

By, JOHN TORSIELLO

ATLANTIC CITY COUNTRY CLUB

Remains at the Center of New Jersey Golf



Atlantic City Country

Club in Northfield, N.J. has historically been at the forefront of sporting life in the Garden State, indeed the country, for over 100 years.

The venerable club, founded in 1897, enjoys the distinction of being the acknowledged “Birthplace of the Birdie” and also where the term “Eagle” was coined.

No fewer than six USGA championships have been played at the club’s legendary and stunningly beautiful course. In fact, the club’s professional at the time, Johnny J. McDermott, became the first American to win the USGA Championship in 1911 at the tender age of 19. The great Babe Didrikson Zaharias captured the first of her three USGA Women’s Open titles at the club in 1948 when fans paid a whopping \$2.50 to watch the final round on Sunday and see the best female players in the land battle for the \$7,500 purse put up by 55 Atlantic City businessmen. In addition, Don January won the inaugural PGA Senior Tour event played here in 1980.

Still gracing the premises in a notable nod to the club’s storied past is the “Atlantic City Country Club Bell,” which was originally

used in the early 1900’s to remind golfers perhaps too caught up in their matches that the last trolley was about to leave for Atlantic City. The club still rings the bell at the end of each day, a fitting tribute to those who once prowled the fairways here and to those who take such delight in playing the course today.

The club was purchased from the Fraser family by Park Place Entertainment, which quickly set about adding a new luster to the grand dame of Atlantic City golf courses. Tom Doak supervised 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, open to the casino’s high rollers. 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. The reception was nothing short of

spectacular.

“A lot of clubs like

to bill themselves as country clubs

for a day to the daily fee player,” said Charles Fahy, director of golf operations. “But here at Atlantic City Country Club we truly are that. We keep the course in tour-like condition and everything we do harkens back to the great tradition and integrity the club became known for. We are building upon that, and always try and improve what we offer.”

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.

What ACCC offers is not only a magical place to play golf, where one can face the same shots and putts that Walter Travis, Sam Snead, Bob Hope and Arnold Palmer faced, but also a first class clubhouse, a dining facility and other fine amenities. “The King” also played the course fairly regularly in 1951



and 1952 when he was a relatively unknown enlisted man in the U.S.

Coast Guard and stationed nearby.

“We have done everything to enhance our dining experience for our guests,” said Fahy. “We are open for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and our Sunday Brunches have been very well received. We treat everyone who visits like a member of a high end club.”

The gleaming centerpiece of ACCC is its course. John Reid, Willie Park, Jr., Howard C. Toomey and William S. Flynn, in addition to Doak, have laid skilled hands to its design. Only 6,577 yards from the tips, the slope is 128 with a course rating of 72 (par is 70), which gives you an indication of the demands this beauty places on placement off the tees and short game management on and around the difficult greens.

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 sixth hole is a 592-yard tester that is a true three-shot hole except for the longest hitters. It’s rated as the number one handicap hole.

The ninth hole is named “Adirondack,” after the comfortable chairs located under cedar trees surrounding the green. This 452-yard, dogleg left par-four is perhaps the toughest hole on the course. A long hitter can try and cut the distance down by playing the ball over a large bunker guarding the left side of the fairway. But hit into the trap and you will be hard-pressed to make four because trees guard the left side approach to the putting surface. A more conservative attempt to find the short grass is recommended. A tee shot to the right of the fairway bunker will leave an open, long-iron shot into the heavily bunkered green.

The back nine features holes

that wind along marshland. There are two par-fives, including the number two handicap hole, the 553-yard 13th, three good par-threes and four par-fours.

Hole 14 is a wonderfully scenic, short par-four measuring 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-tired green. The teeing area on this hole is set on a peninsula in Lakes Bay and affords a scintillating view of Atlantic City.

Hole 18 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. Another long par-four, 432 yards, the hole usually plays into the wind. Large fairway bunkers line both sides of the hole and the best tee shot is one to the left portion of the landing area as it will help you avoid large trees that guard an approach shot from the right side of the fairway. The approach is uphill slightly to a two-tired green. Enjoy the view as you stroll up the 18th and toward the clubhouse that stands majestically behind then green.

“One of the attractions of our club that there is no other like it in the area and we are only a 10 or 15 minute drive from Atlantic City,” says Fahy. “We have a relatively small active membership with a limited number of spots available for new members.”

For further information visit www.accountryclub.com , call Fahy at 609-236-4415 or write to him at cfahy@harrahs.com.

