



Club Focus Double Your Pleasure

The two courses at Canoe Brook have witnessed decades of changes and hosted dozens of famous golfers over the years

BY REED RICHARDSON

Situated atop the Watchung Hills that overlook Manhattan, just 20 miles to the east, Canoe Brook Country Club has provided families in northern New Jersey a welcome retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life for more than a century. And from the very beginning, golf has played a significant role in the life of its club members. This summer, Canoe Brook adds yet another historic chapter to its legacy when it hosts the 91st Met Open Championship from August 22–24.

The Early Days

As the 20th century dawned, a group of prominent businessmen from Summit, New Jersey, decided they would build a country club on an idyllic, 133-acre site known as the Canoe Brook Meadows, named after the largest of the creeks that ran through it. Jack

Vickery, assistant to golf equipment maven Frank Slazenger, and Alex Smith, who went on to win the 1906 and 1910 U.S. Opens, were hired to transform the gently rolling landscape into a championship-caliber golf course. The 18 holes that opened one year later gained a reputation as a stern test of golf, and the club became a member of the USGA in 1905 and the MGA in 1909.

Soon after a 1916 Walter Travis renovation that lengthened the course some 500 yards, golf's increasing popularity among the club members prompted Canoe Brook to build a second 18 holes. In 1924, Canoe Brook opened the South Course, designed by the

The 17th hole on Canoe Brook's North Course is part of a masterly finishing stretch.

noted golf architecture team of Charles Alison and H.S. Colt, but its narrow fairways and gnarly rough were far from a hit with Canoe Brook members. Indeed, within a year the club voted 10 to 1 in favor of selling off the South Course, and only a concerted effort by a few foresighted members saved it from extinction.

To redeem a course that club members had taken to calling the “incorrigible monster,” Canoe Brook brought in Major R. Avery

Jones, the greenskeeper at nearby Baltusrol Golf Club, to redesign the South’s greens and cut back the rough and encroaching trees. By 1930, Jones’ efforts had been judged a smashing success and the South Course quickly surpassed its older sibling in preeminence. As evidence of the South’s rising pedigree, the USGA tapped it to host the 1936 U.S. Women’s Amateur and, that same year, Ben Hogan used the course as his final warm-up in preparation for the U.S. Open at Baltusrol (a tactic he repeated before the 1954 U.S. Open).

BEN SUTTON GOLF SCHOOL

WHY TRY TO IMPROVE YOUR GAME ON A DRIVING RANGE WHEN THE GAME IS PLAYED OUT ON A COURSE?

Personalized instruction under actual playing conditions and situations—that’s the key to lasting improvement. Ben Sutton’s 50-acre Learning Center is dedicated solely to golf instruction.

Ben Sutton is the only school in the world that provides full-time, real situation golf instruction. You can’t get it at your local club, in playing lessons or at any of the driving range schools. Our staff of LPGA and PGA Professionals work within your natural ability to help you reach your goals.

Get a solid start on your game or take it to the next level by attending one of our 3, 5 or 7-day sessions.



Our Learning Center allows you to learn to play real shots from real tees, fairways, rough, and bunkers, over and around water to real greens.



**REAL CONDITIONS. REAL SITUATIONS.
REAL RESULTS. ONLY AT BEN SUTTON.**

www.bensutton.com

1-800-225-6923

The Current Courses

During the latter half of the club’s existence, golf at Canoe Brook might best be described as a Dickensian tale of two courses. Starting with the post-World War II boom and extending through the early 1990s, one course was almost always enjoying record-high rounds and terrific playing conditions while the other was either being renovated or rerouted.

The most significant of the long list of course changes occurred in 1950, when the club agreed to swap the land beneath seven holes of the North Course (land now occupied by the Mall at Short Hills) for an equal amount of acreage closer to the clubhouse. “As a result, we picked up a new third, fourth, and 13th through 18th, some very fine holes,” says long-time Canoe Brook member Bill Carlough. Likewise, a widening of the Morris Turnpike (New Jersey Route 24) in the late 1960s and early 1970s necessitated extensive revisions to both courses. During this period, course designers Alfred Tull, Hal Purdy, Robert Trent Jones, Sr. and his son, Rees, all had a hand in shaping Canoe Brook’s layouts.

“As a result, the North Course is now the more difficult of the two,” says Canoe Brook head professional Greg Lecker, adding that the North’s course rating and slope (74.8 and 138) are higher than the South’s (73.2 and 133). “It’s pretty straightforward, without all the doglegs you’ll find on the South. But the greens appear more subtle yet actually have a lot more break, and the fairway bunkers and rough are penal.”

Despite the North’s admitted

advantage, however, Lecker still names two of the par fives on the South Course, numbers eight and 11, as the most difficult holes at Canoe Brook. "They're both true par fives that run side by side," he explains. "For 98 percent of golfers, it takes three really good shots to get on the green. So, a birdie or even a par on these holes means you're having a really good day." On the North Course, Lecker prefers to tout the final third of the course rather than single out one particular hole for praise. "From 13 on, every hole is a championship hole," he says.

Championship History

Canoe Brook has hosted three national championship tournaments: the 1936, 1983 and 1990 U.S. Women's Amateurs. Of these three, the first continues to stand out. Not only was that event won by the then-reigning British Women's Amateur champion Pam Barton – making her only the second golfer in history to win both titles in the same year – it also marked one of the first appearances of a freckle-faced 18-year-old named Patty Berg, as well as a skinny 17-year-old named Betty Jameson, both of whom went on to become founding members of the LPGA and earn induction into the LPGA Hall of Fame.

Over the years, Canoe Brook has grown in stature and become a frequent stop on the local and regional tournament circuit and, more recently, a popular qualifying site for major championships. "We're always trying to give back to golf," says George Thompson, Canoe Brook's current club president. "Whether it's hosting Met Amateurs, New Jersey Opens, or qualifiers for the U.S. and British Opens, we try to focus on sharing our courses for the good of the game."

As the site of the 2006 U.S. Open Sectional Qualifying on June 5, the club was suddenly thrust into the international media spotlight when 16-year-old golf phenom Michelle Wie tried to play her way into the U.S. Open. More than 5,000 fans and 250 members of the media turned out to see if Wie could make golf history, but in the end Canoe Brook's tricky greens proved too

difficult as she finished five strokes short of earning a spot. Nevertheless, her poise and professionalism did win some converts, among them Canoe Brook's Lecker. "Michelle is mature beyond her years," said Lecker, who spent time with Wie and watched her play. "There's no doubt she belongs in championship golf. It's just a matter of time before she has a better putting tournament and then look out."



The Golf Fitness Experts™

Body Balance for Performance® is the complete golf health and fitness training program, individually designed for you to Feel Better and Play Better Golf.

Power



You will learn how your Body is affecting your swing and what you can do to correct it.

Distance



3R Training™ approach

Accuracy

• **Release**
Using manual therapy techniques, the certified Golf Fitness Specialist releases muscle tissue in areas that limit your flexibility and range of motion within your golf swing.

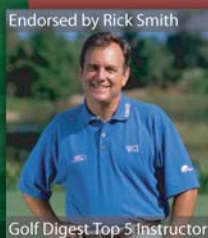
Consistency

Flexibility



• **Re-educate**
Once you achieve your optimum degree of flexibility and range of motion, you must now have the ability to control your swing. The Golf Fitness Specialist guides you through proven golf-specific exercises that reinforce the use of your new mobility.

No Pain



• **Rebuild**
Now that you are comfortable in your new mobility, the Golf Fitness Specialist strengthens your body to enable you to make a consistent, safe, repeatable golf swing.

GOLF FITNESS LOCATIONS

Hawthorne
153 Broadway, Suite 200
Hawthorne, NY 10532
914-773-2145

Darien
264 Heights Rd
Darien, CT 06820
203-655-6464

Bayshore
225 Howells Rd
Bayshore, NY 11706
631-665-4560

Roslyn
55 Bryant Ave, 2nd Floor
Roslyn, NY 11576
516-484-9775



Majestic trees and a wide bunker frame the dogleg of the second hole on the South Course.

The Future

This August, Canoe Brook will host the Met Open for first time since 1923, when Bob MacDonald trounced “Long” Jim Barnes by ten strokes in an 18-hole playoff. This time around, however, golfers will have to contend with the South Course’s many doglegs and elevation changes as well as a much longer North Course if they wish to succeed. And though navigating Canoe Brook’s two distinctly different courses may pose a much greater challenge for tournament competitors, club members can be forgiven for thinking of it as enjoying the best of both worlds. “Every time I go out to play Canoe Brook I feel fortunate,” says member Bill Carlough. “That’s because I can choose between two golf courses that are among the finest in the Met Area, and what can be wrong with that?” We like to think – nothing at all. ■

GOLF-ART.COM
FINE ART PRINTS - GIFTS - AWARDS & CUSTOM FRAMING

(203) 438-8989 RT. 7 RIDGEFIELD, CT (800) 283-3344