

Courses worth playing . . . and why

Raven's Claw GC

Pottstown, PA

Par 71, 4,834-6941 yards,

Ed Shearon, architect

Gene Carpino, head professional

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When Ed Shearon, who has spent his career in environmental design for a broad spectrum of industries, including golf, finished Raven's Claw GC, he was sure he had produced a solid winner for any golfer of any skill level.

He was right.

Over the last five years since Raven's Claw hit the golf scene at its locale just off the busy Rt. 422 corridor west of King of Prussia, this par 72 tract has proven to be a great compliment to the Philadelphia-area golfing scene. It has been ranked by one national publication as one of the Top 10 public golf courses in Pennsylvania.

And why not. It has all sorts of interesting holes that vary from par 5, 526-yard No. 1 hole (named the "Relic") with the crumbling old building on the right hand side of the fairway to the par 3, 137-yard No. 14 (named the "Cathedral") that's all about a delicate wedge shot.

With the five tee boxes, this bentgrass tee to green layout makes it accessible to a golfer of any handicap.

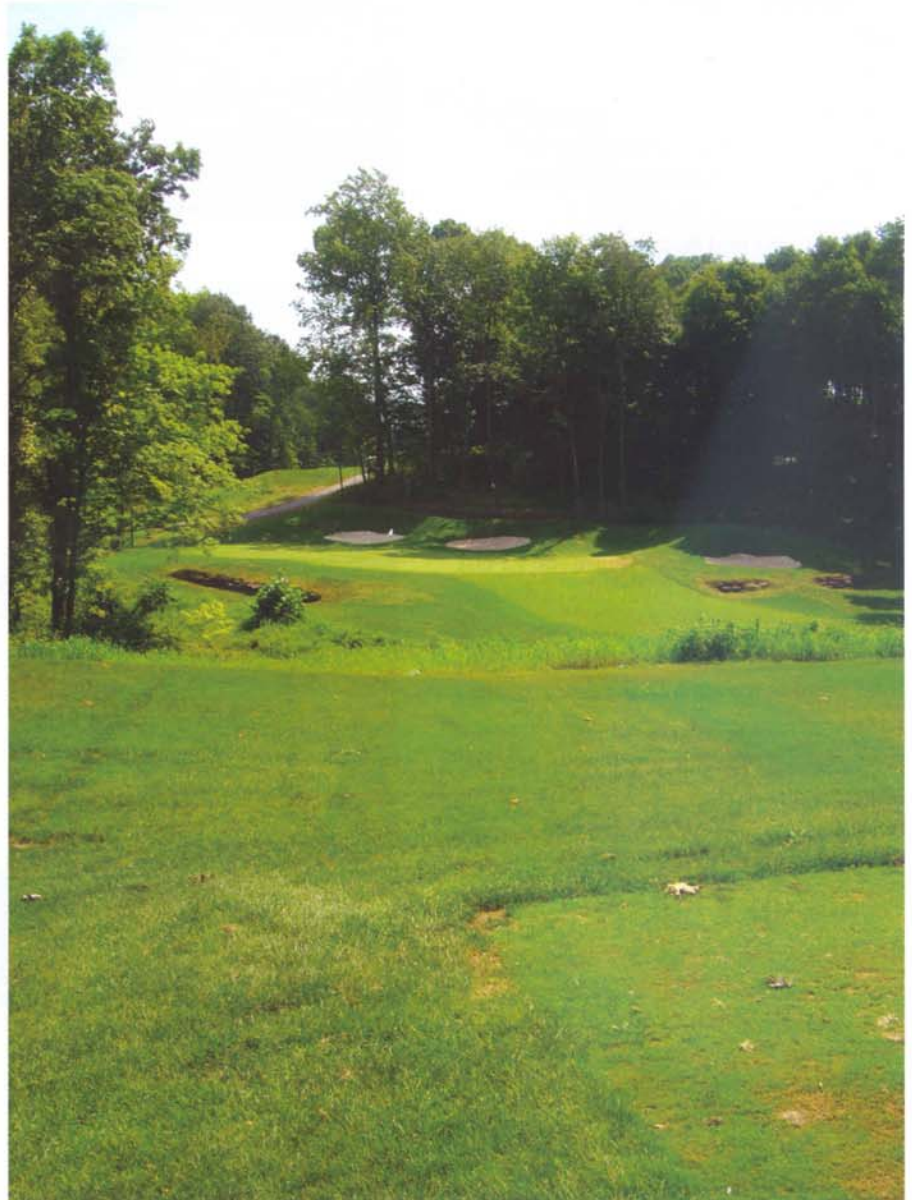
The par 3s, like the aforementioned No. 14, are as an interesting set as you'll find at any golf course. The 209-yard No. 3, the "Waterloo," always plays longer than it looks. Most guys underclub. The 160-yard No. 6 is the easiest of the quartet while the 242-yard, yep, you read it right, No. 17 (somehow, strangely, handicapped at 16; it's tough) usually requires a driver from the majority of golfers, not the kind of thing you want to have in your hand on a par 3.

While the course does have several lengthy par 4s, Raven's Claw offers some interesting, and not-to-easy par 4s, that can play, from the middle tees (where many mid-handicap golfers play from), from lengths like 292, 332, 335, 358 and 342 yards.

The No. 8, named "Short," stretches to only 292 yards, but it requires somewhat of a layup to a position where a short to medium iron must be struck over a hazard to an elevated green that dramatically slopes front to back. A birdie putt could be waiting after two good shots, but this hole can also spell disaster: double bogey, or worse.

Finishing holes can make a course memorable, or even great, especially if you're playing for something besides fun and pride (like money?), and the last three here are good ones.

The 391-yard par 4 No. 16 is rather straight forward and could be classified as a "birdie hole," but then you've got that lo-o-ong par 3 at 17 and then a very interesting No. 18.



The par 3, No. 14 at Raven's Claw GC may be only 137 yards from the tips, but you have to have the right short iron and a good swing to make par here.

It measures 368-yards from the tips, but everything changes if you play it from the middle tees, which makes it 347 yards and provides the golfer with a real decision: Do you play it safe down the left hand side, although a long and left tee shot could put you out of bounds, or do you go straight at the hole, over a daunting hazard and through a group of trees with an opening of, say, 50 yards.

Besides the golf course, Raven's Claw GC has all the bells and whistles. It possesses a beautiful clubhouse (great for weddings, receptions, meetings) as well as a full-stocked and spacious pro-shop and Sheerin's Pub, with a long and comfortable bar with several brews on tap and a restaurant with a menu from burgers to steaks.