

Atlantic City Country Club

One of the East's Great Facilities

By JOHN TORSIELLO

History, quality and atmosphere. Those are three key ingredients that make Atlantic City Country Club in Northfield, N.J. one of the most significant clubs and courses in the Northeast.

The club was founded in 1897, and has the distinction of being the home of many firsts, such as being acknowledged as the "Birthplace of the Birdie," and also where the term "Eagle" was coined. Six USGA championships have been played at the club's legendary and beautiful course. The club's professional at the time, Johnny J. McDermott, became the first American to win the U.S. Open in 1911. The great Babe Didrikson Zaharias captured the first of her three USGA Women's Open titles at the club in 1948, and Don January won the inaugural PGA Senior Tour event played here in 1980.

The "Atlantic City Country Club Bell" was originally used in the early 1900's to remind golfers and other members that the last trolley was about to leave for Atlantic City. The club still rings the bell at the end of each day.

The club was purchased from the Fraser family by Park Place Entertainment, and Tom Doak was commissioned to supervise a complete renovation of the layout, while maintaining the course's tradition of fast and firm greens and sweeping vistas of the Atlantic City skyline that is located only minutes away.

For the first several years of ownership by Park Place Entertainment and Caesars Entertainment, the ACCC operated as a resort

course. In 2005, under the current ownership of the world's largest gaming company, Harrah's Entertainment, the course was open on a limited basis to the general public for daily fee play. Management and the grounds staff keep the course in Tour-like condition.

"We strive for year-round consistency with playing conditions," says Charles Fahy, PGA member and director of operations at ACCC. "We are confident customers will be satisfied with the Tour-like conditions. Over the winter, we did some clubhouse renovations keeping in mind the history and integrity of the club.

ACCC has won a number of prestigious awards, including being named the Number One Daily Fee Course in New Jersey and one of the Top Overall Courses in the State. In 2001, the club was named by *Turnstiles Golf and Travel* magazine as one of America's Best 40 Resort Courses, the only resort course in New Jersey to make the list and the only course north of Virginia and east of Illinois to earn the honor.

John Reid, Willie Park, Jr., Howard C. Toomey and William S. Flynn, in addition to Doak, have laid skilled hands to the ACC course design. Some 6,575 yards from the tips, the slope is 128 with a par of 70.

The layout starts with a beast of a par-four, a 450-yarder that rates as the seventh toughest hole on the track. It begins with a forced carry over water that leaves a long iron to a well-protected green. Tee shots missing the first fairway often find the deep rough to the left and or a large fairway bunker on the right.

The course lightens up a bit for the next

three holes--two short par-fours and a short par-three--before passing through perhaps its toughest stretch at holes five, six and seven.

Although short, the very good 353-yard third requires an accurate tee shot to avoid out of bounds to the right and a massive fairway bunker that is strategically placed down the entire left side of the fairway. A good tee shot and you're left with a mid- or short-iron approach to an elevated green that is protected by bunkers on three sides.

The back nine features holes that wind along marshland. Hole 14 is a scenic, short par-four he measures only 339 yards from the tips. But the tee shot is over a salt marsh and more aggressive swings bring a greater portion of the marsh into play. A conservative shot is a long-iron off the tee left of the salt marsh, which will leave you a short-iron approach to the undulating, two-tiered green.

The 432-yard par-four 18th is aptly named "Trolley" after the vehicle that once brought guests back to Atlantic City following their rounds and perhaps a quick cocktail on the club's veranda. Enjoy the view as you stroll up the 18th and toward the clubhouse that stands majestically behind then green.

"We had a great year at ACCC in 2009, considering the industry numbers and economy," says Fahy.

The club has a new membership program with full membership costing \$6,500 a year, family membership \$8,500, junior membership \$1,200, weekday (Monday through Thursday) membership \$3000, and social membership \$495.

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