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Changing The Game

The Quarry Course at St. Charles Country Club

By Greg Jourdan

The St. Charles Country Club's innovative approach to the traditional game of golf provides a remedy for the game's four-letter word: T-I-M-E. The amount of time a round of golf requires is the chief complaint from players. The club's six-hole Quarry Course may not change the direction of new course construction, but it is likely to add new faces to their membership with a solid course that can be played in less than an hour. The club does not restrict membership tee times on the Quarry Course, and they welcome families to play golf together. The historic club is changing the way its membership plays golf.

Perhaps St. Charles CC has innovation in its DNA. Tom Bendelow, a course designer regarded as the 'Johnny Appleseed of American Golf' in the early 20th century, designed its 18-hole course. Bendelow is credited with over 700 golf course designs; moreover, he was a catalyst to grow the game. Presently, St. Charles CC is planting seeds for golf's next generation. Golf is a sport. Golf is a recreation. Golf does not need to be a burden. Member Timothy Sherman's appreciation validates the club's unique, proactive solution to a busy life: "The Quarry holes cater to members, like myself, who love the game of golf but do not have the time to break away for four to five hours." The club offers a Quarry membership that includes privileges at all social and recreational facilities, not to mention participation in their junior golf, and other kid-centered programs.

In 2002, the club began a master plan to maintain its status as one of Chicagoland's premier private clubs. This plan included adding an appendage to their celebrated 18-hole course. The project committee hired golf

course architect David Esler to create a six-hole course on newly acquired land that rested next to the northern portion of the club. Esler, fresh from the construction of his much-heralded design at Black Sheep Golf Club in Sugar Grove, completed the Quarry Course in 2004. Esler's genius at the St. Charles CC never graced the front page of golf magazines. Like Black Sheep, the Quarry Course is a hidden gem that is one of golf's best-kept secrets.

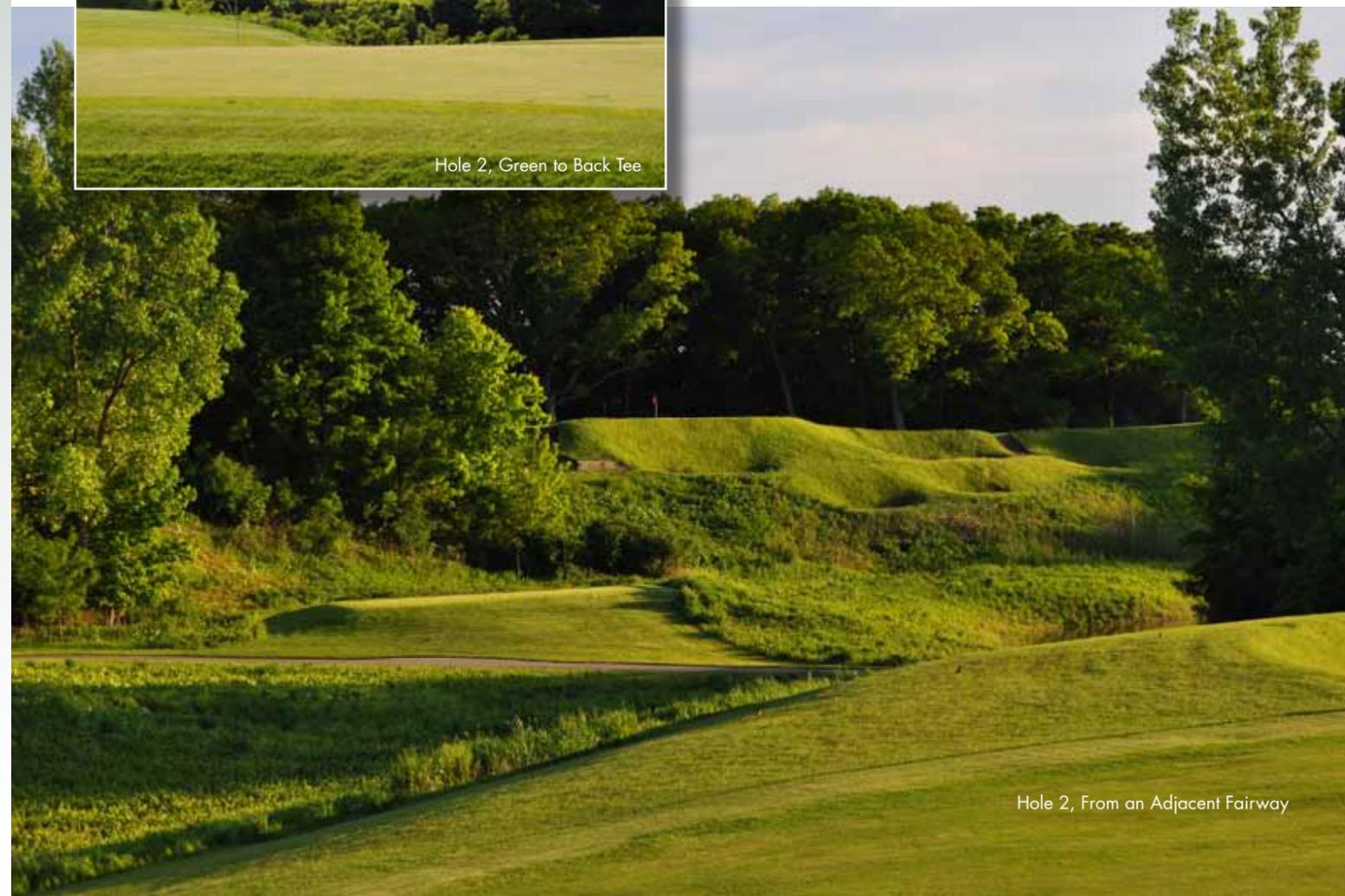
The Quarry Course is not an executive pitch and putt, nor is it the little sister to the club's 18 hole layout. St. Charles CC's first Membership Director, Rick Coffey, remembers his first visit to the completed Quarry course. "My jaw dropped at the sheer beauty of the land." Coffey, a scratch golfer, adds, "The challenge to break par



Hole 1



Hole 2, Green to Back Tee



Hole 2, From an Adjacent Fairway

was obvious, but I knew this was a special course.” What Coffey describes as special is much more than a new mini-loop for members. Difficult? Yes, but after completing these six holes you will not be concerned with par. The personality of the course should surpass a goal of posting a good score or trimming a handicap. It is about playing golf. If you are fixed on rounds that are divisible by nine, then the club’s answer to your programming is a configuration that also plays as a nine-hole loop. Holes one, two and six are replayed. Play on that routing is typically completed in less than two hours.

Esler uses width to create numerous options for golfers of all levels. Par is a goal, but most golfers will discover that bringing their ‘A’ game will still leave them a few shots short of beating ol’ man par. The Quarry is best approached as a campaign against your limitations. Win a few battles, maybe lose a couple balls, but shouldn’t pushing yourself to play your finest mental and physical golf be a victory regardless of score? Better players will appreciate the challenge, yet juniors, seniors, and neophytes can sneak around these six holes without feeling dejected due to limited power or skill. All levels of players can appreciate a memorable experience in less than one hour. The Quarry Course is a burst of excitement, not a marathon of minutes. That burst is exactly what young players want from a golf course.

To those familiar with Bendelow’s design at St. Charles CC, the terrain is gently rolling with parkland green sites and bunkering. The topography on the Quarry loop is more akin to Northern Michigan than the Fox River Valley. Surprisingly dramatic elevations frame each hole, and the



elevation requires intimate knowledge of the course and your club distances. Consider the opening hole, a long, sweeping par-4 that bends like most of our shots, left to right, a firm handshake. The course reveals itself with intense textures and stunning scenery from the teeing ground of the par-3 second hole. From each of the four tee boxes, players are presented a plateau green with a 40-foot drop to a pond and wetlands. An under-clubbed effort is unrecoverable from the back tees, while the forward tees offer a modest challenge with stunning

by a pond and hillock covered with wispy grasses. If you keep the driver in the bag and plan your next three shots, then par is on your plate with a couple fairway woods and a hybrid. However, you may or may not swing them in that order.

The sixth hole at the Quarry Course is arguably the toughest par-4 in the state. Members play it as a par-5 and a par-4 when the six holes are played as a nine-hole course. With either configuration, the approach to the green is over 200 yards due to a ravine at the elbow of this dogleg right. The



views. A player stretching the yardage here may bemoan the injustice of the hole, but his partners who elect the forward tees encounter a fair test of their skill sets. This is one of the reasons the course is appealing to families. Dad may bark for forgiveness, but the rest of the family can smile with satisfaction.

The Quarry requires a strategic approach and plenty of patience. This is evident on the par-5 fourth hole. At 617 yards from the tips, this is a three-shot hole. Adding to the test is a sliver of a fairway flanked

uphill approach over the ravine is an intimidating task. For most golfers, the opportunity to sink a birdie putt is cause for celebration. Earning a par on this monster will be a hero’s tale that will be remembered for a long time.

Quarry Course is more than a pioneering appendage to St. Charles Country Club. It also offers a solution to golf’s biggest deterrent. Time is not a four-letter word at the club. It is one of many reasons to tee it up at the Quarry’s six-hole loop. www.stcharlescc.com