

Country Joe International is the Most Unusual Golf Course In Minnesota

By MIKE O'BRIEN
Country Joe Racing

Country Joe International is unusual in many ways besides its outlandish name. It is probably Minnesota's only four-hole golf course replete with a driving range, sand trap, pond and a troublesome creek to challenge its players. It also shares its acreage with an 18-hole Disc Golf course and nine-hole Miniature golf. Probably the most unusual things about the 861-yard, par 14 course is that there are no green fees, no established tee times and it is played primarily by youngsters with no previous experience on a golf course at all. By the way it is kept in very good condition.

The Country Joe course is owned by Joe Miller and his wife Jane,

neither of whom actively play golf. (*I would say that's unusual*). The course is situated on their property just outside

Lakeville, Minn. Joe Miller is a home builder with his Country Joe Homes company in the area and also a major land developer. He purchased the property in 2002 as a base for his Country Joe Racing

that feeds drivers to the NASCAR Winston Cup Series. Three major buildings on the property house several race teams.

When the Millers purchased the property, one of their main objectives was to provide a place where youngsters of all ages and stations in life could be exposed to a different lifestyle. Jane Miller heads up this activity. There were four very non-descript golf holes on the property when they purchased it. There were two options open to the Millers at the time. Plow it up and forget about the golf aspect or revitalize the course and make it usable. They chose the latter.



From the course to learn about golf...

teams. The race teams compete nationally in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series and also in ARCA, a major racing series

New tee boxes were built. An irrigation system was installed, the greens, with the help and advice of Tom Proshok of Brackett's Golf Course, were put in great, playable condition. New mowing equipment was purchased including a 14-foot Land Pride gang mower, seven-foot Steiner that is used for mowing the fairways and two Ferris mowers for the general mowing of the 40-acre property. They also purchased a National I-Stripe mower and John Deere greens mower. It was certainly a major investment for the couple.

The Fairway Foundation was having problems finding practice facilities for their groups and the Millers were looking for a way to make their property available to groups such as this and a partnership was formed. The Fairway Foundation had connections into Community Centers in the Twin Cities and the course was made available to those groups also. In addition Jane Miller contacted the churches and schools in the area and has made the entire property available to many of those organizations as well.

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...to the classroom with Mike Morris -- the kids get a well-rounded education.

Country Joe Racing—

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For the summers of 2004 and 2005 the Millers have hosted an average of almost 1,200 youngsters a summer. All the youngsters that visit are given the run of the entire property, fed (*we go through a lot of hot dogs at County Joe's*) and at times addressed by celebrities from the area. Former long snapper of the Minnesota Vikings, Mike Morris, pictured on Page 24 lower left, is a frequent speaker. The man is huge, he talks, the kids listen. An interesting sidelight is the behavior of the kids. In the first three years there has only been one instance of any damage done to the golf course. A little frustration (*anybody ever get frustrated on a golf course?*) got the better of a youngster and he took it out on one of the greens. Quite a record for the kids.

One of the highlights for the groups are the tours of the Country Joe Racing shops. There are normally approximately 21 racing stock cars in various forms of readiness. They get to talk to drivers, get autographs and autograph cards and actually sit in the seat of an 800-horsepower 3,400 lb stock car. Some of these cars are being built, some repaired from the rigors of the racetracks and some are all ready to race. These cars race from Daytona International Speedway to the short tracks such as Elko and Raceway Park.



The Fairway Foundation enjoys the practice facilities at Country Joe's.

As the person that has assumed some of the responsibilities for the maintenance of the course, (*I was the only one that played*

necessarily well) I was made to realize just how difficult and expensive maintaining a course really is. Superintendent Tom

Proshok has been a great help as have the people from the various fertilizer and equipment companies in the area. I now have a great idea as to just how much I don't know. Any help from any of the MGCSA members would be more than welcomed and appreciated. Come visit Minnesota's most

"Superintendent Tom Proshok has been a great help as have the people from the various fertilizer and equipment companies in the area."

golf) joining the MGCSA as a Facilities member has been more than helpful. Having played golf for a long time (*not*

unusual golf course anytime. Remember, bring your kids.



Just a few happy faces of the over 1,200 youngsters who enjoy Country Joe's.