

## Longest course in the East debuts in Hoosier state

NOBLESVILLE, Ind. — The longest course east of the Mississippi River has opened here near Indianapolis. The 7,700-yard Purgatory Golf Club, designed by golf architect Ron Kern, can play like “heaven or a place of eternal torment,” according to club officials. Either way, it’s a five-mile hike if every shot

flies straight towards the pin.

To be fair, the course provides six sets of tees at each hole to give short-hitters and beginners a chance at reaching the greens in regulation.

“You need to use your head when you play here,” said Tenna Merchant, the property’s co-owner. “If people

play the right tees, they will really enjoy the golf course. The avid, experienced golfers love it here because they find a layout they don’t see very often. Inexperienced players might not have their best rounds, but they will enjoy the scenery and appreciate the difficulty of the course.”



The 17th hole is dubbed ‘Hell’s Half Acre.’

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### ‘HELL’S HALF ACRE’

According to religious mythology, Purgatory is where souls pay for their earthly sins before they can gain entry into heaven. The name conjures up images of struggling against great obstacles to achieve eternal happiness. Golfers who play this course will understand.

With more than 125 bunkers, the Purgatory track can be treacherous. The bunkers, which are filled with white, crushed limestone sand, lie mostly outside of play. But there are exceptions. At the 16th hole, large bunkers completely line the fairway and surround the green. The 17th hole, dubbed “Hell’s Half Acre,” is a short par-3 surrounded by bunkers. Basically, the green is an island in a sea of sand.

Mike Merchant, director of golf, said the course has pulled in a lot of adventurous players who come back for more. “We’ve been very busy in our first couple of months and have enjoyed more repeat business than we ever anticipated,” he said. “We’ve had players from across the state and the country play the course – folks from California, Michigan, Illinois and Kansas. It’s been absolutely incredible.”

### HAZARD REMOVED

The initial design proved a little too tough. The original fourth hole featured a boulder-lined dry creek bed, but the hazard was hidden from the tees. Course managers, concluding that was unfair, have decided to plant in the creek bed with fairway grass. The work should be completed by next summer.

“Some aspects of the course were just too difficult for the average golfer,” said Mike Merchant. “We want to make the course as golfer-friendly as possible with some adjustments from time to time.”

Regardless of skill level, players will enjoy the club’s amenities. Purgatory features a 7,000-square-foot practice green, a separate 10,000-square-foot chipping and putting green, and a 300-yard driving range. There are three full-service restrooms on the course, so while golfers might spend time looking for errant balls, they will never go more than four holes without finding a place to “freshen up.”