

www.northshoremassgolf.com August/September 2007 Volume 5 Issue 4

NORTH SHORE
GOLF
Numbers Game

Come along with North Shore Golf as we shadow the MGA during a Course Rating Session

Also inside: Travel the local golf globe with our Pro Shop Chatter

The Natural

Given the perfect canvas for a links style golf course, the architects of Newport National didn't need to get fancy as they created a British Open-style venue for all of New England to enjoy

BY GARY TRASK

When Arthur Hills made his very first visit to the site that would become The Orchard Course at Newport National Golf Club, he was immediately swept away by a vision.

"I remember thinking to myself, 'What a beautiful piece of land to build a golf course,'" says Hills, a world-renowned architect who has his name on more than 150 courses across the country. "It was clear to me right from

the very start that this had a chance to become a stunning golf course."

Hills' instincts were right on. Newport National has received rave reviews ever since opening its fairways back in the summer of 2002. But what Hills first envisioned for the land, and what he and his associate, Drew Rogers, ended up creating, were two different golf experiences. Soon into the process the designers realized that instead of

planting trees, building ponds and adding rolling hills and mounds, they would be better off simply taking what the land had to offer, which was a perfect canvas for a links style golf course.

"It had all the right elements right from the beginning so we decided not to try and create something that wasn't there," says Rogers, a senior design associate for Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates in Ohio since 1992, who

made multiple site visits to the course as it was being created. "The best thing about this project is that everyone seemed to have this common vision right from the start. We all agreed we were working with a 'pure golf' site and we wanted to make sure we allowed those characteristics to shine through without us getting in the way."

Newport National GC is actually located in Middletown, R.I., but sits just three miles from the heart of downtown Newport. The drive from the North Shore takes less than two hours (if, of course, you avoid rush hour traffic) and as you arrive in the Newport area you pass by a polo club and wine vineyard, confirming even further that you're in an area known for its affluence. Once you get to the first tee, however, thoughts of those classic Newport characteristics fade away as you suddenly feel you're teeing it up "across the pond."

"Many times when I'm on the golf course I don't even feel like I'm in the United States," says Newport National's President and General Manager Matt Adams. "It's very similar to the type of courses you would see overseas. Then

"Everyone seemed to have this common vision right from the start. We all agreed we were working with a 'pure golf' site and we wanted to make sure we allowed those characteristics to shine through."

- Newport National architect Drew Rogers

you add in the wind and the views of the Atlantic Ocean and you've got all the elements of a British Open-type experience."

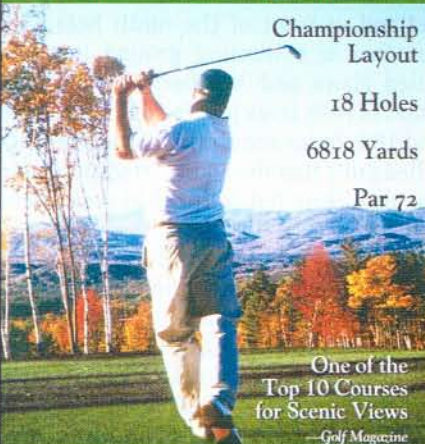
The course also provides an experience that can be enjoyable for all skill levels, thanks to four sets of tees that range from a 74.4 rating and 138 slope from the back tees, which measure a whopping 7,244 yards, to a 68.8/119 from the front, where the yardage is listed at 5,217. Adding to the links course affect is the fact that Course

Superintendent Scott Roche and his staff only water the course "as needed." The greens are watered by hand with hoses and if the result is a few brown patches here and there throughout the course, so be it.

"What excites me most about the course is that over the years it has started to mature and reveal the subtleties of the mounds and the angles of the fairways," explains Adams. "If you over water you'll never see that stuff. What we've done is allowed the natural contours that sit below the land to come through naturally. We actually want to see a little brown hue in the rough. That's how the course was designed and that's how it should be played."

"Our goal isn't to be perfectly manicured from corner to corner," adds Roche, who proudly mentioned that Audubon International has designated the course as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. "Our water capacity is rather small (the only water that comes into play is the small irrigation pond that was built next to the 12th and 13th holes) so we water the course judiciously. We're also a low input course as far as fertilizer and chemicals

**You've done the Shore.
Now golf the Mountains...**




Championship Layout
18 Holes
6818 Yards
Par 72

One of the Top 10 Courses for Scenic Views
—Golf Magazine

On-site Single Family & Town Homes Available.
Call for Brochure

603/726-3076
888-OWL-NEST
Exit 28 off I-93
Campton, NH
www.owlsnestgolf.com
Ask About Grand Slam Golf Getaways



TRUE BLUE to our customers

Following through with expertise and customer service



1.800.EASTERN easternbank.com

Eastern Bank
trueblue™

Member FDIC



Undulating greens and spectacular views are the norm at The Orchards Course at Newport National.

so we do see some dormancy along the course at times, but that's what the course was built to be like and it certainly doesn't take away from the experience."

Especially since the fescue-lined fairways are typically in primo shape. It's virtually impossible to get a bad lie if you're sitting in the fairway, and more often than not, if you stay out of the rough, you're going to have a good look at the green on your approach shot.

"It's definitely a thinking man's course," says Adams, who moonlights as a reporter for Golf Channel and is also the co-author of the NY Times best-selling book, *Chicken Soup For The Soul*. "If you hit the fairway off the tee the course has been shaped to propel your ball forward.

"Another great thing is, because of the wind patterns coming off the ocean, you could play 18 in the morning and 18 in the afternoon and they could be two completely different rounds. It's those types of things that make the course so unique."

And if unique is what you're looking for, you'll do no better than the par-5, 567-yard, eighth hole. The hole, which runs alongside a Bridle Trail that snakes throughout the course and is used daily by horseback riders, starts with a classic risk-reward tee shot that gives you the option of cutting the corner to shorten the hole. It ends with an undulating and perfectly square - yes, that's right, square - green.

"I asked Mr. Hills what I should tell people when they ask me about the square green and he said, 'Tell'em it was inspired by Stableford Squares, a course in England,'" Adams recalls. "I said, 'Gee, I've never heard of it. Can I go on-line and get some information on it.' He said, 'No, I just made that up.' That's the kind of imagination he has. And you can see that by play-

ing the golf course."

Hills laughed when he was reminded of that conversation with Adams and said that the true origin of the square green was simply a golf course architect taking a stab at having some fun.

"I thought it would be new and different," he said. "Something that the average golfer has never seen."

That same "average golfer" will also likely appreciate the numerous bird boxes at Newport National GC found throughout the native grass areas as well as the wetland in front of the ninth hole's tee box that is a hunting ground for Red-tailed Hawk and Northern Harrier. The stand of fruit trees planted along the 16th and 18th holes and the mallards and ring-billed gulls that live in the irrigation pond are also likely not featured at your home course.

Because the course is presently for sale, it remains an unfinished project. There is no practice facility and the clubhouse - while offering stunning vistas of the ocean from its front deck - is a temporary building. The original plan was to feature 27 holes and Adams is hopeful

that once the owners - Reality Financial Partners of Boston - completes a sale, the club will someday be able to provide golfers the ultimate experience it hoped for from the very beginning.

And if the opportunity presents itself, Hills and Rogers would love the chance to work a little more magic on this piece of land they've grown quite fond of.

"As it's currently constituted, on a nice day, that's as nice a place to play golf as I can think of," Hills adds. "I'd be more than happy to have the chance to be able to add to that experience." ■

"You could play 18 in the morning and 18 in the afternoon and they could be two completely different rounds. It's those types of things that make the course so unique."

- Newport National
President and GM
Matt Adams