2220 W. 83rd St.
Naperville, IL 60564
golfnaperville.org

Springbrook GC commands some of the finest views of Naperville's open space and trails. This 18-hole parkland-style championship course was renovated in 2022, and is expected to reopen in mid-year of 2023 with exciting updates including new tees and bunkers. Work on your swing at the one-acre turf practice tee, or fine tune your short game at the large practice putting green or two short-game practice greens with bunkers. Enjoy post-game refreshments on the expansive patio with great views of the course. Springbrook also offers lessons, outings, a well-stocked golf shop, and more.



Stonewall Orchard Golf Club

847-740-4890
25675 W. Highway 60
Grayslake, IL 60030
stonewallorchard.com

Cutting through hundred-year-old oak and pine trees, Stonewall Orchard Golf Club has quickly become one of Chicago's most prolific public golf courses.

Since opening in 1999, the Arthur Hills-designed gem located in northwest suburban Grayslake has served as Final Stage Qualifying site for the U.S. Open, and currently sits in rotation with Olympia Fields and Medinah Country Club as host site for the Illinois PGA Section Championship held every Summer.



Tam O'Shanter Golf Course & Learning Center

847-965-2344
6700 W. Howard St.
Niles, IL 60714
golftam.com

One of the most important courses in popularizing the game of golf in America is located right here in Niles. In 1953, Tam O'Shanter Country Club hosted the first-ever nationally televised golf tournament.

Today, a public 9-hole par-33 course remains, maintained with the goal of providing playing conditions reminiscent of those Hogan, Palmer, and Nicklaus enjoyed years ago. Swing out for a scenic round and walk in the footsteps of legends at Tam O'Shanter!

Year-round instruction available!





University Ridge Golf Course

608-845-7700
9002 County Rd. PD
Madison, WI 53593
universityridge.com

University Ridge is home to the University of Wisconsin Men's & Women's Golf Teams. Since 2016, University Ridge has been the host site of the PGA Tour Champions, American Family Insurance Championship, which is hosted by Ryder Cup Captain Steve Stricker.

Play where the Badgers and the Pros play! University Ridge!



White Pines Golf Club

630-766-0304
500 W. Jefferson
Bensenville, IL 60106
whitepinesgolf.com

The White Pines Golf Club's two 18-hole championship courses, situated on more than 260 acres, have been a favorite among Chicago area golfers since 1928. The public course, owned and operated by the Bensenville Park District, is an excellent choice for players of all skill levels. Whether it's an evening at the lighted driving range, a casual round with friends, an outing or special event, White Pines Golf Club offers the perfect setting to get "away from it all." Enjoy food and drink at 37 Bar & Grill. Take advantage of Monday-Thursday tee time specials and book online!



Whitetail Ridge Golf Club

630-882-8988
7671 Clubhouse Dr.
Yorkville, IL 60560
whitetailridgegc.com

Experience a "tail" of two Nines at Whitetail Ridge Golf Club. Our Front Nine flows through a beautiful valley featuring a creek that splits through its relatively flat landscape. Our Back Nine begins on #10 with a climb up the slopes and follows the rolling hills into some towering trees. Finish your day in The Persimmon Room. This newly renovated space features an indoor/outdoor dining area with shareable dishes, scratch-made entrees, an extensive list of bourbons and whiskey, and the most spectacular sunsets around!



Wilmette Golf Club

847-256-9777
3900 Fairway Dr.
Wilmette, IL 60091
golfwilmette.com

Wilmette Golf Club is the closest 18-hole facility north of Chicago. This par-70 course will test all skill levels with the purest greens on the North Shore. A 30-station driving range and large putting green are available for working on your game. Enjoy a drink or dinner on the patio overlooking the 18th green at The Lawn. Contact us directly to book your next outing or special event. Take advantage of tee time specials by booking online at golfwilmette.com



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X-Golf Kildeer

847-847-1723
20771 N Rand Rd Suite I-4
Kildeer, IL 60047
xgolfkildeer.com

XGolf Kildeer offers an upscale indoor golf experience. State-of-the-art golf simulators, full bar, private and semi-private rooms, and wide open floor plan!



X-Golf Libertyville

224-504-2940
1177 S. Milwaukee Ave.
Libertyville, IL 60048
xgolf-libertyville.com

We spent 15 years engineering, learning from golf experts, and creating a simulator of unparalleled accuracy. The result? A completely new experience that lets golfers play on the world's top courses, compete in a wide variety of game formats, and of course – enjoy some of the best golf they've ever played in a high-energy indoor entertainment facility.

Whether a tee time or PGA Professional lesson, X-Golf has it all: a full bar with beer and cocktails, shareable appetizers, and courses designed for all ages and levels from amateurs to professionals.



X-Golf Orland Park

708-966-0486
15876 S. LaGrange Rd.
Orland Park, IL 60462
xgolforlandpark.com

We offer eight state-of-the-art simulators which are designed for golfers at all stages of their game. Whether you want to sharpen your game to gain that competitive edge or are just starting out and want to learn new skills without battling the outdoors, this is the place for you. The simulators can give you data about your swing and ball striking to improve your game and along with that, we can help you take your game to the next level by having a PGA-qualified Professional on our team.



X-Golf Schaumburg

847-380-1848
1100 American Ln.
Schaumburg, IL 60173
xgolf-schaumburg.com

We spent 15 years engineering, learning from golf experts, and creating a simulator of unparalleled accuracy. The result? A completely new experience that lets golfers play on the world's top courses, compete in a wide variety of game formats, and of course – enjoy some of the best golf they've ever played in a high-energy indoor entertainment facility.

Whether a tee time or PGA Professional lesson, X-Golf has it all: a full bar with beer and cocktails, shareable appetizers, and courses designed for all ages and levels from amateurs to professionals.



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Golfers We Love to Hate

Now that the season is in full swing, the golf curmudgeon in me would like a word.

Here are my top beefs with golf, my fellow golfers, golf courses, and the world in general:

Slow play. No mercy. None! I once called the pro shop and said, "I'm calling to report felony slow play on No. 3."

Holes that run along the side of the driving range. Who hasn't driven along the first cut looking for a drive to realize, yikes, there's like 60 balls up there!

The guy who scoops up his putt as a gimme without consulting anyone.

The course that didn't tell you when you made the tee time that they just punched their greens.

Cart girls who ask you on the second hole if your group needs anything. Lady, we were just in the snack bar 15 minutes ago! Or worse, seeing the

foursome up ahead huddling around the beverage cart in the middle of the first fairway..

The guy who straddles the line of every putt with two feet and does that Vulcan two-finger voodoo thing.

The guy on a crowded putting green who stands by one hole and putts to another.

Anybody who shows up with iron covers.

The change monkey behind the pro shop counter who gives you that look, the one that says you're not worthy of playing his over-priced golf course. Yeah, Scottsdale, I'm talking at you.

The guys who drive off down the fairway before your girlfriend has a chance to hit.

Courses that won't let you take the cart into the parking lot.

The guy who tees up a second ball as everyone else is heading back to the carts. He's the same guy who re-putts every missed putt, even before others have putted out.

The marshal who issues your group a warning – having appeared seconds after the group who've been holding up play has cleared the green.

Golf courses with GPS-equipped carts with geo-fencing that disable the cart if you get too close to, well, anything. How about a little warning? Maybe something entertaining, like, "Danger, Will Robinson!" or, "Red alert! Shields up!"

The outside-services guy who rushes up to wipe down your clubs before you've had time to grieve

about the three-putt that just lost you all sides of a Nassau. Or your cart-mate who disappears when it's time to pay the guy who rushes up to wipe down your clubs.

The put-me-down-for-bogey guy.

The guy with no handicap who wants to bet.

Or the guy who wants you to move your ball mark, who really ought to give up the game if he were to come anywhere near your ball mark.

Or the guy who never marks his ball.

Cart-paths-only golf courses. Yeah, a certain Scottsdale course that will remain nameless, I'm talking about you.

Guys who have no business playing from the tips.

Unfilled divots and unrepaired ball marks, and forget about raking bunkers.

No sand in the sand jar.

The guy whose ball you're looking for who won't tell you what ball he's playing until he's found it.

The group that's held up play all day that finally lets you play through, then rides your ass the rest of the round.

The guy who complains about slow greens because he left a 20-footer eight feet short.

The I'd-better-not-hit-yet guy. Dude, they're 300 yards away. The drive you just hit didn't go 200!

The guy who makes sure that everyone knows that he knows

the Rules of Golf.

The guy from the adjacent hole who drives into your fairway to try to hit the drive you just center-piped.

The group ahead that parks in front of the green and won't drive off until they've recorded their scores.

The guy up ahead who visually counts his score by pointing to the various spots where he played his seven, or was it eight shots?

The guy who's obsessed with looking for lost golf balls.

The guy who stands in your line.

The guy who's always late to the first tee.

Bunkers with no rakes.

Guys who complain about crap like this.

Dan Vukelich, a former Chicagoan, is the online editor of AlabamaGolfNews.com. He works remotely from his home in Albuquerque, N.M.



Here are my top beefs with golf, my fellow golfers, golf courses and the world in general.



Where Championship Golf Meets Scenic Beauty

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Scan the QR code, or visit abbeysprings.org



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