

**14TH GREEN** — Here's a view from behind the 14th green looking at the nearby pond and fairway, as well as the covered bridge at the right which is used for shelter and carrying cart traffic over the water.

## Golf Course Superintendent Scott Hoffmann Designs 'The Classic' Course at Madden's

By Ralph Turtinen

**G**olf course superintendents often are hired after new courses have been designed and are well on their way toward being completed. Rarely does a superintendent have the opportunity to be the designer.

But such was the case with Scott Hoffmann, CGCS, head golf course superintendent at Madden's at Gull Lake for more than 20 years and designer of The Classic, a new championship par 72 layout that can play anywhere from 4,800 to 7,107 yards from its five tees at the Brainerd Lakes area resort. With this new addition, Madden's now has 63 holes with its two other 18-hole courses and executive nine.

The Classic, which opened for limited play in late August and was the site of the MGCSA's Stodola Research

Scramble on September 15 (*see story on Page 20*), already has drawn such praiseworthy comments as "outstanding, challenging, picturesque, sure-to-win-an-award."

**With its well-groomed fairways** weaving their way through colorful woodlands, primarily northern red oak but also presenting some pines and other deciduous trees, the Classic is accentuated with sand bunkers that not only serve their green-guarding purposes but also are designed (thank you, golf course superintendent) for easier, more suitable maintenance. These flash-type bunkers expose the Ohio Best sand in an attractive fashion (*see photograph on Page 8*), but also are designed so that rainwater coming

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## The Classic—

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toward a bunker is re-directed around it, rather than through it.

That's just one example of the value of having a golf course superintendent participate in the design, but there are others.

In advance of completing the fairways and greens, roughs at the Classic were groomed first, primarily to obtain an "English park look" and make certain they were not a "last-minute deal to complete before the opening" but also to make them much easier to maintain. Naturally, golfers will find it easier to locate their errant shots.

**Hoffmann also took advantage of the natural land** which offered "a sweeping type of hills" that allowed for nice golf holes, but, since the course was built in the woods, he also made certain the greens received plenty of southeast morning sun which he says is "the key to growing grass."

What came to be is a challenging but fair course, one that will appeal to beginners as well as professionals.

It obviously was a pleasure to have the course built in such a fashion that helped maintenance crews in several ways, but designing a course was something Hoffmann wanted to do for a long time.



**MADDEN'S OWNER** and general manager Brian Thuringer, right, reviews progress on The Classic, with Scott Hoffmann, left, designer and head superintendent at the resort, and Pat Morstad, head superintendent for The Classic.

He had put in long hours of studying golf courses and attending seminars to expand his knowledge.

**He believes that the design of a golf course should be one-third strategy, one-third agronomic and one-third**

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**HERE'S THE CLASSIC'S 17th GREEN** with Bass Lake, one of the state's best facilities for rearing walleyes, in the background.

## The Classic—

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aesthetic, in this way producing something that not only appeals to golfers but also has the owner's interests very much in mind.

Brian Thuringer, owner of Madden's, gave Hoffmann the go-ahead to design and build the Classic course.

To be sure, Hoffmann valued the input of three well-known names in golf during their spring and fall trips to analyze the course. Offering a variety of suggestions were former National Amateur champion John Harris, the Edina player who has won several state amateurs and other major Minnesota titles; Warren Rebolz, former executive director of the Minnesota Golf Association, and Geoffrey Cornish, a golf course designer from Amherst, Mass.

"All three provided good input and were of great help," said Hoffmann.



**TOUGH WORK** — These two able-bodied men, Scott Listul in the foreground, and Riley Kiefer utilize a Wacky Packer and rake to firm up the Ohio Best sand.

After route plans were laid out and green plans were drawn, general clearing began in 1994, with the focus then being to give the rough Cornish's suggestion for the "English park look." Earthmoving and shaping was the primary work accomplished in 1995 with John Rarden Construc-

tion, Brainerd, doing the dirt work. Seeding was done in the late summer and early fall. This past season the final grooming took center stage.

**Built on 212 acres**, the course also offers interesting treatment of water near Bass Lake, which is recognized as an outstanding spot for rearing walleyes, and other spots on the course. Water also is recirculated from wetlands, which have been preserved to help waterfowl.

With Providence creeping bent grass tees, fairways and greens, the Classic can stretch out to 7,107 yards from the tour tees, which Hoffmann expects to be used only at major competitions. From the black tees the course is 6,600 yards; the blues, 6,250; the whites, 5,700, and the forward tees

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### FLASH BUNKERS

add beauty and function to The Classic. They are designed to move water around the bunkers, rather than create rivulets through it.

## Jim Madden Took A Chance on Hiring Scott Hoffmann — And Won

Ever since Scott Hoffmann was a teen-ager at Fergus Falls High School, where he was graduated in 1972, he has had a keen interest in golf courses. He enjoyed one summer of work at Balmoral, a Fergus Falls area course owned by Arnie Hemquist, and two summers at Pebble Lake Golf Club.

Hemquist's son, Mike, was a student at Michigan State University majoring in turf management, and the elder Hemquist suggested Scott chat with Mike about this type of career and consider going to MSU.

Scott did go to Michigan State, where he was graduated in 1975. His on-site training during his college days was with Ted Woehrl, past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and former head superintendent at Oakland Hills in Bloomfield, Mich., site of the 1996 U.S. Open.



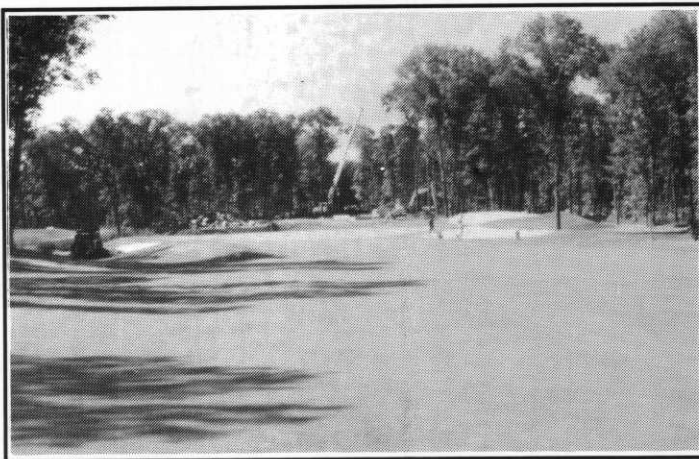
Scott Hoffmann

Scott's first job was at Mitchell Country Club in Mitchell, S.D. during the summer of 1975. Both Scott, now 42, and his wife, the former Jewell Jacobson and his high school sweetheart at Fergus Falls, both yearned to get back to Minnesota. When they learned of an opening at Madden's on Gull Lake, they naturally were anxious to apply.

At first owner Jim Madden thought Scott, then 21, was too-young for the job but he became much more interested after reviewing Scott's resume. "And it didn't hurt that John Arnold (a partner at Madden's) went to high school with my dad," Hoffman said.

Following Scott's interview in August, 1975, he was hired and has been at Madden's ever since, overseeing the work on the resort's 45 holes — the East course with its 18 holes built approximately 70 years ago, the par 3 nine holes constructed in the 1950s and Pine Beach West, designed and developed by Jim Madden in the 1960s. And now comes The Classic, the new championship par 72 course which opened for limited play in late August.

Scott and Jewell are the parents of daughter Brandy, 22, and son Nick, 15. They're all happy to be in the Brainerd Lakes area, and obviously pleased that Jim Madden took a chance on Scott 21 years ago.



**CLUBHOUSE UNDER CONSTRUCTION** — Work will proceed throughout the winter to prepare the Classic's clubhouse for its official opening next year. That's the 18th fairway leading toward the clubhouse in the background.

## The Classic—

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(yellow and red), 4,800 yards. The fourth hole plays up to 640 yards.

### Is 63 holes too much?

Madden's obviously doesn't believe it is with its 600-bed resort, another 600 at next door neighbor Cragun's and another 100 at nearby Kavanaugh's. In addition, with 27 holes of championship golf at The Pines at Grand View Lodge, also on Gull Lake; an appealing 18-hole course at The Preserve, two miles south of Pequot Lakes; Breezy Point with its 36 quality golf holes on Pelican Lake; Whitefish, about nine miles east, and the 27 holes at The Lakes at Ruttger's, the Brainerd Lakes area has become, in fact, a golf destination. Pine Meadows, formerly Brainerd Country Club about 12 miles south, also has been refurbished, as have other smaller courses in the area.

Work will continue through the winter on The Classic's clubhouse, scheduled to open next April 15.

**Hoffmann also praises the assistance and support** of Pat Morstad, a Michigan State graduate like Hoffmann, who is head superintendent on the Classic, and Mike Kosmak, who oversees the resort courses. Scott has five full-time employees and three full-time mechanics as well as 45 seasonably returning employees.

"Obviously I am most appreciative of the fact that Brian Thuringer gave the go-ahead to design and build the Classic," Hoffmann said, "and it was a real pleasure to get ideas from John Harris, Warren Rebholz and Geoffrey Cornish. In addition, we have a great staff of employees, all of them necessary — not only for building the course but also to keep it in tip-top shape."

Scott Hoffmann smiles modestly when hearing kind words about The Classic, quickly shares the plaudits "with so many others who helped" but no doubt feels most happy inside knowing that his "field of dreams" indeed became a fascinating reality...a reality that has encouraged him to investigate possible opportunities to design other courses.



**REPRESENTING THE WILDS GOLF CLUB** and preparing to tee off on the 12th hole of The Classic are Jack Matteffy, left, James Gardner and Dan Simpson. This hole produced the only skin of the day. The Tartan Park group of Randy Allen, Steve Conway and Curt Pickar won the lone skin. They were missing their captain Joe Moris.



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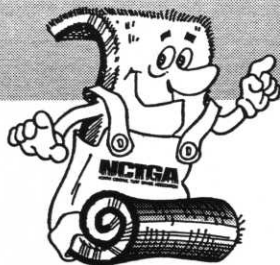
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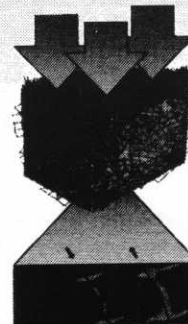
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