

Ronald Fox



The Fox family: Ron, son Stephen, daughter Ashley, wife Chris, daughter Jessica and dog Abby.



POINT O' WOODS

Point O' Woods Golf and Country Club? I've never heard of this golf course. Where is this place?

If you, like me, had never heard of this fabulous Robert Trent Jones-designed golf course located in Benton Harbor, Michigan, consider yourself officially introduced. Point O' Woods was built in 1958. As rated by *Golfweek* magazine, it currently ranks #56 in the all-time ratings as one of America's best classical golf courses. Mr. Jones was known to have a very fond affection for this piece of land and the layout that he conceived. The name of the club comes from the topography of the original parcel of property. The surrounding land was and still is farmland, but a small point of undeveloped woods existed, untouched. Now this site features another Jones masterpiece.

The members of the club are mostly Illinois residents who own summer homes in the surrounding area. They were looking to build a club they could play while away from their "other country club"

back home in the Chicago area. The property was purchased, Mr. Jones was called in and the rest is history. The course itself sprawls over 200 acres of rolling forest land. Needless to say, hitting the ball straight here is a premium requirement for scoring. The design requires a player to work the ball both ways. Tremendous risk and reward opportunities are available to challenge players. The greens are large and receptive, but well-guarded by strategically placed bunkers. The par 3s play long. The course plays to 7,014 yards and is a par 72. There's nothing tricked up about this course—it's just straightforward, classic golf. The club has hosted the prestigious Western Amateur since 1963. Some of the previous winners include Curtis Strange, Scott Verplank, Justin Leonard and Tiger Woods.

Now you know a little about the golf course, but let me intro-

duce you to the man who makes the legend live. Ronald Fox was born to and raised by a Scottish greenkeeper in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Ron's father was from what you would call the "old school." A greenkeeper for 40 years, he put in a working day from dawn until dusk every day. Ron told me a story about one particular Christmas when his father went to work in the morning as usual to grind reels on Christmas morning. The family had to wait for father to come home at 11 o'clock before they could open the presents. That's "old school!"

As Ron was growing up in a club-provided residence off of the 13th hole, he and his brother roamed the golf course daily, playing in the woods and sneaking on to play a few holes at night to hone their own golfing skills. Ron remembers driving a tractor and mowing the rough when he was

13. His father was a tough disciplinarian and many things were never explained; he had to pay attention and watch his father. Needless to say, Ron attended the “school of hard knocks” as a youth—a “school” that Ron feels today is losing “students” as many of the new golf course superintendents never grew up in a caddy shack or worked the business end of a shovel or rake as a seasonal employee.


Ron has been working at Point O’ Woods for the last two years. His previous position was at Valley Brook Country Club in Pittsburgh, where he worked for 15 years. Naturally, he is a Penn State graduate, class of ’76. He is a 15-year GCSAA member and while in Pittsburgh served on the Greater Pittsburgh Golf Course Superintendents Association as vice president. Currently, he is a member of both the Western

Michigan Golf Course Superintendents Association and the MAGCS. He is assisted by Mark Ostrander, a Michigan State graduate (there is a friendly rivalry between them). Mark has been at the course for four years. Some of the projects that Ron has undertaken in his short tenure include the installation of a new irrigation system and a massive tree removal program. To date, more than 400 trees have been removed and more are scheduled to meet the ax.


Ron is supported on the home front by his wife, Chris, his twin daughters, Jessica and Ashley, who will be turning 13 (good luck, Ron), and their son, Stephen, who will be 6. The transition from Pittsburgh to rural southeast Michigan has not been easy, but Ron has the full support of his family and is committed to providing the members of Point

O’ Woods the championship-caliber conditioning that they expect.


Ron, welcome to the MAGCS. I know that you will bring us a wealth of knowledge and experience that our Association will be able to use to help us move forward. Thanks for being a host at the June meeting.

P.S. Anyone fortunate enough to make the trip for the June meeting at Point O’ Woods—bring your “A” game! 

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