



Small Wonders

Nine-hole courses offer as much charm and challenge as 'regulation' 18s, and are usually more ecological and economical. So why do so few golfers play them?

By **RON WHITTEN**, Photograph by **Stephen Szurlej**

DR. GARY WIREN IS A PH.D., A HIGHLY regarded instructor; a champion golfer; a master professional and member of the PGA Hall of Fame. I am none of those. In fact, the only thing I have in common with Gary is that we both learned golf as youngsters on a hardscrabble nine-hole course in Omaha, par-33 Spring Lake Park, where the last hole, a 100-yard par 3, played over a busy city street, and the meanest hazard was a snarling German shepherd just beyond a flimsy chicken-wire fence behind the second green.

mean anything, they're probably justified in that assumption. For more than two generations now, nine-hole courses have comprised just 29 percent of all layouts in America, not enough clout to be considered even a special interest. They're merely a fringe element, a cult.

So be it. But it's a cult worth exploring. Allow me to provide some reasons why.

Some Nine-Hole Courses Are Genuine Tests

The good news is, there are no 4,000-yard nine-hole courses. Because they're invariably built on compact parcels of land, nine-hole courses tend to be more about accuracy and finesse than brute strength. But, as with Chihuahuas and Yorkshire terriers, some of those little things have bite.

None more than The Dunes Club in New Buffalo, Mich. A half-dozen years before he established Bandon Dunes in Oregon, recycled-products impresario Mike Keiser created this delightful and devious nine on 68 acres of densely wooded sand dunes off Lake Michigan, just north of the Indiana border. Utilizing the services of architects Dick and Tim Nugent of Chicago as well as mixing in his own armchair-architect ideas, Keiser produced the Pine Valley of nine-hole courses, with vast expanses of exposed sand edging fairways that pitch and roll as if in a storm off the lake, and smallish greens tucked atop sand spits and behind leafy trees. What isn't sand or tightly mown turf is knee-high native grass.

Back in a 2000 *Golf Digest* feature, Dan Jenkins chose the 513-yard eighth hole as one of his Best 18 Holes in America—The New Generation, and nearly every commentator on course design ranks the 3,478-yard par-36 Dunes as the country's best nine-hole course. It's private and perfect, with a clubhouse about the size of a detached garage. That's all a nine-hole course needs.

Due east of The Dunes is Signal Point Club in Niles, Mich., just north of South Bend, Ind., a 1964 private club that is perhaps the most imaginative ever from architect Robert Bruce Harris. Strung

LITTLE PACKAGE, BIG PUNCH

The par-3 sixth typifies the challenge at The Dunes Club in Michigan, which has a Pine Valley feel and is viewed as America's best nine-holer.

Amazingly, Spring Lake Park still exists. Both Gary and I have made separate pilgrimages to it in recent years, and we're both delighted that little has changed. Oh, there's a new clubhouse and cart paths. The tee boxes are now grass, not dirt. The dog is long gone, but the ninth is still a pitch shot over 16th Street.

Spring Lake Park is why I have such an affection for nine-holers. They are the bedrock upon which golf was built in this country. The first courses were nine

holes. The first U.S. Opens were played on them. Legends such as Arnold Palmer and Pete Dye grew up on them.

Nine-hole courses represent fundamentals, with few frills and almost no pretenses. They're usually extremely affordable, frugal in their chemical use and can be played in less than two hours.

Architecturally, nine-hole courses are our great-granddaddies, but most golfers treat them like red-headed step-granddaddies because most don't consider nine holes to be real golf. If statistics

along a skinny corridor on the west side of the St. Joseph River, Signal Point is tight and tree-lined, with big oval bunkers well removed from enormous putting surfaces, deliberately oversized to accommodate two separate flags, white and red, corresponding to tee markers of the same color. Golfers play white-to-white the first time around, 3,044 yards par 36, then red-to-red at 3,181 yards par 36, for the second nine. So each hole has two personalities. The opener may be only 324 yards, but the second time it's 408, maybe longer if the red flag is tucked back behind a bunker. Conversely, the par-5 second measures 540 yards, but when it's the 11th, it's 475. The craziest hole is the seventh, a zigzag double dogleg through hardwoods and pines, the only par 5 around that measures just 435 yards (489 when played as the 16th) and yet is still a true three-shot hole.

They call Signal Point "Little Point O' Woods," a nod to former Western Amateur venue and *Golf Digest* 100 Greatest member Point O' Woods just up the road in Benton Harbor, and it certainly resembles it in look and challenge. Back in 1967, when *Golf Digest* ranked America's 200 Toughest Courses, Signal Point was one of six Michigan courses listed, along with The Point, Oakland Hills, CC of Detroit, University of Michigan and Warwick Hills. Alas, the editors apparently decided there was a mutt amongst those big dogs, and Signal Point was dropped in 1969. No nine-hole course has been ranked by *Golf Digest* since.

As versatile as Signal Point is, it has nothing on Double Eagle GC in Eagle Bend, Minn., where in 1983 former tour pro-turned-architect Joel Goldstrand created his first of several nine-hole reversible layouts. With nine fairways and 10 greens on 80 acres, Goldstrand provided 18 holes for an owner who couldn't afford the upkeep of 18 and did it with bunkers that play both ways and no awkward doglegs or blind shots. It's not a particularly original idea. The Old Course at St. Andrews is the template for all reversible layouts, and William S. Flynn built one on the Rockefeller estate,



Pocantico Hills, in Tarrytown, N.Y., in the 1930s. But unlike St. Andrews, which plays its clockwise routing but once a year, Double Eagle switches every day. On odd days it's the 3,337-yard par-36 Green Course, while on even days it's the 3,536-yard par-37 Gold Course.

Other stern nine-hole tests include Doral Arrowwood GC in Purchase, N.Y., a Robert von Hagge resort design that has been dubbed the "Little Blue Monster." It has humps and bumps everywhere, along with splashy bunkers and ponds on seven holes. It was built in the early 1990s on the site of the old 18-hole par-3 Green Valley Golf Center, and pity the poor hacker who strolled up at the grand reopening expecting his pitch-and-putt.

There's also the private Links at Fisher Island in the center of a 216-acre island of condominiums in Miami's Biscayne Bay. A 1990 P.B. Dye design of 3,347 yards and par 35, it's a tropical terror, with big lakes, 56 bunkers, one island green, one hidden green, imitation sand dunes dotted with coconut palms and gumbo limbos, constant wind and live flamingoes.

Include Falcon Valley GC in Lenexa, Kan., in this category. Designed by Craig Schreiner, it was originally to be 18 holes, but potential land across railroad tracks proved too inaccessible. A par 36 of 3,366

yards, it is hilly and treed on the first four holes, then open and exposed to south winds for four holes and finishes with a straightaway par 4

hugging a lake on the right. Like Doral Arrowwood and Fisher Island, Falcon Valley is that rarest of creatures, a nine-hole residential development course. Other successful nine-hole housing courses that come to mind are Bigwood in Ketchum, Idaho (just west of Sun Valley resort), and Spanish Wells on Hilton Head Island.

TINY TOUCHES

(Above) A nine-hole links is the center of attention at Florida's Fisher Island. (Right) The par-3 eighth hole at Signal Point in Michigan is the Slim Shady of golf.

Some Nine-Holers Are Untouched Masterpieces

If you're interested in studying classic old architecture, the best place may be on nine-hole courses, because most of those clubs have never had enough money to screw things up with a fancy remodeling. The original designs are still there, maybe with shrunken greens and grassed-over bunkers, but they are still as originally conceived.

So if you want authentic Alister MacKenzie, don't go to Augusta National, go



to Northwood GC in Monte Rio, Calif., north of San Francisco. Built in 1927, it is positioned inside a bend of the Russian River, just north of the famed Bohemian Club's campground. Indeed, the course was apparently constructed specifically for members of the Bohemian Club, but it has been a public course for decades.

Northwood is only 2,893 yards par 36, but if you think you can overpower it, think twice. Most holes are lined by gigantic redwoods, providing some of the narrowest corridors in the game. You'll be playing in spots of deep shade except at high noon. (That certainly isn't a MacKenzie trademark, as he preferred wide holes with lots of options, but it's

what he had to provide on that tight, forested site.)

Adding to its challenge are skinny, tumbling MacKenzie greens and re-established MacKenzie bunkering. (Cavities of other fingery bunkers are still clearly visible and will be reclaimed in years ahead.) Every hole is special, but the sunken punchbowl green on the 382-yard second shines, as do the deception bunkers well short of the green on the single-file 381-yard seventh. The best holes may be the short par 4s: the 293-yard dogleg-left first, where a long straight drive will leave you blocked by trees, and the relatively wide 280-yard sixth, with bunkers scattered willy-nilly.

RON WHITTEN PICKS

The 25 Best Nine-Hole Courses in America

1. The Dunes Club, *New Buffalo, Mich.*
2. Whitinsville (Mass.) CC
3. Northwood GC, *Monte Rio, Calif.*
4. Aetna Springs GC, *Pope Valley, Calif.*
5. Sunnylands, *Rancho Mirage, Calif.*
6. Birchwood CC, *Westport, Conn.*
7. Signal Point Club, *Niles, Mich.*
8. Links at Fisher Island (Fla.)
9. Starr Hollow GC, *Tolar, Texas*
10. Pocantico Hills GC, *Tarrytown, N.Y.*
11. Hooper GC, *Walpole, N.H.*
12. Wyoming GC, *Cincinnati, Ohio*
13. Double Eagle GC, *Eagle Bend, Minn.*
14. Falcon Valley GC, *Lenexa, Kan.*
15. Pottawatomie GC, *St. Charles, Ill.*
16. Doral Arrowwood GC, *Purchase, N.Y.*
17. Gleneagles GC at McLaren Park, *San Francisco*
18. Sydney R. Marovitz GC, *Chicago*
19. Woodstock (Ill.) CC
20. Quaker Hill CC, *Pawling, N.Y.*
21. Stone Creek GC, *Williamsburg, Iowa*
22. Hotchkiss School GC, *Lakeville, Conn.*
23. Annapolis (Md.) GC
24. Dixie Red Hills GC, *St. George, Utah*
25. Legends Butte GC, *Crawford, Neb.*

An early inkling of Robert Trent Jones' imagination can be found at Pottawatomie GC, a nine-hole muni in St. Charles, Ill. This was a WPA project completed in 1939 and features Trent's first island green, on a real island in the Fox River. It is at No. 3, a 345-yard, sharp dogleg-left par 4 that requires a drive of only 200 yards to reach the turn. From there it's a short iron over a river channel to the big well-bunkered green. It looks simple, but it is not. A row of trees prevents gamblers from firing at the green from the tee, overhanging trees can complicate the aerial approach, and there is a little pond within the island just right of the green that is hardly noticeable until you have drifted into it.

The island looks natural, but I am told that Trent actually built much of it using soil excavated just north of the course. The 154-yard fourth hole is also self-contained on the island, and if anything, the shot into that green is far more intimidating, with the long expanse of river just beyond the back fringe. A recent Greg Martin renovation has returned the flair of Trent's bunkering and re-established the corner lobes of his sweeping greens, making Pottawatomie a little vest-pocket delight.

Another early Trent Jones design is Quaker Hill CC in Pawling, N.Y., near Poughkeepsie. Built for a group headed by legendary radio (and later television) broadcast journalist Lowell Thomas, the 3,046-yard par-35 private club opened in 1942. Inside the clubhouse, a converted barn, is a history wall, 30 feet high and 20 feet long, embedded with artifacts Thomas collected from his travels, including an ancient rock unearthed in Mesopotamia and a chunk removed during the construction of the Empire State Building. Also on display are all nine Trent Jones sketches of his proposed greens, and every green still exists almost exactly as he first envisioned them.

Plymouth (N.C.) CC sports an untouched William S. Flynn design that opened in 1937. It was constructed for Flynn by a young Dick Wilson, who later became Trent Jones' chief rival in the golf design business, producing such dramatic courses as Doral, Bay Hill and La Costa. (Wilson's nine-hole masterpiece is Sunnylands, on the Walter Annenberg estate in Rancho Mirage, Calif.) What's more, the first pro at Plymouth was Ellis Maples, who also later became a golf architect, one of the most prolific in the Carolinas.

Near Boston, where the great Donald Ross started his design career after arriving from Scotland, is a little private Ross gem called Whitinsville CC. Started as a company course for Whitin Machine Works in 1925, it quickly gained national fame when its ninth hole was featured

in George C. Thomas Jr.'s 1927 seminal treatise *Golf Architecture in America*. The 446-yard ninth, with its tee shot across the corner of a river basin to a roller-coaster fairway and approach over another valley to a hilltop green, is still considered one of the greatest par 4s in the land.

Golf architect Brian Silva, who lived next to the course for years before marriage and success transplanted him to a summer home in New Hampshire and a winter one on Florida's Amelia Island, has long proclaimed Whitinsville to be the most genuine Ross design in existence. He points out the prototypical Ross pedestal greens and grass-faced bunkers, including old-fashioned carry bunkers on the 438-yard fifth. At 3,282 yards and par 35, even the length remains unchanged.

I recently examined the plans for Whitinsville at the Tufts Archives in Given Memorial Library in Pinehurst, N.C., the largest repository of Ross memorabilia. Indeed, the holes today exist just as they were on the plans, which were drawn up

by Walter B. Hatch, a chief Ross design associate. There's a notation on the cover sheet to the plans: "Hope Mr. Ross will be able to look these over before you start them," followed by Hatch's initials. Several hole diagrams bear the notation, "OK. DJR." So Ross did review Hatch's drawings. But it raises some questions: Did Ross ever see the site? Did Hatch draft what Ross had designed, or did Hatch design the holes and Ross simply edit them?

It doesn't really matter. Whitinsville is clearly classic Donald Ross architecture. The man mass-produced terrific courses, juggling 20 or more projects at once, and in an era when cross-country travel was strictly by train, he relied upon legions of lieutenants to carry out his intent. The glory of it is that his standard product, even at nine holes, was so superior. Other well-preserved nine-hole Ross layouts in Massachusetts include North Andover, Tatnuck in Worcester and Cohasset in Southbridge. In most other states, his nine-hole jobs have since been expanded to 18.



Nine-Hole Courses Are Glimpses Into The Past

A lot of nine-hole courses are steps back in time. Whether it's the metal coil starting system at City Park GC in Baton Rouge, La. (drop your ball atop the spiral of others and when it reaches the bottom, retrieve it and head to the tee) or the low-tech sand greens of the Midwest ("Down 'n' Dirty," *Golf World*, Oct. 8, 2004), there are aspects of nine-hole courses that remind us that the game is about more than just money.

An article in the October 13, 1948, issue of *Golf World* talked about long-abandoned Oakhurst GC in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., claimed by many to be the first organized golf club in America, dating from 1884. The club had disbanded by 1904, and its nine-hole course, with crisscrossing fairways, went to seed. Illustrating the article was a photo of soon-to-be Masters champion Sam Snead, swinging in a pasture that had been an Oakhurst fairway half a century earlier.

A dozen years after the article, Snead convinced a golf buddy, Lewis Keller, to buy

the land for breeding thoroughbred horses. Thirty-four years after that, the ageless Snead was hitting the ceremonial first shots at the grand reopening of Oakhurst Links.

Encouraged by golf writer Dick Taylor and golf architect Bob Cupp, Keller revived the ancient course in the early 1990s after quitting the horse business. Cupp says the project was as much archeology as architecture, taking just eight days of probing and mowing to rediscover the somewhat mountainous routing after 80 years of hibernation. Old newspaper reports and photos helped determine the fairways and greens. Gentle depressions proved to be old sand bunkers.

"It goes back to a peaceful time when the size of the game was comprehensible and nature had a lot to say about conditions," Cupp said when Oakhurst was unveiled to the public in 1994. Snead may not have agreed. On the opening day, he started on the par-3 third, using a hickory-shafted club and gutta percha ball specially built by club designer Karsten Solheim. Snead swung and both the gutty and clubhead went flying.

"Did either of them get on the green?" Snead asked dryly. He found the ball and got it up and down for his 3.

Oakhurst is certainly an acquired taste. Its postage-stamp greens are slow and grainy and stymies (where you leave your ball blocking your opponent's path to the hole instead of courteously marking it) are still allowed. Its fairways are fescue and clover clipped by a dozen sheep, and golfers are allowed free drops from sheep droppings. The course, just 2,235 yards par 37 (with the longest hole just 318 yards), is played with reproduction hickory-shafted clubs and gutta percha balls available from the pro shop. A booming drive goes 150 yards.

WHEN BIGGER'S BETTER—AND NOT

Nine-hole courses improved by the addition of another nine

Prairie Dunes CC,
Hutchinson, Kan.

Crumpin-Fox Club,
Bernardston, Mass.

GC at Devils
Tower, *Hulett, Wyo.*

Rifle Creek GC,
Rifle, Colo.

Nine-hole courses that lost charm when expanded to 18

Rich Harvest Links,
Sugar Grove, Ill.

Rolling Rock Club,
Ligonier, Pa.

Bodega Harbor GL,
Bodega Bay, Calif.

Sea Ranch GL,
Sea Ranch, Calif.

Hillcrest G&CC,
Batesville, Ind.

—R.W.

Where Oakhurst is a relatively accurate reproduction, Wawashkamo GC on Michigan's Mackinac Island is the real deal. It dates from 1898 and is the oldest continuously played course in the state. It's flat and dry with cross hazards, tall fescue roughs and tiny greens edged by "chocolate drops" and other sorts of mounds. (The circus ring around the par-4 third green has to be seen to be believed.) At just 2,999 yards par 36, it's also meant to be played with hickory-shafted clubs and gutta percha balls available on site. Irrigated only by rain, it is maintained almost organically, and a lot of the mowing is done by horse-drawn equipment.

Another turn-of-the-past-century delight is Marion GC on the southern coast of Massachusetts, west of Cape Cod. It was the first design of George C. Thomas

Jr., who would later move to California and give us Los Angeles CC, Riviera and Bel-Air. Compared to those, Marion is primitive, reflective of the steeplechase style of golf prevalent in 1906. Holes intersect with old boundary-marker stone walls, walls so numerous that the land must have been shared by several landholders. Some walls have been covered with earth, up to five feet high on the 175-yard third, where a narrow slot provides both a view of the green and a walkway to it. A rock wall on the 115-yard ninth is the leading edge of a high, flashed-sand bunker, with the green hiding behind it. Try designing that in this age of litigation. (Marion's scorecard, by the way, reads, "Play at Own Risk!") A half dozen years ago I wrote, "Marion is not Merion. The grass is a mish-mash of turf and weeds. Some fairways are spongy. The greens putt slow. And I highly recommend it." I still do, just for the sheer novelty of it.

MASS APPEAL

Whitinsville GC is a time capsule never buried, and its holes, especially the par-4 ninth, remind us why Ross architecture is so enduring.



Would you prefer a taste of the Roaring Twenties? According to its scorecard, Granada GC in Coral Gables (built in 1925 by Bill Langford) is the oldest operating nine-hole course in Florida. Its dead-flat fairways are common Bermuda grass and not much wider than the boulevards edging every hole. There are a few angular mounds (remnants of huge cop bunkers), a few big umbrella-like banyans, and an obligatory pink stucco clubhouse. Play it, and you expect to see flappers cruising by in big Packards with bubble-shaped fenders, their horns going “aoogha-aoogha.”

Over in San Francisco, its classic 1920s layouts—Olympic, Harding Park and California GC of S.F.—have all drastically thinned out the dense cypress trees that once turned fairways into hallways. So to gain any sense of the claustrophobia that honed the talents of greats such as Ken Venturi and Johnny Miller, the only option these days is to play Gleneagles GC at McLaren Park. OK, this nine-holer of 3,006 yards par 36, wasn't built until 1962, but it was designed in an old-fashioned style by Jack Fleming, who back in the '20s built courses for Alister MacKenzie and later oversaw Frisco's public golf operation. With wall-to-wall tree limbs, side-slope fairways, soggy greens and the damndest sharp dogleg left at the 320 mark on the 577-yard sixth, Gleneagles is, yes, a San Francisco treat. If this were in just a little better part of town, it would be a tourist attraction, even at nine holes.

Sad to say, the Great Depression still exists at Chicago's Sydney R. Marovitz GC, hard against Lake Michigan in Lincoln Park just north of the Loop. A 1932 Ed Dearie design (originally called Waveland), it's a solid nine of 3,240 yards

par 36 with elevated greens guarded by deep, flat-bottomed bunkers whose true dimensions aren't clear until you walk up to them. Every hole runs more or less north or south and is harassed by constant lakefront winds. There's even a pond in play. It's the grand old clubhouse behind the ninth green that's the relic of Hard Times. After a recent round there, I asked in the pro shop for directions to the men's room and was sent around the corner into the mammoth old locker room. On each door of at least 15 toilet stalls hung clothing, and standing before a wash basin was an older man, buck naked, washing clothes in the sink. Turns out he's one of several homeless men who frequent the clubhouse. “We can't stop them,” the pro told me. “All we ask is that they don't bother the customers.”

ordinary design, spiced up considerably by its ocean views.

Even worse is Great Dunes GC in Jekyll Island, Ga., a disappointment for anyone who's seen old photos of the original course, an 18-hole millionaires' hideaway called Jekyll Island GC. In the early 1900s, it was perhaps the first true links in America, with rollicking fairways and saddle greens amidst raw, breathtaking sand dunes, separated from the Atlantic and its breezes by only a ridgeline. Most of that is gone now, the oceanfront holes replaced by a highway, the remainder abandoned for years before being reclaimed from weeds by the state government in the 1950s. Most of the duneslike topography seems pushed away by road graders, leaving only hints of linksland. It has

CALIFORNIA SWEET

(Below) Olympic? Harding Park? Nope, it's Gleneagles in San Francisco. (Right) Like a fine Napa Valley wine, the par-3 fourth at Aetna Springs is complex, with more than a hint of oak.



Not every bone-dry throwback nine-hole course is charming. Highland GL atop a bluff overlooking the Atlantic on the hook of Cape Cod, may sport Scotch broom, a ninth hole painted by artist Donald Moss back in the 1970s and a lighthouse that dates from the 18th century, but frankly it's a pretty

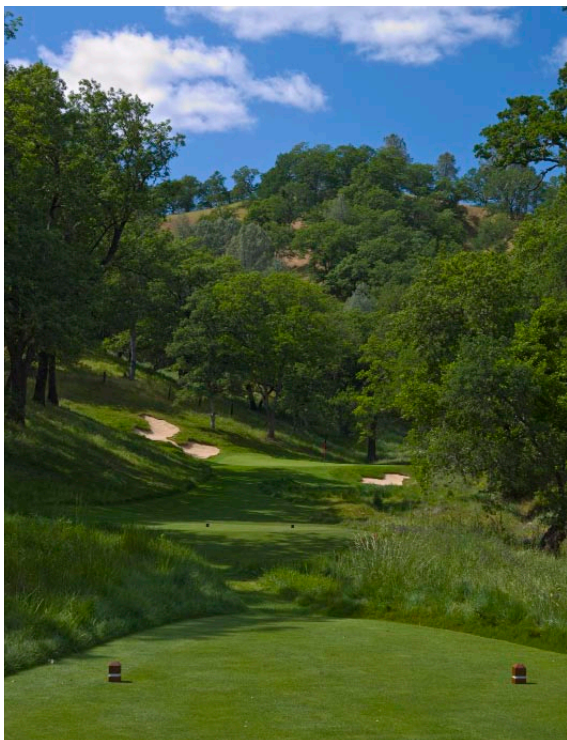
ridiculously small oval greens where winds (and existing green pads) dictate large ones, a few tiny oval bunkers and a curious lagoon short of the second green. It is overhyped, from its misleading new name to the insistence that it represents the architecture of Walter Travis when no evidence of

such architecture exists. Great Dunes is what gives nine-hole courses a bad reputation.

Most Nine-Hole Courses Need The Business

In lauding the virtues of little Phoenixville (Pa.) CC (a nine-holer by Hugh Wilson, who also authored Merion), golf writer Michael Bamberger recently posed, "Maybe the future of golf, in these crowded times, is its past."

We can hope so. Most nine-hole clubs are older; have little debt service and thus are less likely to be foreclosed. But they also have far few members. (Part of the reason why you hardly ever need a tee time to play a nine-hole course, and can zip around it in record time, is that few golfers play nine-hole courses anymore.)



So even a low-budget nine-hole club can fail. Midway GC, a nine-hole sandgreens layout near Inman, Kan., gained national exposure as the subject of a chapter in Anthony Pioppi's fine 2006 book *To The Nines*, just about the only book devoted to nine-hole courses. But the club lost so many members (who

doubled as volunteer maintenance workers) that it had to close at the end of 2007.

Happily, there are some new projects involving nine-hole courses. Last year, designer Garrett Gill finished the nine-hole Pheasant Links, on the site of old substandard Arrowhead GC just north of the Iowa-Minnesota border; rearranging holes and perching them above the flood zone of adjacent State Line Lake. With a lodge on site, game bird hunting is the primary theme at Pheasant Links. Even the golf carts are of camouflage color, with gun racks.

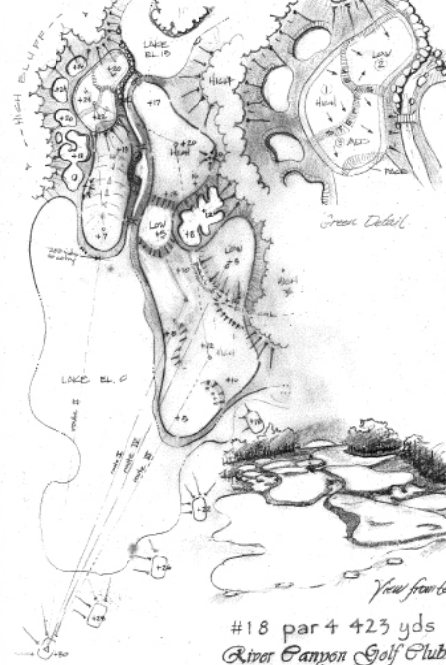
In northern New Jersey, Roger Rulewich finished the nine-hole Cascades GC for the owners of Ballyowen and Wild Turkey. In North Dakota, East Coast architects Stephen Kay and Doug

Smith converted the sand greens of Kulm CC to grass ones, which they patterned (in smaller dimensions) after famous putting surfaces such as the Redan, Punchbowl and Biarritz.

And in Northern California wine country, Tom Doak (of Pacific Dunes/Cape Kidnappers fame) and his lead associate, Jim Urbina, recently completed the total refashioning of the old nondescript Aetna Springs GC (once owned by Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church), transforming it into an inspired nine that requires a full repertoire of shots, its charm vividly displayed on the 134-yard par-3 fourth, tucked above a stream bed in a seam between two oak-dotted hills. Alas, the club is on life support at the present time, a bank

foreclosure and auction of the course a distinct possibility.

The future of golf may well involve talented architects producing modest, inexpensive nine-hole courses that are fun to play. But for them to survive, golfers need to accept nine holes as a legitimate round of golf. **GW**



2010

Lido Competition

If the \$3,000 grand prize isn't enough to convince you to enter the 2010 Lido Competition, the annual golf design contest co-sponsored by Golf World and the Alistair MacKenzie Society, then consider this: If this year's winner attends the MacKenzie Society annual meeting at Ireland's Cork GC Aug. 21-24, he or she will receive a bonus \$2,000 to help defray travel expenses.

And if that's still not enough, permit us to suggest one more reason: winning the Lido Prize can lead to even bigger and better things.

Our prime example is **Thad Layton**, who won the 2003 Lido Prize for his original hole design (pictured above) which, as all entries must do, utilized the design philosophy of Dr. MacKenzie within the confines of a two-shot par 4. Back in '06, Layton was a "CADD monkey" for Arnold Palmer Course Design Co., doing computer design and graphics. Today, Layton is a golf architect for Palmer and has worked on, among other projects, the renovations of Pebble Beach (for this year's U.S. Open), Bay Hill in Orlando (for this year's Arnold Palmer Invitational) and The Bridges in Bay St. Louis, Miss., where he first got involved in the golf business as a grunt laborer in 1996.

Layton will serve as this year's judge for the Lido Competition, the first time a former winner has ever judged the contest.

The Lido Competition is based upon a magazine design contest won by Dr. MacKenzie in 1914. His winning hole, a par 4 with triple avenues of play, was later constructed by contest founder C.B. Macdonald on his Lido Golf Club on Long Island, N.Y. Sadly, the course, and hole, did not survive World War II.

AS IN PREVIOUS LIDO CONTESTS, ENTRANTS ARE RESTRICTED TO A HAND-DRAWN DESIGN, ON PAPER NOT LARGER THAN 11"X17," ALONG WITH ONE SHEET OF SUPPORTING EXPLANATION. ONE ENTRY PER CONTESTANT. AN ENTRY FORM IS REQUIRED. ENTRY BLANKS, AS WELL AS A FULL SET OF RULES, MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING almalido@sbcglobal.net OR ONLINE AT www.golfdigest.com/golfworld.lido DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ALL ENTRIES IS APRIL 1, 2010. NO FOOLING. THE WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY MAY 1, 2010. —RW