

How To Play The Best Holes In Brunswick

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When you play a great golf hole you need more than good golf shots. You need good thinking and sound decision making as well. Great holes offer the golfer options. Risky options. Safe options. Chicken options.

Remember the guy who won the "Worst Golfer Award" at the TPC in Sawgrass by putting the ball from tee to green over the bridge to the island green on the par 3, 17th hole. That was an ultra-chicken option.

When you play a great hole for the first time you often tap in your third putt for a double-whatever and then stand looking back down the hole toward the tee. You wonder why you didn't notice the other way to play the hole? You could have hit a safety off the tee, layed up away from that water, chipped up and rolled it in for a par.

Yeah, it always looks easier from the green.

As a matter of fact, it is easier to analyze a golf hole from green to tee. Seeing the holes from the desired landing area and what it offers for subsequent shots gives better insight on how to play the hole with your particular game. It also lends some objectivity to your thinking. On the tee you may be either bouyed or depressed by the score on the previous hole causing a decision you may soon regret.

Once I have made a par on a great

hole, I tend to adopt the tactics that earned the par as standard procedure for all subsequent rounds. My game is making pars and saving pars. I only get birdies on very short holes, or with unconscious approach shots. Occasionally I will sink a chip or a cross county putt.

It is not often that I stand on the tee of a 198 yard, par 3 and say to myself, "OK. I'll just cut this 3 iron over the left trap and slide it under the hole for an easy uphill birdie." My tactics are more like, "Gimme the 4 wood. You guys keep your eyes on this ball. I'm gonna try to keep my head down."

Please keep my golfing limitations in mind as I describe how the best Par 3, Par 4 and Par 5 from the Best 36 should or could be played.

Par 3,

17th At Sea Trail

This long par 3 earns its "Best" selection by possessing all the qualities that make a par 3 great. 17 has a challenging green, matched in size to the length and trajectory of the approach shot. The size and design of the green on a par 3 hole sets up the tailoring of the rest of the hole.

The green at Sea Trails' 17th is about 32 yards wide and 22 yards deep. It has several levels and enough undulations to make three putts an imminent possibility. This relatively shallow green tilts toward the tee and undulates from high to

low to high across the back of the green. There are at least eight good pin placements on the green, two of which will challenge the best of golfers. These two pin placements are on the two semi-mounds at the rear of the green. Both can be protected by the two bunkers which protect the approach to the green.

The left bunker is a large, deep hazard that will collect any shot that is short of the target and not precisely aimed to negotiate the 15-yard opening between the bunkers. The right bunker collects shots that are off line right and keeps them from going down a steep embankment into double trouble.

Tee shots landing left, right or over this green will leave the golfer in a variety of untenable positions. The only true spot to bail out on this hole is short of the green. Such a shot will still leave the golfer a tender little pitch to this shallow green. But, wait a minute! Who ever heard of laying up on a par 3? Nah. Go for it! If you don't catch the tee shot maybe you will be lucky enough to roll through the small opening between the traps.

Well, the folks at Sea Trail realize that a lot of shots may well land short. They have 20 yards of closely mown fairway in front of the green to improve the chances of spinning the ball to the pin.

The fact that the tees sit a good 10 yards above the green gives the golfer fair warning of the trouble that

lies below. It is immediately apparent that you must either hit the green or be short. The shot designed to hit the green must be struck with a long iron and needs a high trajectory in order to hold on the putting surface.

Now if that sounds like a tall order, consider that about 70 yards off the tee, a very large tree dominates the right side of the green. If the pin is located on the right half of the green, you must fade the ball to get it close enough for a birdie or insure a two putt.

All the ingredients and more. If you don't think this is a great hole, I suggest you go play it for yourself. A par on the 17th at Sea Trail feels like a birdie to me.

Oyster Bays'

Par 4, Second Hole

Like all great holes this 420 yard par 4 offers several options to the golfer. It is designed as a gentle dogleg right with a long carry over water off the tee. The landing area for the aggressive tee shot is protected by a series of three bunkers and the green is guarded by bunkers short left and over right. The green is a very deep, peanut shaped affair which can vary the approach by as many as three clubs depending on the location of the pin.

The really long hitting, low handicap golfer will be tempted to cut his drive close to the fairway traps on the right and shorten up the hole to

about 400 yards in the process. If he is successful, he will be rewarded with a middle iron to the green. This will prove to be a big advantage in approaching such a large green and could well yield the birdie two such excellent shots deserve.

Other good golfers whose drives are in the 240 yard range will need their length just to clear the water from the blue tees and put them in a position in the middle of the fairway for a long iron to the green. Most of them will be quite satisfied with a par.

A middle handicapper playing from the white tees (365 yards) will need a carry over water of 150 yards or so and will be faced with either a long iron or a fairway wood to the green. These golfers will lengthen the hole to more like 400 yards by playing the drive well left away from trouble and requiring less carry over water. What they save on the drive they will pay for in a long approach shot to the green, if in fact they choose to go for it.

Although the layup area short of the green narrows as it approaches the putting surface, it is a preferred choice of shots to taking a chance of hitting the approach too long. This elongated green sits at a 45 degree angle to the line of the approach. In addition to being protected by two challenging bunkers, there is out of bounds 11 yards right of the green

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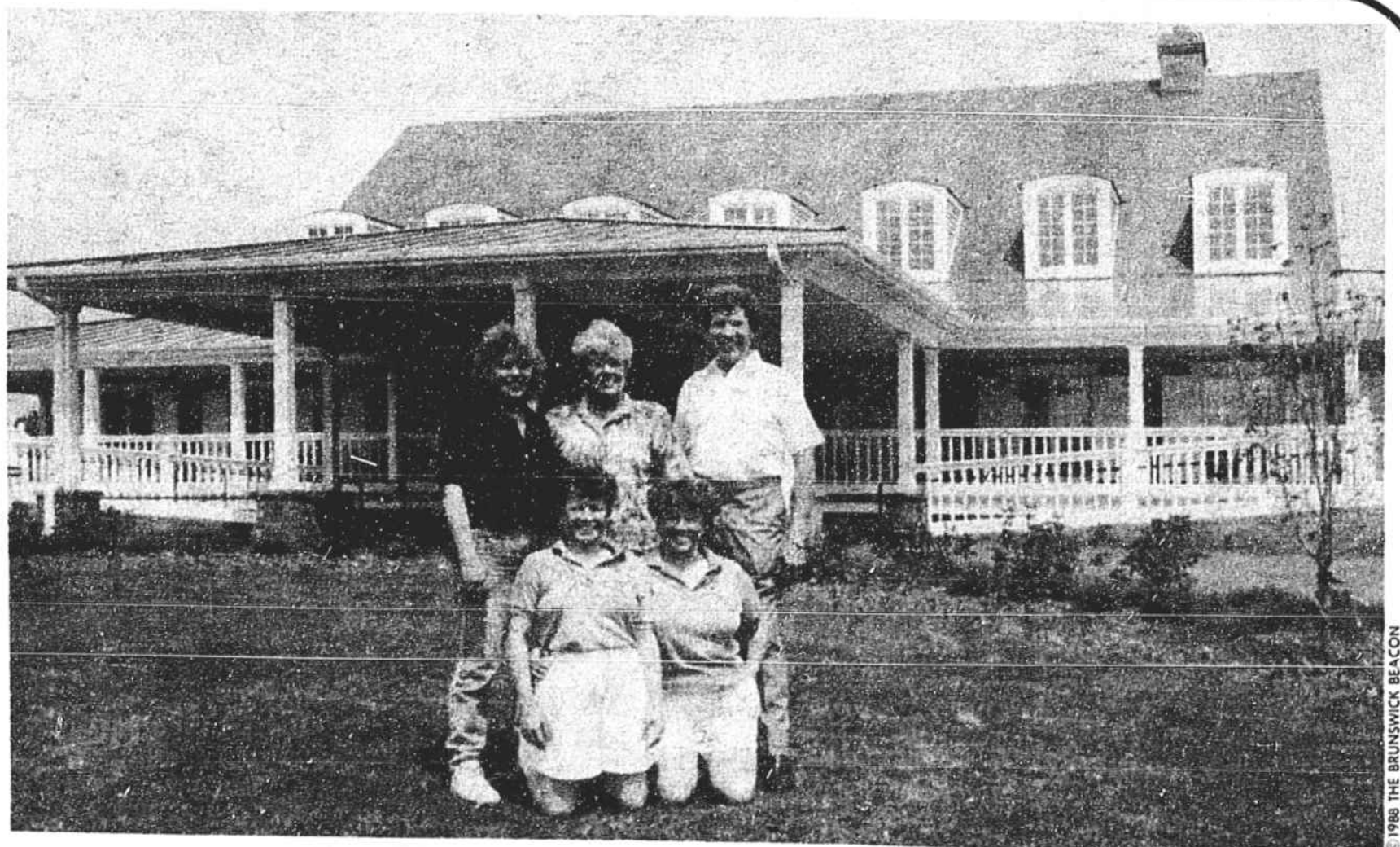
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