

Silva's Black Creek Club to debut in July

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — When Black Creek Club opens in July, architect Brian Silva will unveil what he calls “[Seth] Raynor on steroids — a course that will raise the bar on layouts that presume to integrate vintage design characteristics into the modern game.”

Located 10 minutes from downtown Chattanooga, the semi-private Black Creek Club (BCC) was laid out, developed and constructed by an ardent chapter of the decidedly unofficial Seth Raynor Fan Club:

- Silva is refurbishing a pair of vintage Raynor designs: Mountain Lake Club in Lake Wales, Fla., and Pittsburgh's Fox Chapel GC which is scheduled to host the USGA's Curtis Cup Matches in 2002.

- The four major investors in BCC — Doug Stein, Gary Chazen, King Oehmig and Clay Crumbliss — are all members at nearby Lookout Mountain (Ga.) Golf Club, a 1925 Raynor layout that Silva finished restoring in 1999. [In the name of “research”, this development foursome has spent the last decade criss-crossing the country, doggedly playing and “studying” the Raynor design legacy.]

- The Black Creek course itself was built by Stein's contracting firm, Stein Construction Co., the same outfit which built The Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn., one of Pete Dye's best designs and site of the 1991 U.S. Amateur.

“Black Creek Club is a unique project because the architect, developers and contractors are all of a very, very like mind: We all have the utmost respect and admiration for Raynor's work,” said Silva, a partner with Uxbridge, Mass.-based Cornish, Silva and Mungeam, Inc. “These clients wanted a traditional golf course in the Raynor style, and that's just the direction my own designs have taken. And let's be honest: It's impossible to do restoration work at places like Fox Chapel without absorbing the artistry and strategic sensibilities of the original architect. It's been an entirely positive influence, and I think it really shows at Black Creek.”

Though Raynor and his early design partner, C.B. Macdonald, worked during the early years of this century, they were unabashed devotees of 19th-century British course design. So strong was this Old World influence, so dutiful was **their** homage, that all the Raynor/Macdonald products (National Golf Links and Fisher's Island GC on Long Island, Shoreacres and Chicago Golf Club in Illinois, Yale GC in New Haven,

Conn., Yeamans Hall in Charleston, S.C.) include loving replicas of famous Scottish holes such as the Redan at North Berwick and the Alps at Prestwick, among others.

Silva has carried on this practice by reprising Raynor's Redan and Punch Bowl greens at places like Waverly Oaks and Cape Cod

National GC. At Black Creek Club, the architect has included all the Raynor standards: the Biarritz Green (no. 17), the Redan (11), the Reverse Redan (7), the Cape Hole (15), the Short Hole (3), the Double Plateau (1), and an Alps/Punch Bowl hybrid at the one-of-a-kind par-5 6th.

Black Creek's routing plan re-

flects the extraordinary amount of time Silva spent on the site prior to course construction. One example: The architect created a bit of theater with his placement of the 7th tee, which sits high on another ridge behind the Punch Bowl putting surface. Go-for-broke second shots to the 6th green might be blind from the fairway, but those standing on the 7th tee have an unimpeded, bird's-eye view of the drama.

“Brian really did a magnificent job routing this golf course to maximize the fun and the fairness,” Stein said. “The 6th, for example, will yield a lot of birdies. But the 7th is a 245-yard par-3 where you can easily make 5. On the backside there are two drivable par-4s [10 and 15], but there are two par-4s [12 and 13] where it's very difficult to get home in two. The course is very fair that way...”



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