



Mark Bobb.

# Mark Bobb -N- Barrington Hills Country Club



*Like most MAGCS members, every spring I look forward to the list of the upcoming season's monthly meeting locations. What does the Golf Committee have up their sleeves? Who has committed his course, time and effort to the betterment of the Association? Once again in 2001, thanks to the generosity of various meeting hosts, the Golf Committee has produced an impressive list of venues. Through August, members have traveled from the southwest suburbs to DeKalb County, from Michigan to the far western suburbs to Indiana. The venues have ranged from public to private clubs, old to new courses, open to tree-lined layouts.*



*Barrington Hills Country Club's no. 3 handicap hole, no. 6 is a 415-yard par 4 with a 30' elevated tee.*

It is my good fortune to have the opportunity to introduce everyone to the host and host venue for September's monthly meeting: Mark Bobb and Barrington Hills Country Club. Admit it—you mark certain meeting locations on your calendar early in the year. Barrington Hills C.C. should be one of those. This is a can't-miss meeting.

Barrington Hills is 225 acres of old-time golf; hundreds and hundreds of old-growth mature trees; large, undulating greens (averaging from 6,000 to 8,500 square feet—the largest 10,000 square feet); elevated tees and greens; 40 acres of rolling fairways up to 50 yards in width; and doglegs on 50% of the holes.

Playing to a par 71, Barrington Hills has two par 5s and three par 3s on each nine. The remaining holes are challenging par 4s. Most are doglegs, ranging in distance from 350 to 430 yards. A couple par 4s fall short of 350 yards but club selection is the key. Of the 75 large bunkers strategically placed around the course, very few line the greens. Their flat lip entices the golfer into questions of what club to use.

Barrington Hills was built in 1921. A Mr. Ebel laid out the original design. In the '50s and '60s, the course was redesigned by one of the Packard boys. Tom Doke did some design work on the



fairways and greens during the mid-'90s.

But as much as members considered further redesign, the prevailing sentiment is for the true course layout to remain the same. Barrington Hills doesn't try to surprise or shock the golfer with hidden streams or lakes, concealed traps or trees that pop out of nowhere. The course is challenging but fair. The smart, straight golfer is rewarded.

Most memorable here: not the clubhouse entrance way, the clubhouse, the tee markers (or lack thereof) or the scorecard. Rather, it's the mood: the serenity spanning hole to hole. The time afforded to think about the next challenging shot. The golf course, and your game, are what remain.

Mark's biggest challenge, then, is to improve the course while keeping the course's character intact. Mark took over the superintendent's position in 1990 from the soon-to-retire John Ebel. To date, Mark's major accomplishments have included:

- 1997—new driving range with bentgrass tees and four target greens;
- 1998—addition of championship tees to all holes;
- Ongoing—enlargement of all greens (two to three each year).

In addition, there is the ongoing upkeep of cart paths, tree pruning and bunker work.

The 250 members have a master plan and Mark is the overseer of their plan. Bring the course back to the original design while always keeping up with the necessary ongoing maintenance. Future

projects include additional tree replanting, bunker renovation and reclamation, and returning greens.

Mark is a native of Jacksonville, Illinois (a remote suburb of Springfield). Like many superintendents, Mark started his career in a completely different area. He studied to be an engineer at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. In 1982, he graduated with a degree in horticulture specializing in turf management. However, one could argue that his future was always leaning toward golf course manage-



*No. 3 green in the early morning fog.*

ment as throughout high school, Mark worked at Jacksonville Country Club.

Upon graduation from college, Mark worked another summer at Jacksonville C.C. But Mark yearned for the big city. In 1983, he became assistant superintendent at Villa Olivia, then onto Kemper Lakes for a year-and-a-half. In 1987, he joined Barrington Hills as John Ebel's assistant. Shortly thereafter, John

notified the club's board of his intentions to retire. The natural choice for a replacement was Mark Bobb. In 1991, Mark officially became the superintendent at Barrington Hills.

Mark's wife of 13 years, Melissa, works for the state in Elgin. Their daughter, 12-year-old Kaileigh, is soon to be a teenager and an honor roll student at Hampshire Middle School. Mark is a member in good standing of both MAGCS and GCSAA.

I applaud Mark for his ability to manage his time, both personally and professionally. Mark actually keeps reasonable summer hours, efficiently managing Barrington Hills while keeping ample time for his wife and daughter (and all of her sports activities), as well as for personal hobbies such as golf and 12" softball. Mark keeps a fairly steady 7-handicap in golf and a 200-plus bowling average.

And, as if managing and beautifying 225 acres weren't enough, Mark has 1.5 acres of home turf to maintain. The Bobb family has a beautiful home outside Elgin. Between mowing the grass and cultivating the bushes, trees and flowers, Mark gets his hands dirty ensuring that his garden flourishes.

Mark and his staff are very excited about hosting the September meeting. This venue promises to give each and every golfer time (during interludes looking for lost balls amongst hundreds of trees or traveling between tees) to reflect on the many privileges of this industry, our Association and our friendships. Make sure to thank Mark and most of all, hit it straight. 