

New Courses



Hole Number 3 at Sundance

Jerry Matthews and Sundance

By Mike Terrell
Photos by Mike Brown

The golf course construction boom of the 1990s – when the state of Michigan led the nation in new course construction is long over – but that didn't stop A-Ga-Ming Golf Club from forging ahead with the construction of

its second 18-hole course.

The new Sundance course, designed by one of Michigan's best known golf architects Jerry Matthews, is slated to open in early June. It will join the club's other 18-hole course The Torch, which made its debut in 1986.

The Torch was designed by former PGA champion Chick Harbert and

developed by then-owner Bill Siebenthaler.

The new course, which was built just to the west of The Torch, is along the same rolling bluffs that offer such great views of Torch Lake from the present course.

“You'll not only still get some great views of Torch Lake from Sundance, but it's opened up some



Hole Number 16 at Sundance

spectacular views of Grand Traverse Bay as well,” enthused owner Mike Brown, who along with his partner Larry Lively took over the reigns of A-Ga-Ming in 1996. “We saw a need for a second course, interest rates on borrowed money were low, and we forged ahead with the new development.

“We were sending our package customers off to other courses, because golfers like variety,” he explained. “It seemed the right time to develop a second course and offer them more variety at A-Ga-Ming Golf Club instead of sending them off elsewhere.”

The new Sundance course involves a combination of rolling

link-style terrain and northern Michigan hardwoods.

“It’s a very open links-style course that is comparable to Forest Dunes, the Tom Weiskopf course east of Grayling, or Gary Player’s Wolverine at Grand Traverse Resort,” beamed Brown as we discussed the new course. “That’s heady company, but I think they are most like what golfers will experience when they play Sundance.”

With its more open layout Brown feels that it will appeal to a wider segment of the golfing public.

“It’s not as tight as The Torch. The average golfer will be able to spray a few balls around the course, but still be able to recover,”

offered Brown. “It’s a very playable course, even though there is a lot of sand on it.”

Matthews, who’s designed nearly 100 courses with most of them being in Michigan, laid out the course to appeal to a wide variety of golfers.

“This is one of the best properties I’ve worked with,” he told me last summer as we sat on the deck of A-Ga-Ming’s club house overlooking Torch Lake. “I’m constantly surprised at how many places you can be on the golf course where the views are absolutely amazing. I’ve just accentuated what Mother Nature had already put here.”

From the tips the new Sundance



Hole Number 13 at Sundance

course will measure around 7,000 yards down to a very manageable 5,000 yards from the forward tees, according to PGA pro Lavelly.

“We want it to appeal to all skill levels,” he added. “We will have five sets of tees so the golfer can pretty much customize the yardage to a comfortable distance.”

Sundance will feature fescue-covered mounds, wide fairways, large greens, 110 strategically placed bunkers, large ponds, wetlands and a couple of huge waste bunkers.

“The course kind of dazzles you with its views and topography,” added Brown.

Both owners feel that number 17

is probably their signature hole.

“It’s a picturesque 210-yard, par-three playing from tees high atop a wooded ridge that offers wonderful views of Torch Lake,” Brown enthused. “From the tee it drops about 80-some feet onto a large green surrounded by large maples and cedars.”

Hole number nine may be one of the most interesting. The tee-shot is a forced carry over wetlands through a narrow tree-lined chute to reach the fairway, and it’s uphill all the way to the green.

A huge 15-acre practice center will be available later in the summer. It will feature a driving range, putting green, chipping

green and practice bunkers. A new 7,000-square-foot clubhouse is also scheduled to start construction this fall, and they also have approval to build 52 condos around the new course with 10 residential lots located on the north side of the property.

For more information on the scheduled opening of the new Sundance course or to book tee times, call (231) 264-5081 or click on www.a-ga-ming.com. **MG**

Video:

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2004shows/show24/>