



## Another "TOP 10 COURSES" List To Ponder

By Rob Schultz

We're all in love with lists. Pick up a magazine or a newspaper and many of us are immediately attracted to the stories or columns that deal with the best and worst of anything from grocery stores to, yes, golf courses.

What we must remember is that all lists are subjective. What might make your top 10 list, or David Letterman's top 10 list, might not even earn any recognition in somebody else's top 10 list. Case in point: *GolfDigest* magazine's latest list of the top 10 courses in each state. The listing of what the magazine's researchers consider the best courses in Wisconsin was, in this writer's opinion, a joke,

In case you missed it, the top 10 courses in Wisconsin, according to *GolfDigest*, were, in order:

1. Blackwolf Run (River)
2. Milwaukee Country Club
3. University Ridge
4. Blackwolf Run (Meadow)
5. SentryWorld
6. Geneva National (Palmer)
7. Maple Bluff
8. Oneida Golf and Riding Club
9. Geneva National (Trevino)
10. Lawsonia Links

Hmm. It seems the *GolfDigest* researchers spent more time studying who designed the courses rather than their layouts and conditioning. There's no question that each of those aforementioned courses are outstanding in their own right, but I feel at least five of them should have been substituted for better ones. And the order of the others who stayed on the list is all wrong.

How can Blackwolf Run's River Course rank No. 1 when *GolfDigest* researchers are supposed to put such a premium on playability? *GolfDigest* gives high marks for resistance to scoring, but I think the system is flawed because it only considers how tough a course is to play for a scratch player rather than including mid- or high-handicappers. After all, 98 percent of all golfers rank in the mid- to high-handicapper range and the list should

take them into account.

There isn't a course in this state less playable for the average golfer than the River Course, a brutal Pete Dye layout that loves to drive you to distraction by creating so many impossible situations. The River Course is gorgeous and the conditioning superb, but it loses points with me because it offers few opportunities for most golfers to score well.

Another question I have regards how University Ridge can rank No. 3, or the Geneva National courses Nos. 6 and 9 when their immature greens—and, in the case of Geneva National, their rock hard, immature fairways—don't even rank with the state's mediocre courses in terms of conditioning. They're just too young to compete with the likes of outstanding courses like Blue Mound, Ozaukee, Meadowbrook, Racine Country Club, Kenosha Country Club, West Bend Country Club, Tuckaway Country Club, Janesville Country Club, Butte des Morts Country Club, North Shore Country Club, Lake Arrowhead, Blackhawk Country Club and Merrill Hills. All those courses should be ranked higher than University Ridge or the Geneva National courses—at this point.

And in terms of fairness of layouts, SentryWorld isn't even in the same universe with most of the top 50 courses in the state. I think it made *GolfDigest*'s top 10 list only because of its reputation...and its flower bed. Sorry, but that's not enough to make my list.

Speaking of my list (you knew I was getting around to that, didn't you?), I used a different kind of criteria than *GolfDigest* to reach my conclusions. First, I had to either walk, or play, the course. Second, I had to like the course I walked or played. Third, and extremely important, I had to feel the course was fair and playable for all handicaps. Fourth, I placed the highest premium on conditioning. Fifth, I placed a high premium on esthetics.

Without further fanfare, here's the

Sports Page 1993 Top 10 courses in Wisconsin list:

1. Milwaukee Country Club
2. Blue Mound Golf and Country Club
3. Blackwolf Run (River)
4. Oneida Golf and Riding Club
5. Maple Bluff Country Club
6. Ozaukee Country Club
7. Tuckaway Country Club
8. West Bend Country Club
9. Brown County Golf Club
10. Lawsonia Links

The biggest oversight in the *GolfDigest* list was Blue Mound. Anybody that knows anything about golf in this state understands just how great a course Blue Mound is. Some feel it's better than Milwaukee Country Club.

But that's a bit of a stretch. In terms of playability, esthetics, conditioning and just about every other category you can dream up, Milwaukee Country Club stands out in this state like Pine Valley stands out among the country's best. There is no substitute.

Oneida, meanwhile, is the best course in the northeast part of the state and offers a fun, yet extremely challenging layout. It's only competition in that area is Brown County, which daily-fee golfers say is every bit as good as the private courses. They're right. But they still change their minds when any of them gets the opportunity to play Oneida. That's how good Oneida is. *GolfDigest* wronged Oneida, as well as Maple Bluff, by ranking them so low on its list.

Finally, I feel Ozaukee, Tuckaway and West Bend country clubs are the best of the rest. All three scored huge points for their conditioning and all three, in my opinion, have layouts as strong as those that I replaced from the *GolfDigest* list.

There are so many others that deserve recognition, too. And that desire to make somebody's list is what drives some superintendents or other golf course staffers to keep working hard to improve their courses. For that reason alone, lists are good. Just don't take them as gospel. They're subjective. Opinion.

Remember the good words of Sir Robert Peel, who said: "Public opinion is a compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs."

Nice list, Bob. 🍷