

The Middle of Nowhere

Streamsong

Chuck Barber, St. Charles Country Club

PHOTOS: CHUCK BARBER

If there is a 'nowhere' in Florida, Streamsong Resort is directly in the middle of it. I was invited to attend the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, Florida by our head pro to play some golf with a few of our members.



This view is from the putting green looking down the 1st fairway of the Red, Coore-Crenshaw designed course. The mounding is very severe, as is the bunkering throughout the property.

I was interested in attending mostly because, as I understand it, it rarely snows there and the temperatures most likely, would be above freezing. I became more interested when one of the courses on the schedule was Streamsong Resort. I had read a little about the course's construction, design and opening through some of our trade magazines. I don't think I'm going to Bandon Dunes any time soon so I figured this was about as close as I could get. Since my wife, Tina, is an extremely understanding person she thought it would be a good idea for me to accept the invitation. It's good work if you can get it.

The course is owned by Mosaic, the world's largest producer of phosphate and potash for crop nutrition. The site

for the golf course is one of the old mine tracts that was no longer used. The mounding comes from the overburden, or material sitting on top of the phosphate rock, that is removed during excavation. It is triple washed and sent by conveyor back to the mining site. This sand, incredibly clean all over the course, was the growing medium for the greens, tees and fairways as well as the source for bunker sand.

The Streamsong philosophy for their courses is that they are designed to be walked. Much of Florida is flat but the mounded nature of the sand makes the elevation changes at Streamsong fairly dramatic by local standards. It is not a difficult walk but there are some hills to navigate, for sure.



The overburden from the mining process created the severe mounding on the course. Very little of the mounding that was left from the mining was actually moved when the courses were laid out and constructed.

The caddies on site were from Bandon Dunes and extremely helpful. Very little earth was moved during construction as the design intent was to use as much of the existing topography as possible.

There are three mowing heights at Streamsong: one for greens, one for collars/surrounds and one for fairways and tees. There is no rough to speak of except for the reed grasses growing outside the fairways. The fairways are very generous but if you do miss one you'll either be in dunes sand or these tall grasses which makes advancing the ball difficult.

One of the most fun components of the whole experience was navigating the greens. They were planted to Mini-Verde Bermuda. They were mostly dormant when I played but according to the assistant superintendent, Kyle Harris, they had been mown that day to 'clean them up'. They must have been mown pretty low because the ball flew across the surface. The greens are severely mounded and sloped. I found out as well as some in my group, it was difficult to get our putts to stop at reasonable distance from the hole, especially when starting above it. It was great to have the caddies tell us where we needed to attack each hole location from the fairway, however the execution on our part, was lacking. We were rarely successful. The caddies: Good. The golfers: Bad.

The bunker sand was sourced on site and if you weren't in dunes sand you were in bunker sand. The bunkers are very severe and penal. Thankfully the author did not spend too much time at the beach, so to speak, on this first visit.

All in all it was a great day of golf. It was windy and cool, roughly 50 degrees when we finished. Had the sun not been out it would have been uncomfortable. I remember the temperature back home that day was only 15 degrees, so no complaints on the Florida weather. The staff, the caddies and all involved made our visit memorable and I hope to go back soon. It is approximately an hour and a half from Orlando and one hour from Tampa Bay. It is much easier to get to than the Bandon Dunes courses and, from what I understand, a very similar golf experience. Minus the Pacific Ocean, I guess. @



This picture is of the 7th hole on the Blue, Tom Doak designed course.



Generous fairways are the name of the game at Streamsong, with very little rough as we know it in the Midwest.



Caddies are great to tell you how to attach the hole location from the fairway. Maybe someday I'll have enough game to follow their instructions.