

MIDWEST BREEZES

Chuck Anfield, CGCS, *Heritage Bluffs Golf Course*



“South of the Border”

So where do you go and what do you do when winter seems to go on and on and on? The endless days of cold, dreary, oppressive overcast sky's and bitter winds from the north drag you down. Spring seems like it's never going to come. Cabin fever boxing you in...

Head south of the border to Saint Louis, Missouri!

Amazingly, Saint Louis is just four to five hours of traveling south down route 55. It's incredible, what a change in latitude can do to change your attitude. They don't call it the transition zone for nothing.

So I loaded the boys (and clubs) in the van and headed on down south for spring break to check out some golf courses and the sights and sound's of Saint Louis, Missouri, the gateway to the west.

Our first stop was to the site of the 2008 BMW Championship, Bellerive Country

Club. This is the first time in many years that the Western Open will be played outside of Chicago. I can tell you, the tournament is in good hands. Chuck Gast, CGCS was our host for the day. He arrived at Bellerive three years ago from the Country Club of Little Rock.. He also has past experience working for the USGA Green Section in the southwest region. His experience in assisting other golf course Superintendents and Clubs with their

projects and problems has been a great asset for Bellerive. His attention to detail is excellent. Upon his arrival he immediately began work on an 8.6 million dollar renovation of the classic Robert Trent Jones designed golf course. Fittingly enough Bellerive brought in the “Open Doctor”, Reese Jones to do design the work.

The project included: a new irrigation system, new greens (A-4), new tees (Meyer Zoysia), 70 % of the fairways were redone- surface drainage and re grassed(Meyer Zoysia) , new concrete cart paths (1.3 million dollars alone), new bunkers, tree pruning and removal. The rough was also redone with a tall fescue turf type much resembling Kentucky bluegrass but with better heat and drought tolerance. Over *sixteen* miles of fairway drainage was installed. From the tips the course can play to 7500 yards! In short, the golf course underwent a complete make over. To accomplish the feat, the course was closed for twelve long months.

The wait is over. A lot of hard work has paid off for Bellerive. They landed the BMW Championship and possibly a consideration for a major tournament down the road. Bellerive is the “belle” of Saint Louis and is eagerly awaiting Tiger and the PGA Tour in September. Chuck Gast and his staff should be

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Photos of Ann Briar's eighth on the left and seventeenth on the right show the rolling terrain and the heavily protected green sites.

highly praised for all their hard work in making the golf course a show stopper. The world *will* be watching in September.

The boys and I then called upon an old friend in John Soetaert, CGCS at Ambriar Golf Club. Ambriar is just across the Mississippi river in Waterloo, Illinois. Ambriar was named after Ann Nobbe. She was tragically killed in an automobile accident in 1991. It was her dream to turn the 226 acre family farm into a golf course. Her parents honored her request and hired Michael Hurdzan to design the layout. Ambriar opened in 1993 to rave reviews It was immediately awarded a four ½ star rating by Golf Digest.

John began work there as an Assistant during the grow in. He was promoted to Superintendent in 199. He currently is President of the Mississippi Valley GCSA.

The course features bentgrass greens and zoysia fairways and tees. The land has some open rolling terrain with lakes and streams. There is also has some cool wooded sections featuring interesting elevation changes. #11, a downhill par four fronted by a creek is my personal favorite hole.

The logo for the golf course is an old smokehouse left over from days of yore. It still sits prominently adjacent to the clubhouse.

Our last stop, before we headed north was to Gateway National. The course is built on the banks of the Mississippi River just east of the city. It opened in 1998. It is a Keith Foster design built on reclaimed industrial land. Views of the Arch and the



Gateway National is one of the few golf courses in the St. Louis area with bentgrass fairways, greens and tees.

Saint Louis skyline can be seen from many of the holes. It has the unique market niche of being the only golf course in the Saint Louis area to have bentgrass greens, tees and fairways. At the time of construction it was a bad year for zoysia sod. Mr. Walters, the owner made the decision to seed the fairways in bentgrass. Many people play the course for that reason alone.

Lee Miller works for Walters Golf Management. He relocated from TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas in 1997. He helped grow in the course as an Assistant and was promoted to Superintendent in 1998. He has recently been diagnosed with Hodgkins Leukemia. He just started chemotherapy and is dealing with the fatigue problems. His doctor expects a full recovery after treatment.

There is so much more to do in Saint Louis. You can visit the National Park and ride to top of Arch. Forest Park, undergoing major renovations, is one of the largest city parks in the nation, even larger than New York's Central Park. It features museums, pavilions, lakes, golf, tennis and every kind of field you can think of. For those who like beer, a tour of the Anheiser Busch brewery is a must stop. The Saint Louis Zoo is world class and is free. The historic downtown is also worth checking out.

So go south for the winter or spring break and enjoy all Saint Louis has to offer. **-OC**



Gateway National's backdrop is the all familiar St. Louis skyline.



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