

# The Architects of the Gaylord Golf Mecca

By Paul Bairley

**F**or the past century, the rolling hills, lakes and rivers in the Gaylord area have been a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Hunting and fishing, hiking, boating, skiing and sledding were the common activities that drew tourism dollars.

*Photos this page and opposite page: courtesy of Treetops.*



Rick Smith



**Rick Smith's Signature, Treetops, Hole Number 3**



**Rick Smith's Threetops, Treetops, Hole Number 1**

Now, thanks to the natural splendor of the Gaylord area, and the many golf architects that have incorporated these natural features into stunning course designs, the prevalent recreational game in town is golf, and there's plenty of it. The list of courses that comprise the Gaylord Golf Mecca is staggering – The Natural at Beaver Creek, Black Bear, the Black Forest and Valley Course at Wilderness Valley, Black Lake, Elk Ridge, Fox Run, the four courses at Garland, Gaylord Country Club, Deer Run, The Loon, Marsh Ridge, The Lakes and The Pines courses at Michaywe, The Classic and The Tribute at the Otsego Club, Thunder Bay, and the

*Photo opposite page: Natural Golf Architecture*



**Jerry Matthews**



## *Elkridge Golf Course*

four courses at Treetops Resort.

The courses are as diverse as they are many, due in no small part to the personal touches provided by so many renowned golf course architects, such as Robert Trent Jones, Tom Fazio, Jerry Matthews, Tom Doak, Rick Smith, Gary Koch and Mike Husby. One common thread that runs through all of the Gaylord courses is the scenic beauty, featuring panoramic vistas, wetlands, lakes, streams, meadows and deep woods. And seeing this area during the fall color peak will awe you as green hills are converted into a blazing palette of oranges, yellows and reds.

Each course is uniquely different and refreshing, as the architect provides his personal trademark.

*Photo opposite page: Kevin Frisch*



**Mike Husby**



## *The Loon*

Let's take a closer look at just a few of the links.

The Tribute – Otsego Club's newest course, the Tribute opened in 2001 to rave reviews and was designated a Top 10 Best New Course by Sports Illustrated Magazine. Designed by Rick Robbins and PGA tour veteran Gary Koch, the course meanders over a sprawling 1,100 acres in the Sturgeon River Valley. Dramatic elevation changes offer 20-mile panoramic views, as the course winds through towering hardwoods, evergreen forests and pristine wetlands. The Tribute's five sets of tees and huge greens make this breathtaking course

*Photo opposite page: The Umflex Group*



**Gary Koch**

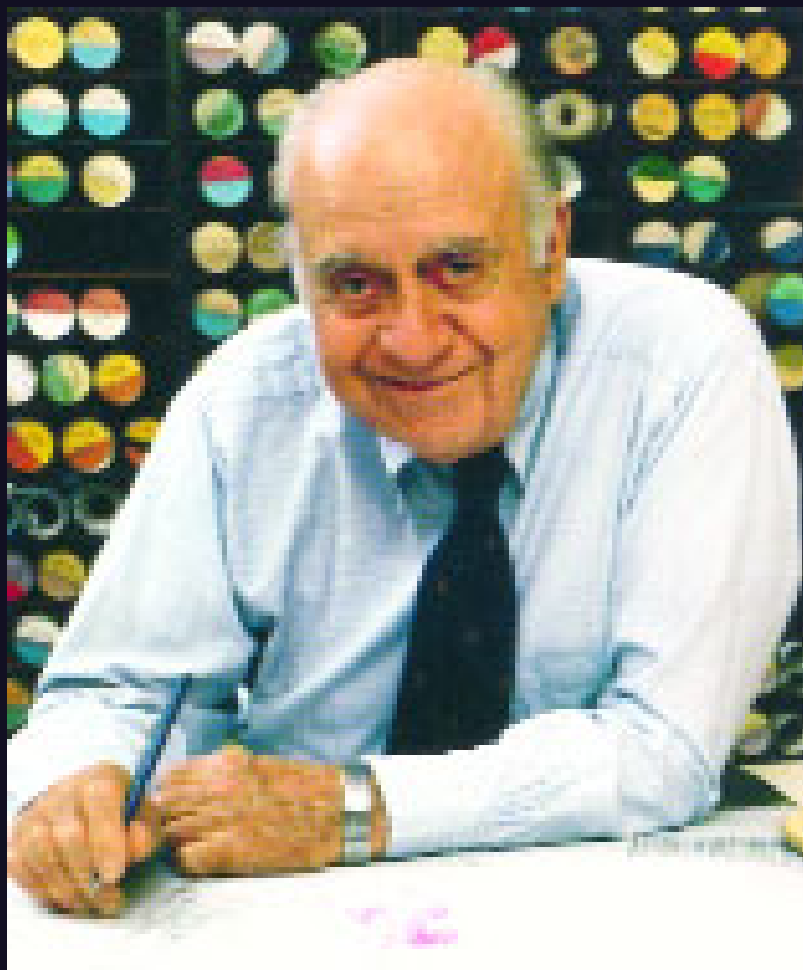


***The Tribute***  
***Otsego Club***



playable for any level of golfer.

Treetops Resort – Treetops is one of the areas most popular resorts, and is ranked in the “Top 75 Golf Resorts in America” by Golf Digest. Treetops features four championship courses, including the Rick Smith Signature course and the Tom Fazio Premiere course, both ranked among the “Top 10 Best Courses in Michigan” by Golfweek. The Signature course combines the northern Michigan landscape with the unique features of Irish links courses, and the Premiere course is the state’s only Tom Fazio design. Add to this the Robert Trent Jones Sr. Masterpiece, which opened in 1987 with the highest slope rating in Michigan (it’s sig-



**Robert Trent Jones**



***The Masterpiece, Hole Number 11***

***Treetops***

nature par 3 sixth hole, overlooking the Pigeon River Valley, inspired Jones to coin the name, “Treetops”), and Rick Smith’s Threetops course, which hosts the Tylenol Par 3 Shootout, and you can see why this golf resort is considered one of the nation’s best.

Black Forest – Tom Doak’s brilliant design is one of two courses at Wilderness Valley. Doak is one of the hottest architects in the business, and he pulled out all the stops in creating this traditional layout over 400 acres of forested valleys and meadows. Black Forest’s large, undulating greens are some of the most challenging in Michigan, and its British-style bunkers are works of art. It opened to numerous accolades, including:

*Photo opposite page: Kevin Frisch*



**Tom Doak**



***Black Forest, Hole Number 1***

Top 4 New Public Courses in America – Golf Digest; Top 50 Modern Courses in the United States – Golfweek; Best Public Course in Northern Michigan – Detroit News; and Best Golf Value in Gaylord – Great Lakes Golf Magazine.

There is simply not enough time to review and compare all of the great architects of Gaylord golf – you will simply have to experience their work yourself at any of the 24 Gaylord Golf Mecca member courses, which generate over 347,000 rounds of golf annually over a 6-month period from May to October. For more information, contact the Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau at [www.gaylordgolfmecca.com](http://www.gaylordgolfmecca.com). **MG**



**Tom Fazio**



***The Premiere, Hole Number 18***

***Treetops***