

# ITF Combined Golf Day to Showcase Two Peoria Courses

Pat Norton, CGCS

**7**his month's Super-N-Site Profile is a real dynamic duo . . . a real two for the price of one . . . it's a double your pleasure, double your fun sort of a thing.

The ITF Combined Golf Day will be held May 3 on two superb Peoria area golf courses. Peter Clarno will be hosting one half of the field at Mount Hawley C.C.'s beautiful, totally renovated private layout, while Geoff Kemp plays host to the rest of the golfers at the awesome and dramatic Weaver Ridge (a course that Phil Kosin justifiably raves about).

I took the time in late March to go visit Pete and Geoff—two turfgrass veterans—at these distinctly different golf layouts and interview them for *On Course* . . . and what a wonderful day those two guys gave me! Both superintendents are just great guys . . . very hospitable, friendly and knowledgeable. Each is a credit to himself, his club and our profession.

## Geoff Kemp's Weaver Ridge G.C.

Geoff Kemp, CGCS, will be hosting one half of the field on May 3 at the stunning, spectacular Weaver Ridge G.C.

In a word—this course is amazing! I had a hard time comprehending its beauty . . . and it is even more difficult to describe verbally. The course has some terrific elevation changes, lots of elevated tees and beautiful vistas

**WEAVER RIDGE**  
golf club



Geoff and Cathy Kemp and their three children: Ben, Jason and Lauri.

seemingly everywhere! ITF golfers are surely going to enjoy being punished by this gorgeous golf course, a Michael Hurdzan/Dana Fry design built by Wadsworth Golf.

Geoff came on board at Weaver Ridge in June 1996 during the irrigation installation phase. Seeding, etc. started on August 16, 1996, with the course opening for play on June 13, 1997.

An Illinois native, Geoff grew up in Bloomington-Normal. He began his career as an assistant at Mount Hawley, then took on the superintendent role at Pontiac Elks, Pekin C.C. and Crestwick C.C. before getting involved at Weaver Ridge.

Geoff is 42 and has been married for 20 years to wife Cathy, who is the events coordinator at Weaver Ridge. The clubhouse is

*(continued on page 14)*

## OLD DUTCH SAND COMPANY, INC.

- TOP DRESSING SAND
- BUNKER SAND
- PEA GRAVEL
- BOULDERS & RIP RAP
- ALL GOLF COURSE AGGREGATES

Call (773) 374-2303  
Richard E. Mika (847) 228-9607  
(219) 938-7020

## **ITF Combined Golf Day . . .**

*(continued from page 12)*

capable of hosting groups of up to 350 people on each of two different levels, which means that as many as 700 wedding guests on any given Saturday look to Cathy and her staff for the royal treatment. I guess that Saturdays at Weaver Ridge are usually incredibly busy!

The Kemps have three children: Ben, 18, Jason, 16, and Lauri, 13. Geoff says that he can still kick Ben's butt on the basketball court and Jason's butt on the golf course. His deep-seated fear, though, is that daughter Lauri will be the best athlete of them all and soon surpass him in any and every sport!

Geoff reports that the course hosted about 32,000 rounds in 1998, a total that will ultimately climb to a maximum of 35,000-40,000 rounds annually. The course plays to different yardages from its five sets of tees . . . anywhere from 5,000 to 7,000 yards depending on how much pain a guy wants to inflict on himself! The course also sports 87 beautiful bunkers, which Geoff flatly states by far represent his biggest headache/challenge.

This golf course is absolutely breathtaking and will be a treat for anybody playing it! However—make sure you've got your "A" game going before attempting to play here. Too often, I (and I'm sure many of you, too) do not take the time to play a few rounds before attending a big event . . . shaking out the rust, right?

In particular, I hope that my friend Hans from Blackberry Oaks takes this advice before slashing and burning his usual way around the golf course during the ITF event. Or maybe I'll ask to be paired with Hans to insure that some of my golfing ability will rub

off on him as we negotiate our way through either one of these fine central Illinois courses.

It would be the least that I could do to repay the hospitality shown to me and to *On Course* by these two fine superintendents.

### **Pete Clarno's Mount Hawley C.C.**

Mount Hawley C.C. is an older club, originally built in 1923, according to Pete Clarno, an affable 38-year-old gentleman. Its acreage is relatively small, about 95 in all, which is very typical of older courses. The club recently underwent a significant facelift to revitalize her venerable beauty, courtesy of Lohmann Golf Designs and Landscapes Unlimited. The actual reconstruction of this course took just 87 days to complete, which is a nice testament to the cooperative talents of many people—Jay Wille and Bob Lohmann, the people from Landscapes Unlimited, the board and membership of Mount Hawley and certainly Peter Clarno.

Pete has extensive construction and grow-in experience. He launched his career at Mount Hawley as the assistant superintendent, and then moved to Georgia to finish a grow-in at a private club. In the early '90s, he spent two years constructing a daily fee layout, then got involved with Sunbelt Golf, the construction contractors for the seven sites and 18 golf courses that comprise the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Alabama. After his two-and-a-half-year stint with Sunbelt Golf (during which time he actually sat on the firm's board of directors), he returned to Peoria in August 1994.

Pete spent the next year-and-a-half working on plans for Weaver Ridge. In February 1996, he started at Mount Hawley C.C., scheming during those early

months on how best to rip apart and renovate the existing golf course. Ultimately, the annihilation of the old Mount Hawley began in July 1996, after the BOD courageously voted to close the course for 13 months for a total facelift.

The magnificent new Mount Hawley features all new greens and green complexes, regraded/recontoured/regrassed fairways, many new tees, all new bunkering, new and expanded lakes, and all new irrigation and drainage. The existing and new elements blend seamlessly into one vintage beauty that plays to about 6,300 yards.

Pete told me that this renovation was somewhat of a "piece of cake"—easy for someone of his experience to say! I'd simply say that the membership at Mount Hawley should be very proud of their golf course and of their superintendent. This guy really knows what he's doing!

Pete is also a 15-year veteran of "the marriage thing." Wife Linda owns her own medical transcription business. The couple has two daughters, Erica, 12, and Stephanie, seven.

Thanks, Pete, for your great hospitality . . . I enjoyed myself just about as much as your colleagues will during the Combined Golf Day! 