Pacific Grove Debuts as December Host

For Pacific Grove Links Superintendent, Mike Leach, it was like coming home after an extended tour of duty. After carving out a niche first as anassistant golf professional at MPCC and then as a golf course superintendent at Corral De Tierra, Leach left the beauty of the Monterey Peninsula for the challenge of growing in the Johnny Miller designed Brighton Crest in 1989. Three years later he was back and he has no intention of leaving anytime soon. Having been in the golf profession all of his life, Leach hopes to make Pacific Grove his last stop. “I feel like I can hang my hat at Pacific Grove,” Leach says with a smile.

Choosing a career in golf was a natural for Leach. “My family operated Indian Valley Golf Course in Novato,” says Leach, “so it’s safe to say I was exposed to the game and course maintenance at a very young age.” The family owned operation left its mark on Leach’s brothers as well. Terry is the V.P. and Golf Course Superintendent at Indian Valley, and Ray is the Spalding/Hogan representative for Northern California. With a lifetime spent in golf, “Was there anyone who may have influenced your career,” I asked? “Certainly my brothers,” Leach responded, “and Indian Valley Director of Golf, Jeff McAndrew. Jeff had a way of always making work fun.” Leach is also quick to heap praises on “Poor Man’s Pebble Beach?” Two distinct nines, in contrast the back nine, designed by Jack Neville, is a true Links property. Some of the wildlife you’re likely to see include blacktail deer, sea otters and an assortment of birds. Although not likely to be present in December, the monarch butterfly is a regular visitor, calling Pacific Grove home during their annual migration.

Also of significance is the Point Pinos Lighthouse, visible from the back nine. It’s history dates all the way back to 1855, and it is currently the longest continuously operating lighthouse in California.

You can expect to see some significant course improvements as well. Since Leach’s arrival 6 1/2 years ago, the city approved a capital improvement and equipment program. The result, a new irrigation system on the front nine, enlarged greens, concrete paths, some new bunkers and tees, fairway drainage and plenty of new equipment.

With so many positive improvements, it’s easy to see why Leach intends to make Pacific Grove his home for a long while. “It really has been a great opportunity coming back,” says Leach, “not only for me professionally but also for my family,” which includes his wife of 20 years, Jill, and their three children.