

GOLF PROS' FAVORITE HOLES

By Stephen Delaney Hale

WHEN ASKED "WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE GOLF HOLE IN SOUTH CAROLINA?" MOST EXPERTS ARE STUMPED. "IT'S TOUGHER THAN CHOOSING A FLAVOR AT BASKIN-ROBBINS," SAID JOHN WINTERHALTER, HEAD GOLF PROFESSIONAL AT THE VENERABLE FOREST LAKE CLUB IN COLUMBIA, SC, WHEN ASKED TO PICK HIS FAVORITE GOLF HOLE IN THE STATE.

Vic Lipscomb, the highly successful golf coach at Wofford College in Spartanburg agrees, saying, "The people of South Carolina are pretty lucky to have what we have, affordable golf on a couple of hundred great golf courses. You get spoiled."

So we polled some local experts to get their selections for a favorite hole. From the mountains through the Piedmont to the sea, answers varied and the selection was hard. This is a state of great golf.

Harbour Town Golf Links No.18

Hilton Head Island, SC

843-363-8385

Happ Lathrop, executive director of the South Carolina Golf Association (SCGA), after a long pause finally said, "I just have to go with #18 at Harbour Town," (venue of the PGA's annual Verizon Heritage Classic.) "I just think that's a great hole. With the tee shot that you have to hit to a precise landing area, and the second shot across the marsh to that small green, and with the wind coming in there off the sound -- that's just a great golf hole. It's all so beautiful and pictur-

esque, with the lighthouse and the yacht cover, the marsh and the Calibogue Sound full of sailboats. That's some golf hole."

Happ didn't get any disagreement from Cary Corbitt, director of operations at the Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island, which includes the Harbour Town course. "I'd have to say Happ's probably got it right," Corbitt said with some fun in his voice. "Depending on the wind, you may have to play your shot out over the marsh for the wind to move it back onto the green, which is a very, very intimidating shot to make."

Wild Dunes Links Course No.12

Isle of Palms, SC

843-886-2164

Steve Behr, head professional at Florence Country Club, voted for # 12 on the Links Course at Wild Dunes. "It's a mid-length par three, with a tee that sits up on top of the dunes, and you hit down into a valley of smaller dunes. The green is surrounded by dunes. It's a small target with thick undergrowth on the left. From the elevated tee you are looking right into the ocean. It is certainly one of the prettiest par threes I've ever played. It is also a classic example that a par three doesn't have to be 220 yards to be a challenge," Behr concluded.

The Dunes Golf & Beach Club No.13

Myrtle Beach, SC

843-449-5914

Nationally renowned Clemson University Golf Coach Larry Penley said his favorite is #13 at The Dunes Club at Myrtle Beach, "a non-reachable par five where you do not hit driver off the tee. This is not a bomb-it-out-there hole like so many par fives now. This hole makes you make birdie with a wedge and a putt. It's a horseshoe shaped hole, so your tee shot is played away from the green and the second shot takes a lot of courage to get close to the green, which is set into a big marshy lake. It's a great green with many different hole locations that make you play it differently every time, especially with the wind coming off the lake and the ocean just beyond that."

Patriot's Point Links No.17

Mt. Pleasant, SC

843-881-0042

While choosing his favorite golf "flavor", John Winterhalter of Forest Lake voted for the 17th hole at Patriot's Point Links, across the harbor from Charleston. "It is a shortish par three, 140-145 yards, with a peninsular green that is set out into Charleston harbor. Of course there is always a wind on the harbor, so you're hitting anything from a wedge to a five iron. It's made all the more distracting because it's such a beautiful view, looking right into the harbor at Fort Sumter and then all of Charleston before you."

Timberlake Golf Club No.15

Chapin, SC

803-345-9909

"Number 15 at Timberlake in Chapin, just outside Columbia, is a really great par four," said SCGA's Lathrop. "It's about 420 yards, requiring a driver to a very tight landing area guarded by a creek on the left and high rough on the right. Then you are faced with a long hard second shot across the same meandering creek, which now runs in front of the green."

Northwoods Golf Club No.14

Columbia, SC

803-786-9242

"Another Midlands favorite of mine is number 14 at Northwoods in Columbia," continued Lathrop. "It's a 320 dogleg right, a great risk-reward challenge. You can drive the green across the water but most folks hit a long iron off the tee, trying to lay up short of the two fairway bunkers that are about 230 yards out. The green sits just across the water with a bunker in front, and is severely undulated."

Furman University Golf Course No.17

Greenville, SC

864-294-9090

Wofford University Golf Coach Vick Lipscomb nominated a hole from a rival school. "Number 17 at Furman University Golf Course is a long dogleg left par four with a nice fairway bunker on the left protecting the angle of the drive. It plays about 450 yards, downhill from the tee and then the second shot is dead uphill, with a deep bunker to the right of the green. That's one of my favorites," Lipscomb said.

So Many ...

There were a number of other holes mentioned -- Ocean Course #17 at Kiawah Island Golf Resort (Kiawah Island, SC), and # 17 and #18 playing along the ocean at Wild Dunes Resort on the Isle of Palms -- are just a few of the state's golf holes known worldwide. "We are so fortunate here in South Carolina to have all the different types of courses we can play, from the coast to the mountains and all the different terrain in between," said Winterhalter. "I'm glad I don't have to choose just one to play."

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