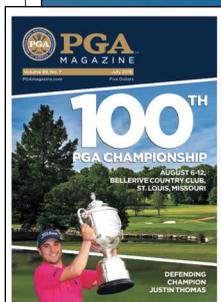
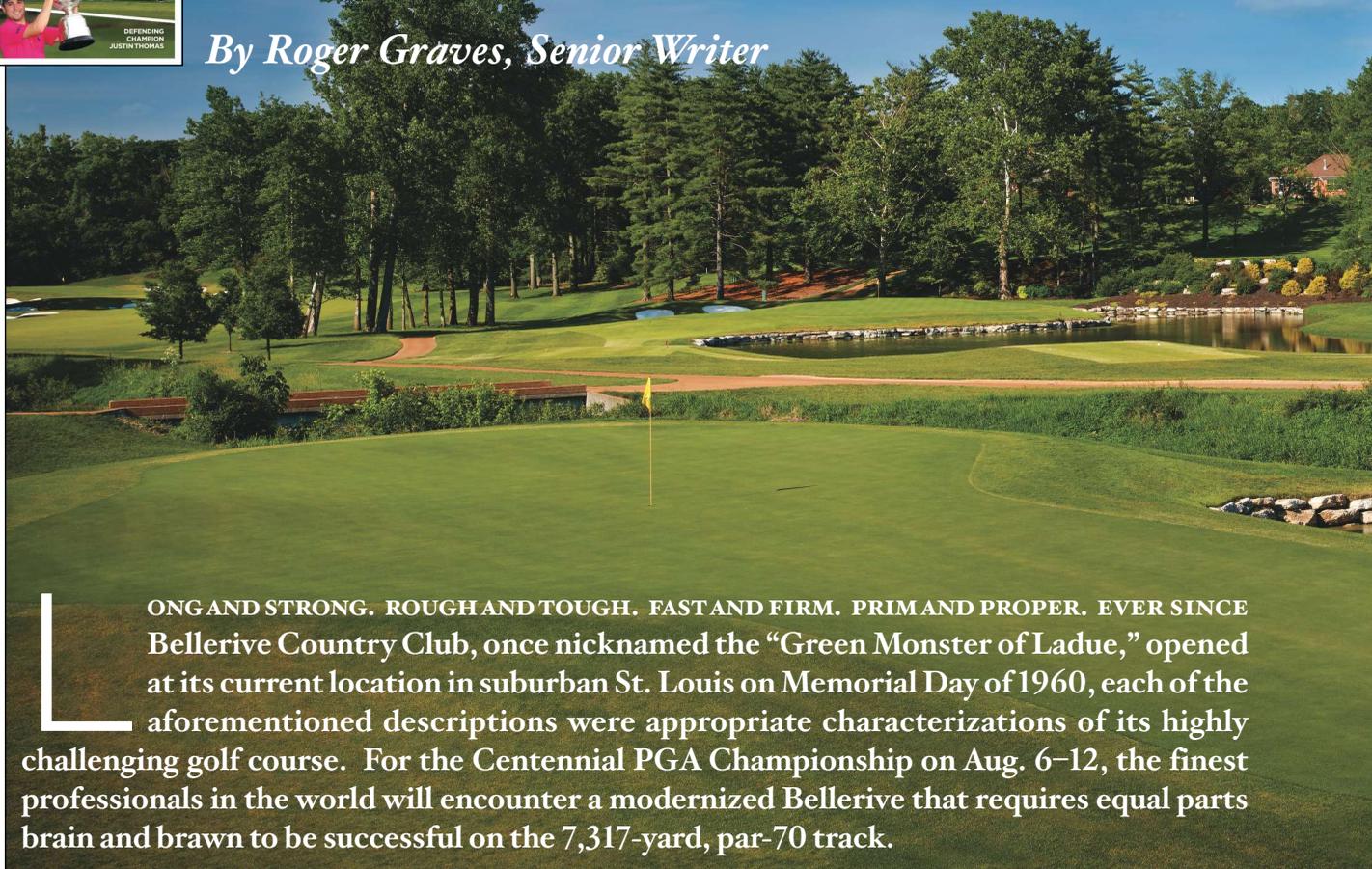


BELLERIVE COUNTRY CLUB: A CLOSER LOOK

RENOVATED ROBERT TRENT JONES SR. MASTERPIECE IS PRIMED TO HOST ANOTHER MAJOR, CHALLENGE WORLD'S FINEST PLAYERS



By Roger Graves, Senior Writer



LONG AND STRONG. ROUGH AND TOUGH. FAST AND FIRM. PRIMA AND PROPER. EVER SINCE Bellerive Country Club, once nicknamed the “Green Monster of Ladue,” opened at its current location in suburban St. Louis on Memorial Day of 1960, each of the aforementioned descriptions were appropriate characterizations of its highly challenging golf course. For the Centennial PGA Championship on Aug. 6–12, the finest professionals in the world will encounter a modernized Bellerive that requires equal parts brain and brawn to be successful on the 7,317-yard, par-70 track.

The Bellerive course designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., that hosted the 1965 U.S. Open (won by Gary Player in a playoff against Kel Nagle) and the 1992 PGA Championship (won by Nick Price) will still be in full flower for the 100th PGA Championship. However, the course underwent a major renovation by Jones Sr.’s son, Rees Jones, in 2005–2006 that transformed the course into a modern-

day masterpiece while preparing the acreage to host the 2013 Senior PGA Championship and the 2018 PGA Championship.

Rees Jones, who gained acclaim for lengthening and strengthening major championship courses such as Winged Foot and Torrey Pines, handled the \$9.5 million renovation, realizing he was working with one of his father’s finest course creations.

Some players will be tempted to go for the green at the par-4 11th hole in two despite the water guarding the right side of the putting surface.



NO. 11

Maintains Traditional Character

“This was not just another renovation for Rees Jones in 2005-06. He was taking care of one of his father’s greatest works, so he had a level of personal interest during which he was dedicated to maintaining the traditional character of the course while bringing it up to match the standards, speed and power of today’s game,” explains Michael Tucker,

PGA Director of Golf at Bellerive, who has served the club for 26 years in various capacities.

Tucker notes that Jones “modernized” Bellerive in several ways. He relocated fairway bunkers and hazards closer to landing areas based on today’s high-tech equipment. Bunkers around the greens were enlarged, cut deeper and placed in strategic positions to catch errant approaches. Tees and

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greens were re-grassed. Today, greens are all bentgrass and fairways are zoysia grass that is more resistant to heat and humidity, which Bellerive could see in quantity during PGA Championship Week in August.

“Rees (Jones) did a wonderful job of maintaining the integrity of the golf course while bringing it up to modern standards,” claims Tucker. “The greens were 8,800 square feet on average before the renovation, and now they are 8,200 square feet. Rees stayed true to his green-within-a-green concept that requires a properly placed approach shot to the green if you don’t want to face a 40-, 50-, or 60-foot putt. You must be on the correct side of the ridges on the greens, making your approach shot to

the green very important. Even though the greens are large, putting will be extremely challenging if you fail to hit the proper target on the green. To put the ball in the proper place on the large greens, you need to be playing out of the fairway. So the first step to success at Bellerive is driving the ball in the fairway. Then, you must be accurate with your approach to the green to set up a reasonable chance at making a putt.”

To underscore Tucker’s point about hitting fairways to set up potential birdie putts, he points to the previous champions at Bellerive. Player won the 1965 U.S. Open, Price claimed the 1992 PGA Championship, St. Louis native Jim Holtgrieve was victorious in the 1981 USGA Mid-Amateur Championship, Peter Jacobsen won the 2004 U.S. Senior Open, Colombian Camilo Villegas won the 2008 BMW Championship, and Japan’s Kohki Idoki won the 2013 KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship at Bellerive.

Champions’ Common Denominator

What do each of those players have in common?

“Historically, Bellerive is perceived as a long course, so you might think the long hitters would have success here,” says Tucker. “But the truth is, if you look at the previous champions at Bellerive, you see that it is the players who keep the ball in play who have the greatest success. Who were the guys near the top of the leaderboard at the 1992 PGA Championship? It was Nick Price, John Cook, Nick Faldo, Jeff Maggert and Gene Sauers –





guys who hit fairways and keep their ball in play. At the U.S. Senior Open, it was Peter Jacobsen and Tom Kite. When you go down the list of winners here, they are all good ball strikers and shotmakers. You have to drive the ball well, have a strong, reliable iron game, and you need to have a good short game to get it up and down when you do miss a green. Gary Player, Nick Price, Peter Jacobsen, Kohki Idoki ... they all hit a lot of fairways and had exceptional short games. They are all major champions at Bellerive.”

Bellerive was built around a large creek that comes into play on nine holes, while water hazards are prominently in play on 11 holes. Tucker reveals that fairways and contours leading to large fairway bunkers, water hazards and greenside bunkers will be closely mowed during the 100th PGA Championship to funnel any balls into the hazards on virtually every hole.

“There will be no first cut of rough to protect balls from rolling into bunkers, creeks, ponds and other hazards,” cautions Tucker. “The weather during Championship Week may dictate otherwise, but we’re planning to have a fast and firm golf course with closely mown areas around all bunkers and hazards. Anything moving toward the water or bunkers will go in.”

Course Designed for Majors

Robert Trent Jones Sr., the original Bellerive golf course architect, designed the course with major championships in

mind, acknowledging that most holes would yield a “difficult par but a comfortable bogey” – so tough, but not unfair. Rees Jones stayed true to that philosophy during his renovations in 2005-2006 while creating a couple of new risk-reward opportunities that will challenge the finest professional shotmakers during the 100th PGA Championship at Bellerive.

The second hole at Bellerive was previously a tight, dogleg left par-4 around a group of trees and small lake with a large bunker guarding the right side. Jones removed the trees along the left and expanded the lake, which now stretches all the way to the green to create a devilish back-left pin position. The second and 11th holes could be drivable par 4s if more forward tees are played in the PGA Championship. The renovation saw all tee boxes moved forward some 50 yards on the 11th hole, giving PGA Chief Championships Officer Kerry Haigh many options when setting up the course for the field of 156 in August.

The eighth hole, a double dogleg par 5 that traditionally played as one of the most difficult during previous championships at Bellerive, was redesigned to some extent by Rees Jones. All tee boxes for No. 8 were on the left side of the creek prior to Jones’ redesign, mandating a right-to-left tee shot that curved around the trees on the left while avoiding the creek on the right. Jones moved the back tees to the right side of the creek, cut down the majority of trees lining the creek and added a deep bunker on the inside left of the first dogleg. The bunker has since been removed and the fairway widened, but the eighth hole will play a massive 610 yards during the PGA Championship as one of only two par-5s on the par-70 champi-

Bellerive C.C.

Hole	Yards	Par
1	425	4
2	410	4
3	148	3
4	521	4
5	471	4
6	213	3
7	394	4
8	610	5
9	433	4
Out	3,625	35
10	508	4
11	355	4
12	452	4
13	180	3
14	410	4
15	495	4
16	237	3
17	597	5
18	458	4
In	3,692	35
TOTAL	7,317	70



onship course.

“The eighth and 17th holes will be the only two par 5s during the PGA Championship, so both will present a reasonable opportunity for a birdie,” observes Tucker, noting that the fourth and 10th holes that play as par 5s for members have been reduced to par 4s for the 100th PGA Championship. “The 17th hole, especially, will be an interesting hole to watch as the leaders come down the stretch. You might see a few players knock it on in two and have an eagle or birdie opportunity, but you can also see some higher numbers there if they get a little wayward.”

The Pivotal “Ridge” Holes

Perhaps the most decisive stretch of holes at Bellerive will be “The Ridge” holes — the 14th, 15th and 16th — that sit on a plateau above the rest of the golf course and traditionally play directly into the prevailing southwesterly wind.

“When you climb up the stairs to the 14th tee, you start a challenging group of three holes we call The Ridge because of its topography up on a ridge above the rest of the course,” says Tucker. “No. 14, the start of The Ridge holes, is a dogleg left with a wonderful infinity green. Par is a good score there. The 15th is a ‘Big Boy’ par-4 of 495 yards that is the epitome of Robert Trent Jones’s philosophy of a difficult par but an easy bogey, or worse. A par at 15 is always a great score. Then, No. 16 is a 237-yard par 3 with big, yawning bunkers in front of the green. You have an elevation change of 12 to 15 feet

if you’re in one of those bunkers, so it creates a tough up-and-down if you miss that green. If you can play The Ridge holes in even par, you’ve always done very well.”

Of course, The Ridge provides a bridge to the pivotal par-5 17th hole and the challenging 458-yard, par-4 18th hole, where the 100th PGA Championship will conclude.

“The 18th is a classic finishing hole that gives very little, especially if you’re trying to get to the house while protecting a one-shot lead,” says Tucker. “Again, getting the tee shot in the fairway is paramount. If you miss this fairway, the 18th may be the most difficult green to hit on the golf course. There are several great hole locations on the 18th, but the back-right pin position is particularly difficult. The 18th always provides good theater when the leaders come down the stretch on Sunday.”

Who will write a new chapter in golf history by winning the 100th PGA Championship at Bellerive and inscribe his name on the coveted Wanamaker Trophy? Tucker isn’t naming names, and he also isn’t predicting a winning score at Bellerive, since the August weather in St. Louis can be problematic.

“Whether the winning score is 8-under or 18-under doesn’t really matter; the golf course will reward the best players in the world when a good shot is struck and will penalize them when a poor shot is hit,” says Tucker. “The weather is the one thing we can’t control, but I know Bellerive will be up to the challenge and will prove to be a worthy championship course no matter what unfolds.” ■