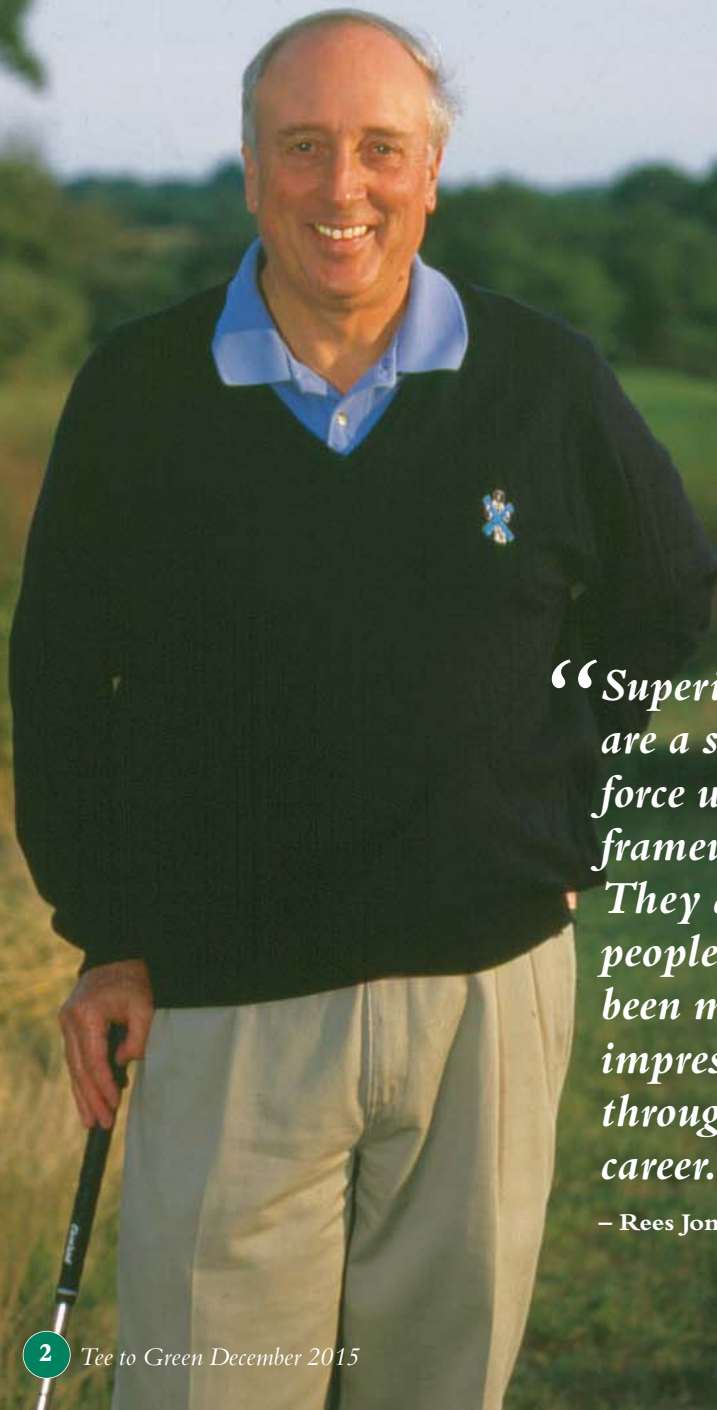


## MetGCSA Honors Renowned Architect Rees Jones With Its 2016 John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award

by Larry Pakkala, CGCS



*“Superintendents are a significant force within the framework of golf. They are the people I have been most impressed with throughout my career.”*

– Rees Jones



The MetGCSA is pleased to announce Golf Course Architect Rees Jones as its 2016 John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award winner.

Being presented at the MetGCSA's January 13 Winter Seminar, this annual honor is reserved for “an individual who, through continuing commitment, has shown exemplary support to the game of golf and golf course superintendents.” Rees is the Met's 26th Reid Award recipient since its inception in 1986 and clearly a wonderful choice for our association's highest honor, given his long and distinguished career in the golf industry.

Assuming the role of “Open Doctor” from his father, mentor, and renowned golf course architect, the late Robert Trent Jones Sr., Rees has been recognized for his redesign of courses in preparation for major championships. He's “doctored” seven U.S. Open venues, The Country Club in Brookline, MA, his first; eight PGA Championship courses; five Ryder Cup sites, and two Walker Cup sites; as well as a President's Cup at The Royal Montreal Golf Club.

Several of the courses he's redesigned have been selected as FedEx Championship sites, including the historic East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, GA, the permanent site of the PGA TOUR's Tour Championship.

In every undertaking, Rees has recognized the golf course superintendent's key role in the project's success. “As our collaborators,” says Rees in the golf book *Green Glory*, “superintendents are the unsung heroes who make us look good by polishing our handiwork. With their persistent pursuit of excellence,” he continues, “superintendents are in a class of their own when it comes to meeting the ceaseless challenges posed by nature, economics, and the game itself.”

“Rees should be applauded,” says former MetGCSA President and reigning Awards Committee Chair Blake Halderman, “not only for his many contributions to the golf industry, but also for his major role in supporting the golf course superintendent. His high regard for the profession has resulted in lasting relationships with the many golf course superintendents he has worked with over the course of his career. I can't think of a more deserving Reid Award recipient.”

## The Making of an Architect

Rees Jones was virtually born into the game of golf. He learned to play as a youngster, competing as a junior golfer, when in college, and while serving in the Army Reserves. Rees worked many summers on his father's projects, traveling with his family to golf courses all over the world.

"I guess you could say I assimilated into the business," says Rees, noting that also key in his tutelage was working with his father's construction manager, the late Bill Baldwin, who shared the ins and outs of course construction. "He taught me that you have to know how to build a course before you can design it," says Rees. "He knew how critical understanding the land was."

Rees earned a B.A. from Yale and did graduate study at Harvard in design and landscape architecture. In 1965, after his brief stint in the army, Rees went to work full time as a principal in his father's firm, Robert Trent Jones, Inc. Nearly a decade later, in 1974, he struck out on his own, founding Rees Jones, Inc., which is still headquartered today in Montclair, NJ, his hometown.

In the course of his lengthy career, Rees has designed or redesigned more than 170 golf courses worldwide, including those in China, Japan, Canada, Mexico, England, Spain, and Africa. Right now, his firm has work spanning 16 U.S. states—including more than a dozen tri-state area projects—and seven countries.

Among Rees's award-winning designs are Nantucket Golf Club in Siasconset, MA, Atlantic Golf Club in Bridgehampton, NY, The Golf Club at Briar's Creek in Johns Island, SC, RedStick Golf Club in Vero Beach, FL, Ocean Forest Golf Club in Sea Island, GA, Haig Point Club in Daufuskie Island, SC, Waldorf Astoria Golf Club in Orlando, FL, and Cascata in Boulder City, NV, near Las Vegas.

Rees attributes his success to keeping the number of jobs his firm has undertaken over the years to a manageable number. "I've always made it a point to be involved directly in the work and to put my mind in the heads of the original architects," says Rees, "rather than imposing my own style."

Also playing a key role in Rees's success are the three associate architects on his design team: Greg Muirhead (32 years), Steve Weisser (25 years) and Bryce Swanson (16 years). All join Rees in his quest to create classic venues that blend traditional design and innovative style.

"We're all on the same page," says Rees. "We're client-oriented, maintenance-oriented, and all very cognizant of whether a course is going to host a U.S. Open or is a public course for the everyday golfer. Greg,

Steve, and Bryce," he adds, "have played a most instrumental role in producing some of the finest courses in the world." Rees's other long-tenured associate, Keith Evans, retired in 2011 after 32 years with the firm.

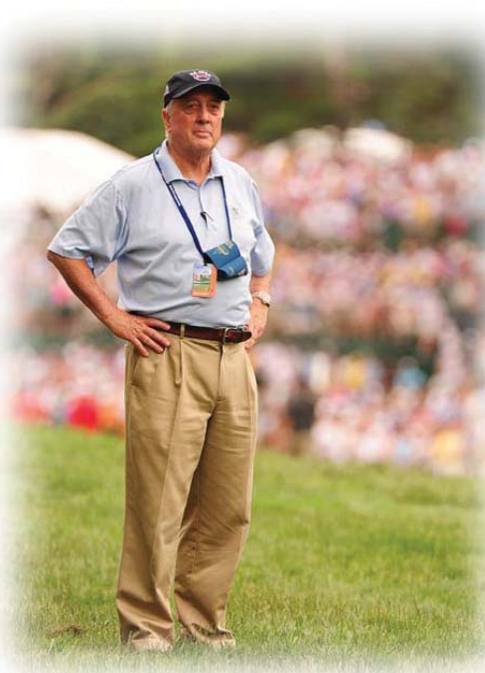
## A Style of His Own

As you might expect, Rees was influenced early in his career by his father, who favored the prolific use of bunkers and water to counter the game's accelerating level of talent during the 60s and 70s. But as Rees began to work on some of the great old classic courses, he became influenced more by A.W. Tillinghast's style and to some extent by C.B. MacDonald, Donald Ross, and Alister Mackenzie.

Adhering to what you might call a neo-classic style—a blend of traditional design and innovative style—Rees works to create courses that are fair, challenging, continually interesting to play, and visually exciting. "We get a feel for the land," he says, "we listen to the client, and we build a course that we believe has integrity and lasting value."

"I think golfers enjoy being reasonably challenged," he continues. "Golf holes that unfold with a variety of shot options requiring intelligent management of the game—choosing the right club and the right strategy—make for a more interesting round. I do not believe that playability should be sacrificed to showy features that penalize a shot that is only slightly errant."

"Our bunkers are strategic features, carefully placed," he says, adding, "we design multiple tees—sometimes as many as five or six—in order to accommodate golfers of



Rees Jones at the 2011 U.S. Open.

Photo courtesy of Fred Vuich.

differing skills, from beginners to PGA professionals."

In the end, Rees allows the contours of the land to dictate the style of the course. He favors embellishing the natural elements and creating other elements to look natural. "We customize every design to enhance what nature offers," says Rees, "always with sensitivity to environmental issues."

Praising Rees's design sensitivity is Fairview Country Club's Jim Pavonetti. Jim worked with Rees's firm in 2010 to create a master plan for renovating the course. Rees's father had done the original course design and Rees worked on the project, so Jim felt Rees was the appropriate choice for the job.

"I wanted to make sure we hired someone who wouldn't push to dramatically change the original design style," says Jim. "I couldn't have found a better person for the job."

"Rees, along with his associate architect, Greg Muirhead, were very aware that Fairview did not want to make the course 'U.S. Open' difficult. His plan accommodates the everyday golfer and also takes into consideration the maintenance side of the equation. In fact," continues Jim, "I think the golf course will be easier to maintain in many respects, once the plan is completed. I can't wait for the day we're finally able to apply the plan to the golf course."

## Public and Proud of It

Rees is exceedingly proud of the fact that he and his associates have brought the public golfer to the forefront of the game, most notably with his works at Bethpage Black in Farmingdale, NY, and Torrey Pines in La Jolla, CA. "These projects have literally changed the old golf image of the best courses being private," says Rees.

The first U.S. Open at Bethpage was held in 2002, soon after 9/11, and according to Rees, it was a very positive event for the people suffering the aftereffects of this life-changing event. Work included the construction of championship tees, the repositioning and/or restoration of all fairway and greenside sand bunkers, and green surface expansions, or reductions, on select holes. Rees went on to make additional design improvements to the Black Course in preparation for the 2009 U.S. Open.

In addition, Rees has just completed a renovation of #3 and #14 green complexes at Bethpage in preparation for the 2016 Barclays, 2019 PGA Championship, and 2024 Ryder Cup.

Bethpage led to Torrey Pines, when it was a "build it and we will come" event. It turned out to be one of the greatest Opens ever with Tiger winning on a broken leg in a 19-hole playoff. Rees completely rebuilt Torrey Pines South, relocating greens closer to the

canyons, recontouring all greens to provide multiple pin placements, repositioning bunkers for stronger players with more advanced equipment, and he added more than 500 yards of length. In 2002, Torrey Pines was chosen to host the 2008 U.S. Open.

Another of Rees's proud achievements is the East Lake Golf Club. Located on the east side of Atlanta, the course became part of a larger mission to breathe new life into a crime-laden area, turning it into an ideal place where kids, instead of getting into trouble and going to prison, are attending Ivy League colleges, with more than a dozen playing on college golf teams.

"Twenty years ago, I went in there, and it really was a disaster," says Rees. "We resurrected the course with a Donald Ross theme and, when all was said and done, created 179 jobs."

Then came a smaller public course and a golf academy, where young people now learn the caddy trade and golf course agronomy. Today, East Lake Golf Club is the home of the annual PGA Tour Championship and final playoff for the FedEx Cup.

A firm believer in "giving back," Rees doctored Bethpage Black for free. Other projects close to his heart have been done pro bono or for expenses, such as the Duke University Golf Club (where he played in the 1962 NCAA tourney), the Charlie Yates Golf Course in Atlanta, and Montauk Downs in Montauk, NY.

Rees's pro bono work extends beyond the realm of golf course design. Over the years, he has volunteered his time on numerous boards, serving in 1977-78 as the youngest president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, at age 36.

Rees has also served on the USGA's Environmental Research, Turfgrass Research, and Green Section committees; the New Jersey State Golf Association's Executive Committee; the MGA's Executive Committee and Long Range Planning Committee, as well as the Board of Directors for the MGA Foundation.

## No Good Deed Goes Unnoticed

Rees's many contributions to the game of golf have not gone unnoticed. He has earned a long list of awards and recognitions over the past two decades, starting with *Golf World Magazine's* 1995 Golf Architect of the Year award and the 1998 MGA Distinguished Service Award.

In 2002, Rees was honored with the Metropolitan Golf Writers Distinguished Service Award and, in 2004, GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award, as well as three architectural awards from the International Network of Golf.

In 2012, Rees was inducted into the New Jersey Sports Writers Association Hall of Fame, and that same year, the Foundation for Long Island State Parks and the New York



Rees at Bethpage Black near plaques honoring him and A.W. Tillinghast.

State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation honored Rees with the Robert Moses Master Builder Award.

In 2013, the American Society of Golf Course Architects presented Rees with its Donald Ross Award for design excellence and industry and association leadership. In February of 2014, Rees was the recipient of the Golf Course Builder's Association of America's Don A. Rossi Award, earning Rees the distinction of being one of seven people (Byron Nelson, Michael Hurdzan, Robert Trent Jones, Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, and Pete Dye) to have been awarded the Donald Ross Award, the Old Tom Morris Award, and the Don A. Rossi Award. Adding to his list of accolades is Rees's 2015 induction into the Northern California Golf Association Hall of Fame.

Now, last but not least, Rees Jones can include, in his impressive lineup of awards, the MetGCSA's most coveted honor: its John Reid Lifetime Achievement Award. Just as John Reid, the namesake of our association's distinguished service award, played a significant role in bringing golf to America more than a 125 years ago, Rees Jones has played—and continues to play—a leading part in ensuring the game thrives well into the future. John Reid would have been proud.

## Superintendents' Supporter

Rees is not only committed to his work, but also the golf course superintendents who put the finishing touches on his final product.

"Superintendents are a significant force within the framework of golf," says Rees. "They are the people I have been most impressed with throughout my career."

So it's no surprise that Rees was more than pleased to be selected as the MetGCSA's 2016 Reid Award recipient.

"This award means so much to me because I have been chosen by the people I've been working with for more than 50 years," he says. "What is also really special to me are the personal relationships I have developed over the years with so many of the superintend-



Rees strikes a pose with Ryder Cup and Wanamaker Trophy.

ents in the New York metropolitan area.”

Bob Ranum of the Atlantic Golf Club is one of those superintendents. “I consider Rees Jones more than just Atlantic Golf Club’s architect,” says Bob. “I consider him a good friend. After knowing Rees for more than 25 years, I know, firsthand, that he has a knack for maintaining relationships with superiors he has worked with in the past and has a good understanding of what they go through on a day-to-day basis.”

When Rees began his career working for his father, he spent time at Montauk Downs on the east end of Long Island renovating the course’s original H.C.C. Tippetts 1922 design. With Montauk holding a special place in his heart, he recently returned to do renovation work for the state. The course’s superintendent, Charlie Reidlinger, oversaw the project, noting Rees’s great humility.

“Despite his impressive track record as an architect,” says Charlie, “Rees is quick to recognize others’ role in his success, namely his associate architects and the superintendents he works with. He likens the work of superintendents to a painter who brings a work of art to life by adding the final strokes or touches.”

Rees has maintained a membership at Montclair Golf Club near his headquarters. He was the green chair for six years and was instrumental in hiring our own Greg Vadala as superintendent. Rees surrounded himself with committee members who had a professional status in the golf business—a number of them his own staff members—to provide Greg with the support he needed to make improvements to the golf course. Having worked as Montclair’s superintendent for 27 years, Greg enjoyed ongoing support from Rees and his team, who established a master plan the club has been picking away at since 2010. Greg offers insight into the special man Rees is, as only someone who has worked side-by-side with him for so many years can:

“Rees (affectionately known among a few of us as The Boss) was my first green chairman here,” says Greg. “And it was a true pleasure working with him and his associates, who were all members of the club. Rees would always make time to meet with me on any subject or need that I had, and the conversation would always start with him asking about my family and how they were.

“Mike Stubbelfield was the head golf pro here at that time and very good friends with Rees. Mike would call me and say, ‘The Boss wants to meet us for lunch in the grillroom at noon (a quick green committee meeting).’

“Mike and I would go early and watch Rees command the attention of everyone in the room as soon as he arrived. Members would stop him to ask what he was up to or to chat about his different courses or even thank him for getting them a round on a

# Rees Jones Revelations



- Growing up I thought I would be in the golf business. I was probably “programmed” by being around my father, Robert Trent Jones Sr.
- The best idea I ever had was to go out on my own at the age of 33.
- My favorite expression is “life’s a do-it-yourself game.”
- I am most proud of my championship golf course renovations.
- It’s not true that my brother [Robert Trent Jones Jr.] and I split the country in half when we both left my father’s firm.
- The world would be a better place if there were more balance—balance between people, balance between nations, balance over the ball.
- When I turned 21, I thought I knew more than I did.
- There is no shortcut to experience.
- Most people would be surprised to know that I had polio when I was 10.
- All successful people need to be mindful of what got them there.
- The best day of my life is today. I’ve been very fortunate.
- When I meet someone, the first thing I notice is whether or not they look me in the eye.
- I’m envious of people with private jets! It would sure beat running through airports and dealing with long lines when on the way to job sites.
- If I could trade places with one person for a day, it would have been Yogi Berra.

He was adored by all and got to play golf every day at Montclair Golf Club. He just made people feel good when they were around him.

- My worst vice is overindulging my two daughters.
- As an athlete, I was once a pretty good baseball player.
- My finest athletic moment was my wedge shot two feet from the pin on the last hole that led to victory in the 2002 RedStick Invitational. It was especially gratifying to win a tournament on one of my designs.
- My first job was as a counter man at a hamburger joint during high school. I worked from 5 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. so I could play golf during the day.
- My life’s mantra is life is all about people. Everybody is important, from the little guy to the big shots. The better you treat others, the better they treat you.
- I’ve found the biggest waste of time is hanging around in airports.
- When I need to relax, I get a massage. It does wonders for your brain as well as your body.
- The one thing that really gets me angry is waste, especially unnecessary government spending.
- My ideal foursome would include Bobby Jones – the golfer – Arnold Palmer, David Fay, and Yogi Berra!
- Playing golf is better than not playing golf, but no better than watching the Mets win the seventh game of the World Series, which I did with my daughter Amy at Shea Stadium 1986.
- The biggest disappointment in my life was that I traveled a lot in my job and I missed spending more time with my family at home.
- The thing I covet most is a better golf game.

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special course. You could see him beam. He loves to make people happy.

“Late one Sunday evening, a two-inch water main along the rear of a 3-year-old USGA green broke, washing out a quarter of the greens mix. Two-dozen members were walking around the green shaking their heads and wondering how to fix the disaster. The Boss pulled up, holding a cup of tea, to survey what had happened. Just like in the old E.F. Hutton commercial, as soon as he arrived, everyone went silent. Finally someone spoke: ‘Rees, will we be playing this green again this year? What do we do?’

“Rees just said, ‘We fix it.’ And a contractor was onsite the next morning, the repair completed that same afternoon.”

Greg couldn't say enough about Rees's unusual ability to connect with those around him and those he works with. And when it comes to the superintendents he works with, Greg will tell you that Rees has a very special place in his heart for them. “I believe he truly wants us all to succeed,” says Greg.

Rees and his wife, Susan, of 47 years have two daughters who now live in Massachusetts. Their eldest Alden, a college professor, has three children: Grayson, 5; Cora Blue, 2; and Madeline Rees, 6 months. Their daughter, Amy, is a social worker and has two children: Taya, 10, and Timmy, 7. Rees enjoys nothing more than sharing his passion for golf with Taya and Timmy, who under Rees's tutelage are becoming fine golfers.

At this point in his career, Rees believes the golf business is picking up as the economy recovers from the Great Recession: “I think that both designers and superintendents recognize that in today's competitive marketplace, we need to work together to reduce costs while still providing a quality experience for players of every level. It's important that we continue to work together to find ways to make courses more playable, make them easier to maintain, and find ways to bring more players into the game.”

*Larry Pakkala, a member of the Tee to Green Editorial Committee, is superintendent at Silvermine Golf Club in Norwalk, CT.*

## Tri-State Area Golf Courses Remolded by Rees Jones

### Connecticut

The Patterson Club, Fairfield, CT

### New Jersey

- Ash Brook Golf Course  
Scotch Plains, NJ
- Baltusrol Golf Club  
(Lower Course), Springfield, NJ
- Baltusrol Golf Club  
(Upper Course), Springfield, NJ
- Canoe Brook Country Club  
(North Course), Summit, NJ
- Canoe Brook Country Club  
(South Course), Summit, NJ
- Deal Golf & Country Club  
Deal, NJ
- Echo Lake Country Club  
Westfield, NJ
- Essex Fells Country Club  
Essex Fells, NJ
- Flanders Valley Golf Course  
(Blue Nine), Flanders, NJ
- Flanders Valley Golf Course  
(White Nine), Flanders, NJ
- Forest Hill Field Club, Bloomfield, NJ
- Galloping Hill Golf Course  
Kenilworth, NJ
- Hackensack Golf Club, Oradell, NJ
- Hollywood Golf Club, Deal, NJ
- Montclair Golf Club  
West Orange, NJ
- Morris County Golf Club  
Morristown, NJ
- Ridgewood Country Club  
Ridgewood, NJ
- Woodcrest Country Club  
Cherry Hill, NJ

### New York

- Bethpage State Park  
(Black Course), Farmingdale, NY
- Brynwood Golf & Country Club  
Armonk, NY
- Crag Burn Club, East Aurora, NY
- Montauk Downs, Montauk, NY
- North Hills Country Club  
Manhasset, NY
- Old Oaks Country Club  
Purchase, NY
- Quaker Ridge Country Club  
Scarsdale, NY
- Rye Golf Club, Rye, NY
- Sleepy Hollow Country Club  
Scarborough, NY
- The Monster, Kiamesha Lake, NY
- Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY

## Tri-State Area Golf Courses Designed by Rees Jones

The following is a list of new designs since forming Rees Jones, Inc. in 1974.

### Connecticut

- Lake of Isles  
(North Course), North Stonington, CT
- Lake of Isles  
(South Course), North Stonington, CT
- Redding Country Club  
West Redding, CT

### New Jersey

- Cherry Valley Country Club  
Skillman, NJ
- Fiddler's Elbow Country Club  
(Forest Course), Bedminster, NJ
- Flanders Valley Golf Course  
(Gold Nine), Flanders, NJ
- Pinch Brook Golf Course  
Florham Park, NJ

### New York

- Atlantic Golf Club, Bridgehampton, NY
- Olde Kinderhook Golf Club  
Kinderhook, NY
- The Bridge, Bridgehampton, NY

## Current Projects in the Tri-State Area by Rees Jones

### New Jersey

- Ash Brook Golf Course  
Scotch Plains, NJ
- Baltusrol Golf Club  
(Lower Course), Springfield, NJ
- Baltusrol Golf Club  
(Upper Course), Springfield, NJ
- Canoe Brook Country Club  
(North Course), Summit, NJ
- Canoe Brook Country Club  
(South Course), Summit, NJ
- Deal Golf & Country Club, Deal, NJ
- Echo Lake Country Club, Westfield, NJ
- Essex Fells Country Club  
Essex Fells, NJ
- Galloping Hill Golf Course  
Kenilworth, NJ
- Hackensack Golf Club, Oradell, NJ
- Montclair Golf Club, West Orange, NJ

### New York

- Bethpage State Park  
(Black Course), Farmingdale, NY
- Brynwood Golf & Country Club  
Armonk, NY
- North Hills Country Club  
Manhasset, NY
- Old Oaks Country Club  
Purchase, NY
- The Monster, Kiamesha Lake, NY