

# WOODSTOCK

## Best Golf Clubs

**T**owards the end of October, most sporting Vermonters have abandoned thoughts of swinging clubs and tend to concentrate more on the coming ski season. Golf courses prepare for shut-down as the foliage fades, and often only the true golfing diehards are capable and willing to face the wind, rain, and chill of the fall. Still, good days emerge that reward the patience of the Vermont golfer, granting soft greens and uncrowded courses. It was on such a day—bright and warm—that I visited two of the most prestigious clubs in the state, The Quechee Club and Woodstock Country Club.

Impeccably groomed and nurtured, even at the end of the season where top dressing and green irrigation is the norm, these courses define the best that Vermont golf has to offer. The Woodstock Country Club remains a scenic gem that caters to all types of golfers. Quaintly nestled in the Kedron Valley, the course, remodeled in 1963 by Robert Trent Jones, is very flat and somewhat short at 5,555 yards from the white tees. The course transpires tight while trees appear in abundance. Club selection is the first key as the Kedron Brook runs throughout the course, starting on the third hole. A booming drive from the tee will cross the brook and leave the golfer with a short iron to a beautifully elevated green that is protected by bunkers on either side and tucked in by a flock of evergreens in the rear. Playing safe and laying up will leave the golfer with two long irons from tee to green.

On the fourth hole, the most difficult on the course, the golfer will encounter the second key to playing Woodstock—



avoiding the fairway bunkers. These sand traps, filled with white sand flown in from Bermuda in 1963, are strategically placed on ten fairways, requiring the golfer to maintain consistent accuracy. Adding to the difficulty of the fourth is a bitterly narrow fairway no more than 30 yards wide. The fifth hole (134-yard par 3) is deceptively tough. Long and slender, the green defends itself by displaying the brook, in front and to the right, and a steep embankment on the left that can hang up any approach shot that strays ever so slightly. The brook again runs in front of the green on the par-5 sixth, but besides that small distraction the hole plays without trouble. The rest of the front nine plays without much adversity except on the ninth, where the fairway is flanked by two bunkers on each side.

The back nine consists of three par 3s and one par 5, totaling Woodstock out at a par 69. The sloping green on the tenth hole is shaped tightly like an hourglass and, depending on the pin placement, can present a treacherous putting predicament. The 12th hole resembles the fourth in layout and difficulty. A taut fairway (20 yards wide) and the Kedron Brook to the left repels your drive towards the right side fairway bunkers. A perfect tee shot will still leave a low- to middle-iron to the pin, where the brook hazard comes back into play as it weaves from the front to right side of the green. Out of bounds stakes to the left of the green add further to the precision needed in reaching this green.

The 15th hole (144-yard par 3) lies short and sweet. The brook tumbles along in front of the green and is backed by a picturesque stone wall that causes even the most serious of golfers to stop and marvel. The long ball comes back into play for the final three holes with the eighteenth hole, at 396 yards—the longest par 4 on the course.

THE QUECHEE CLUB boasts two separate courses and the only 36-hole layout in the state. As we embarked on the Highland Course for our morning round we stopped at the starter's booth and asked Dorian Jones whether to start at the white or blue tees. "Play the blues," he said, "they'll

knock you out." So off we went toting our double-digit handicaps onto a course wielding one of the toughest ratings in the state (73.1).

The variety and difficulty of the Geoffrey Cornish-designed layouts is evident early on in the front nine of the Highland Course. The second, third, and fourth holes slope viciously from left to right while out-of-bounds stakes line the higher left side. The 445-yard third (421 yards from the whites) is a monster. The longest par 4 on either the Highland or Lakeland course, it places a high premium on what the golfer will need most: well-struck, accurate tee shots.

The fifth hole, a 500-yard par 5, compensates the aggressive golfer who makes it past a nasty gully that pulls left towards the woods, while simultaneously avoiding the large bunkers that surround the green. Nestled amongst a cove of pines the green is a magnificent sight, with a thigh-high

stone wall in the background adding to the pleasure of the eye.

The sights continue on the sixth and seventh holes as the rolling waters of the Ottauquechee River come into view. The sixth is a charmer. A good drive along the right side will find a string of funky-looking, hard-packed sand dunes that funnel the ball very close to the green. While the excitement of finally getting close off the drive tends to set in, a surgeon's touch is required to avoid duffing or sculling off the hard-packed surface. The majestic eighth hole (241-yard par 3 over the river) again sets a stern test off the tee and like the ninth is hemmed in by an abundance of bunkers.

The back nine on the Highland mirrors the front in length and beauty. It commences with out of bounds to the left on ten and eleven, affectionately known as the road holes. The 12th is a pretty par 3

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## Quechee Club Taking New Directions

The Quechee Club home to two of Vermont's championship golf courses, is gearing up to gain more notoriety as a prime vacation and business and convention destination. The real estate market, the hospitality industry, and the club's marketing efforts all play vital roles in this procession. Bill Dwyer of the Quechee Landowners Association says that of the 2,500 units, (condominiums, homes, and cluster homes), only 1,300 are currently filled. Although there is no active development, Dwyer feels that the area, once discovered, will sell itself. Lots range from \$4,000 to \$50,000 with amenities built to accommodate. "We're significantly undersized right now," he says "but through our advertising and direct mail campaigns we hope to stimulate activity."

There are a number of golf packages available for the 1992 season. The Parker House, the Quechee Inn at Marshfield Farm, the Friendship Inn, and the Quechee Bed and Breakfast all offer golf packages through the Quechee Club. The club also encourages conventions and business meetings as another potential market. Quechee sees Canada, from Toronto to Quebec, as a geographic market that could bring visitors to the area.

A variety of charity tournaments have added to the Quechee Club's visibility in recent years. With the help of many, and especially club pro Bob Lenzion, Quechee raised a total of \$80,000 this past year. The Make-A-Wish Foundation raised \$10,000, while the New England Open alone brought in \$30,000 for the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. This year the club will add the Boy Scout and Coondog Tournaments to its already busy roster. "We're trying to get more people to experience Quechee," Dwyer says. "It's beautifully developed and it's only going to continue to grow in the right direction. A lot depends on the economy, but to keep the two courses up we need to attract more people. After that, people fall in love with the area when they come visit." The two courses, Highland and Lakeland, are widely considered to be two of the best-maintained courses in New England.

The Quechee Club has addressed the current slump by running a strong advertising campaign, by making these two courses more available to homeowners, by involving local businesses, and finally, by initiating a substantial amount of charitable tournaments. Quechee Club is definitely heading in the right direction.



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that sports a deep ravine in front and two mighty, slanted bunkers on the left. Fifteen, the toughest hole on the course, demands distance and accuracy to dodge the fairway bunkers to the right. The 17th hole is another beastly par 3, with green straddled by a large bunker to the left and two smaller ones to the right. The 18th (609-yard par 5), simply stated, is a grueling finishing hole that puts the exclamation point on this awesome, 6,765 yard, par 72 layout.

The Lakeland Course at Quechee can aptly fill a fall afternoon. Without question the top priority is knocking the ball straight and away from the bounty of water that runs throughout the course. From the first tee to the last green, distance and accuracy are essential, just as on the Highland Course. The first hole (438-yard par 4) requires a big blast that must first clear a body of water while also drawing to the left to avoid a set of trees that fill the right side of the fairway. The river runs along the left side of the 407-yard par

4 second hole. A pond on the right side of the green teams up with the river on the left to cause a severe squeeze on the approach shot. The fifth hole (517-yard par 5) contains five bunkers that outline the right side of the fairway and woods that fill the left side making the hole the toughest on the front side.

The back nine begins with unbelievably tight fairways on the 10th, 11th, and 12th holes. The 12th, like most of the holes at the Quechee Club, is beautifully designed with a long body of water to the right and a strand of fairway bunkers lining the left side. Behind the large green sit two backside bunkers. The seventeenth hole (419-yard par 4) is rated the toughest on the course and presents a profusion of trouble. On the left side lies water and on the right side of the fairway hang two bunkers that together with the two left, greenside bunkers send shivers through the savviest of golfers. The 18th, like the finishing hole on the Highland Course, is another grisly par 5 that when completed should leave even the best golfers drained. The Woodstock Country Club course, with its subtle quaintness, and the Quechee Courses, exhaustively demanding, all offer such prolific beauty that one carries the memory away to ponder and relish deep into the winter. Next season will bring a new chance to be challenged by them again. ♦

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# TO ADDRESS YOUR BALL IN WOODSTOCK VERMONT...

Whether you're looking  
for your dream house or

that perfect vacation rental  
property, our expertise can

help you find it. With a  
quarter of a century of

experience and community  
involvement, you won't find  
another real estate office  
more reliable or committed  
to serving your needs, both  
before and after the sale. So  
get to know us... as your  
neighbors and your friends.