

Course Collection FIFTEEN ★ HISTORY MAKER GOLF Championship Golf Game

Summary written by Keith Avallone

Baltus Roll Farm GC, Springfield NJ / based on BALTUSROL GOLF CLUB

Baltus Roll Farm Golf Club is based on the fabulous Baltusrol course, which has a rich and intriguing history. In the early 19th century, this was a working farm. Its owner, a man named Baltus Roll, was murdered in 1831 by a couple of local hooligans who convinced themselves that Roll--well known for his thrift--had buried a treasure somewhere on his farm. Justice was only partially served, as one of the killers took his own life before trial, and the other was absolved of the murder on a technicality. Sixty-some years later, the land was purchased by Louis Keller, a New York socialite, who converted it to a golf course in 1895. ● For more than 100 years, the course has been home to professional golf, frequently of the epic variety. The first pro event was held in 1926, and there've been fifteen USGA events held at Baltusrol. At the US Open in 1967, Jack Nicklaus set a record with a four-round total of 275, including a blistering 65 on the final day. ● There've been two PGA Championships, in 2005 and most recently in 2016. The 2005 event is remembered for Phil Mickelson's famous chip out of deep rough to set up a birdie on the final hole, while the 2016 event was historic in that it was one of only a handful of times in golf history that the winner of a major--Jimmy Walker, in this case--played 36 holes on the final day of competition. ● The course favors golfers who can shape their shots, with numerous fairway bunkers that are perfectly placed to collect shots that are true but, alas, too long. Where many courses start light and end with a challenge, Baltus Roll's Farm takes the opposite approach. The opening hole presents arguably the day's most difficult test, while the eighteenth hole gives the golfer his best chance at birdie, or even an Eagle if he's willing to take the (long) short cut over the water. There's also a risk/reward opportunity on 11, where the golfer can opt to carry the trees for a chance at birdie or take the safe (dogleg) route and accept par.

Thousand Lakes Pro Course, Blaine, MN / based on TPC TWIN CITIES

Our Thousand Lakes Pro Course is based on the real-life TPC Twin Cities course in Blaine, MN, a relatively new addition to the pro tour. ● The course was built in 2000, designed by Arnold Palmer and Tom Lehman. Tournament play began the following year with the 3M Championship, which continued until 2018 when it was replaced by the 3M Open. ● The course has had its share of memorable moments. Perhaps the most spectacular was at the end of the 2009 event, on the 18th hole, when Bernhard Langer won the first of his two 3M Championships by holing a 20-foot chip shot for eagle to beat Andy Bean by a stroke. The next year (2010), after heavy rains had softened up the course, David Frost went on a tear on the final day shooting a record 11-under 61 to finish 25-under for the tournament and win the event by seven strokes. ● Hale Irwin's four-under 68 for the final round of the 2002 event earned him his third 3M Championship title--two of them were won at the 3M Championship's previous course (Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids, MN). ● The Thousand Lakes Pro Course will play fast and free for you just as TPC Twin Cities typically does. There are classic risk/reward options on the sixth (eagle chance), fourteenth (birdie) and eighteenth (eagle) holes. There's also a "smart play" option on the twelfth hole which will allow golfers the chance to gain a stroke. Scores will be low, so even the more conservative golfers will find there's less incentive to play safe here.

Empire Oaks CC (East), Pittsford, NY / based on OAK HILLS CC (East)

Empire Oaks is based on another storied pro course, the east course at Oak Hills Country Club, which was founded in 1901. ● Oak Hills' east course has hosted many major championships: it's the only club in the United States to have hosted all six of the men's major championships, among those which are held at different venues each year. ● The first championship event was the 1956 US Open, which was won by Cary Middlecoff in typical drama. With over 13,000 fans watching along (then a record), Middlecoff had bogeyed sixteen and seventeen to squander a two stroke lead, but Ben Hogan and Julius Boros both missed makable birdie putts on 17 and 18 and Middlecoff somehow held on for the win. The most recent PGA Championship was in 2013, where Jason Dufner won his first major title putting on a final round clinic on precision irons. ● The course is known for its stately oak trees, some of which have been there since the course opened. Oaks drape many of the fairways, making them magnificently scenic--but treacherous to navigate. ● One of the course's more interesting holes is the fourteenth. It's a drivable par 4 (323 yards) but it's bad news if you overshoot the green. So, big hitters will often simply use the greenside bunkers as a target from the tee. Land in the sand, get a good wedge and it's an easy birdie putt--one of precious few birdie chances of the day. ● Empire Oaks is a challenging course from the start, but it stands out as one of the toughest pro courses on which to finish a round. The par-3 fifteenth is particularly difficult: a downhill tee-shot onto a toothpick-thin green, with a pond situated at right. The seventeenth and eighteenth are both extremely tough, long par-4 holes (509 and 497 yards). It's not unusual for a pro to bogey both.

Motown Crown Golf Club, Detroit, MI / based on The DETROIT GOLF CLUB

The Detroit Golf Club, after which Motown Crown is patterned, is a very recent addition to the pro tour, home of the Rocket Mortgage Classic. Nate Lashley won his first-ever PGA event at the 2019 event, 15 years after losing his parents and girlfriend in a fatal plane crash after watching him play in a college tournament. Bryson DeChambeau won the 2020 event. Those are the only two pro events played here (up to the time this course was published). Prior to that, the most notable event hosted by the DGC was the 1992 US Mid-Amateur tournament, won by Danny Yates. ● While new to the pro tour, the DGC has a very long history--over 100 years. The club was founded in 1899, the first course was just six holes, expanded to nine in 1900. The land for the current course was purchased in 1913, and Donald Ross was commissioned to design the course. Ross is recognized as one of golf's great course architects, and is known for his work at Pinehurst in North Carolina, as well as Michigan's "other" pro course, Oak Hills in Bloomfield Township. ● Ross' design skills and architect's touch are evident throughout Motown Crown. The longest hole of the day, the 635 yard par 5 fourth hole, gives golfers the chance to pick up a stroke, or maybe two, by lofting their tee shot over the trees instead of playing the dog leg. It's followed by the shortest hole of the day, the 167-yard par 3 fifth hole: short, but NOT sweet, it's played uphill with a ridge running along the back of the green that can make for a very difficult putt. Another possible eagle opportunity awaits at the seventh hole, but things get tougher as the back nine progresses. Indeed, the eleventh (233-yard par three) and twelfth (459-yard par 4) holes are long and arduous. The eighteenth hole presents one of the more unique finishing holes in pro golf, with a prominent ditch running the length of the entire hole, 455 yards, a constant threat to ruin a what had been to that point a great afternoon.