

18-hole Virginia course a 'first' for First Tee

By MARK LESLIE

RICHMOND, Va. — When adults tee it up at the new Chesterfield First Tee golf course here, they had better bring their "A" game, or they could still lose a match to their child.

"The longer they hit the ball the more hazards they face," said golf course architect Lester

George, who donated his \$150,000 to \$200,000 design services for this project that was so close to his heart. "I think golf is an awfully hard game to get access to," he said, explaining why he and so many others have given time, money and equipment to open the golf and teaching center in Chesterfield

County's Iron Bridge Park.

The Chesterfield First Tee facility was developed as a chapter of a nationwide effort to make golf accessible to youths.

"The theory behind First Tee is access. As far as I'm concerned," George said, "golf course architects, pros and others ought to be making golf accessible. Here we



Youngsters practicing at the new 18-hole Chesterfield First Tee golf course

King of the hill.

(As well as the side-hill, the bunker edge, and of course, the monster mogul)

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have specifically designed the program to do just that.

"Our intentions were to design, first and foremost, for children and beginners — and beginners could mean teens, adults and maybe seniors. That was our design foundation for the course," George explained. "We had people say, 'Why not make it 6,500 yards long and everybody can play it?' We said the object was to build it to scale for a kid, which is in the 4,000- to 5,000-yard range. Ours is 4,650 yards from the back tees. The next set is 4,206, then 3,836, and the forward tees are 3,382. Par is 66."

NOT A KIDDIE COURSE

Visitors have already discovered that 4,650 yards is no kiddie course. "If adults come out and play it, they will have difficulty shooting par because it is demanding," George said. "But the kids will keep it in play because of the lack of hazards for them. I set the hazards up for the adults, not the kids."

"Lester George did a fantastic job in laying this out," said head pro Tami Bealert. "We have four sets of tees specifically designed for kids, their talent and ability. A kid 10 years old is not going to smack the ball 300 yards, but maybe 180. This course is designed for an iron [shot] into the green versus a wood."

"If I were to play the same tees as a man, my next shot is going to be further away than the man's shot, and there might be a bunker right in my way. The junior tees are relationally the same," Bealert said. "Here we are moving up the tees 75 to 100 yards and giving each child from 5 to 17 years of age a choice, rather than putting them all up to the ladies' tees like they do at other places, or making them all play from the same tee."

On the Chesterfield course, Bealert added, "the kids can score and make par and feel good about themselves. We don't want to discourage them. The doglegs are set up the same way. Their second shot is a clear shot into the green."

SMALLER TARGETS

George designed the greens to be one-third the size of those on a regulation course, which should help players improve their short games. "Your target is a lot smaller, so there is less

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Second Brauer course in Minnesota aims for 'north woods experience'

By MARK LESLIE

BIWABIK, Minn. — Flush with three years of success with its first golf course, Minnesota's Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) is adding a second 18 holes to its mix here as it continues efforts to turn the Giants Ridge area into a recreation destination.

"The demand for this caliber of golf course is so high that we decided to go ahead with a second," said IRRRB development director Mike Gentile, who has overseen operations of Giants Ridge Golf Course since it opened in 1997.

Officials had hoped Giants Ridge Golf Course would host about 22,000 rounds by the fourth full year of operation. "We did 22,000 between July 1 and Oct. 15 of that first year," Gentile said. "Last year we did 30,000 rounds and still turned away between 12,000 and 15,000 golfers."

Building on that success, the IRRRB has chosen Giants Ridge course designer Jeffrey Brauer/Golf Scapes of Arlington, Texas, as "the natural choice to do the second course."

"The charge we gave Jeff," Gentile said, "is to build a golf course that will be equal to or better than the first course, difficult as that may be. We want the golfer, when he is traveling from the

Minneapolis-St. Paul area, where 90 percent of our golfers come from, to play two rounds of golf at least and get two quality, yet distinctively different, experiences."

OLD QUARRY SITE

Gentile described Giants Ridge Golf Course as "a Minnesota North Woods experience, with a lot of pines, a lot of birches, a lot of boulders and rocks." The second course, tentatively called The Quarry at Giants Ridge, will be built three

miles away on rugged topography that straddles former taconite and sand-and-gravel quarries.

Brauer and Gentile said design plans will be complete in August, construction bids will go out in September and construction will be underway by the first part of October. "We will probably be playing golf in two years," Gentile said.

Since Giants Ridge Golf Course opened, the IRRRB has opened a hotel on the property, enticing visitors to stay and play.

Gentile expects The Quarry course will deliver on expectations. "Jeff Brauer uses the land and topography very, very well," he said. "He creates something out there that all levels of golfers, from the rank beginner to the experienced low-handicap golfer, are going to have a great experience."

"The golf course is very fair," he added. "Whereas the existing course is not walkable because of certain environmental constraints we were under, this course will be walkable. We want to attract the State Amateur and Mid-Amateur-type tournaments and so forth to northeastern Minnesota and Giants Ridge."

Jeffrey D. Brauer and his firm, Golf Scapes, have designed 40 golf courses and remodeled 80. Canterbury Golf Course in Parker, Colo., and Giants Ridge are rated among the best affordable public courses in the United States, while his Avocet Course at Wild Wing Plantation in Myrtle Beach, S.C., was a *Golf Digest* best new course winner. His Champions Country Club in Nebraska is highly ranked, as is the Brauer-designed TangleRidge Golf Club in Texas.

President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects during its 50th anniversary year in 1995-96, Brauer also designed Colbert Hills Golf Club at Kansas State, which opened in June 2000 as the cornerstone golf course for The First Tee program as well as the first collaboration between the PGA of America and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

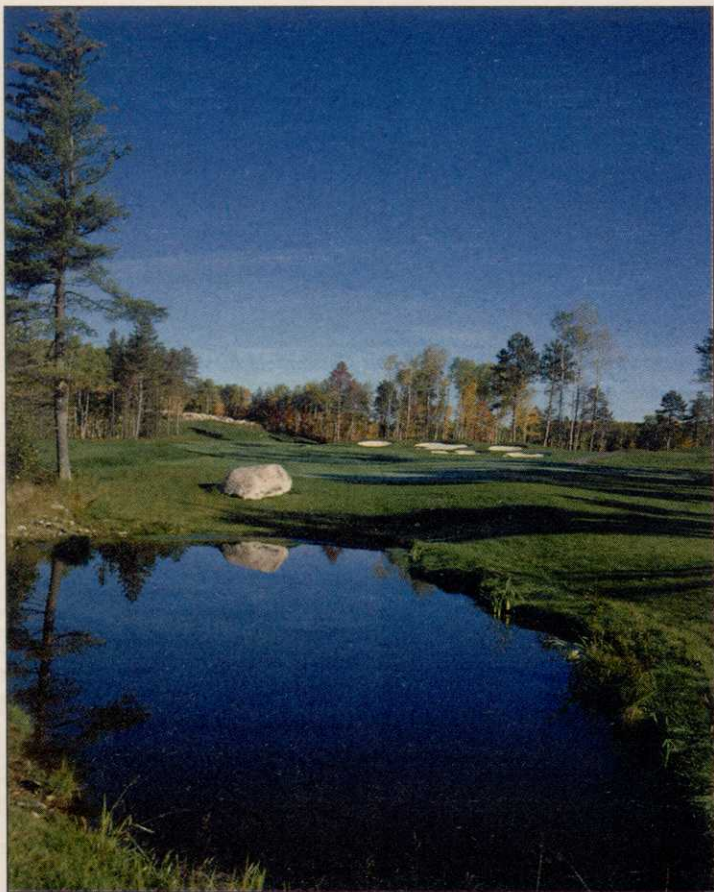


Photo by Mike Klemme

Giants Ridge Golf Course in Biwabik, Minn.

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Ocean Club

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the course offers panoramic views of lush vegetation and cerulean waters. The 17th hole plays entirely along the scenic Snorkelers Cove.

"I feel that the Ocean Club is a perfect location for my first Bahamian project," Weiskopf said. "The classic design of the resort, coupled with the spirit of Paradise Island, creates an ideal backdrop for a golf course that I feel will be memorable, dramatic and a fair challenge to all levels of golfers. My goal is to design the best course in the Caribbean."

Weiskopf, an internationally renowned PGA and Senior PGA professional, has designed 37 courses since 1983 in destinations throughout the United States, as well as South Africa, Japan, Scotland and the Philippines.

"We chose Tom because of his dedication to quality and design," said Sol Kerzner, chairman of Sun International. "The design will reflect the continuing legacy of the resort, providing a classic and memorable course for our guests."

The facility will be managed by Troon Golf, of Scottsdale, Ariz., which is involved in several Weiskopf's projects. ■

First Tee

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room for error. Therefore, you are more focused on that target," Bealert explained. "At a regulation course, when they don't get close to the target, they are still on the green."

Chesterfield First Tee is, in fact, a regulation course. "We are not considered an executive course, just a short course," Bealert said. An important aspect of the Chesterfield course, George said, is that "we have a realistic golf setting: three par-5s, six par-4s and nine par-3s."

The course is complete with menacing bunkers (although there's no water), U.S. Golf Association-spec greens with L-93 bentgrass, and 419 Bermudagrass tees, fairways and roughs.

In addition to the 18-hole course, the facility includes a full-scale practice range, complete with a bunker-flanked putting green and a three-hole beginner's course with each hole measuring from 70 to 118 yards. Other features include a pro shop/clubhouse, and a teaching classroom for the Life Skills Program.

Grand opening ceremonies will be held on Oct. 23. ■