

Best New Courses

America's Best New Courses '06

The 2006 winners feel at home with their surroundings



The Concession Golf Club: Jack Nicklaus and Tony Jacklin created the Best New Private winner: Left of the lake is the 410-yard 10th, which requires a low, bouncing approach; right is the 486-yard, par-4 18th.

Photo: Stephen Szurlej

By Ron Whitten

Golf Digest
January 2007

It was a season that celebrated authenticity in golf design. America's Best New Courses of 2006 reflect what pleasures can result when man and money yield to Mother Nature. This time around there were no magicians conjuring up Scotland in the Sonoran Desert, or Carolina on the Kansas plains. The nation's top new courses are faithful to their surroundings, providing golfers with a genuine sense of where they're at, be it the foothills of Idaho or the Everglades of Florida.

That's immediately apparent at the Best New Private Course of 2006, **The Concession Golf Club**, a rare Jack Nicklaus design without surrounding homesites. Positioned in a remote rural setting east of Sarasota, Fla., The Concession provides an old-Florida experience of saw-grass savannahs, palmetto thickets and hammocks of massive oaks mantled in Spanish moss, all seemingly untouched since the days of the Seminole. The Concession finished ahead of the **North Course at Forest Creek Golf Club**, whose fairways, edged by pine scrubs, sandy roughs and pine straw, capture the essence of Pinehurst,

RELATED LINKS >>

HOW THE COURSES ARE RANKED

To be eligible for Golf Digest's list of *America's Best New Courses 2006*, a course must have opened between May 1, 2005, and April 30, 2006. Winners were determined by evaluations filed by our panel of more than 800 low-handicap golfers, who judged courses in five categories: **Shot Values, Design Variety, Resistance to Scoring, Memorability and Aesthetics.**

The categories are **Private Courses, Public Courses (Under \$75, and \$75 and Over), Remodel** and **Canadian.**

-Surveys overseen by Topsy Siderowf, Sue Sawyer and Mary Jane McGirr

N.C.

The variety of Virginia's Northern Neck is fully represented at **King Carter Golf Club**, with its open meadows, forested hillsides and working vineyard beside its practice range. On the rugged topography of northeast Ohio, **Blue Heron Golf Club** makes no apologies for its steeplechase design from cliff top to cliff top over deep ravines. These were the top two courses in the category Golf Digest now calls Best New Public Course Under \$75. After a decade of using a \$50 green fee to separate affordable from upscale public courses, we believe an increase to \$75 reflects the economic landscape of the times. Still, it is encouraging to report that winner King Carter has a weekend fee of \$34 walking, \$49 with a cart.

- **History of Best New Courses:** Take a look back at all the annual winners, dating back to 1983. *By Ron Whitten*
- **All time leaders in Best New Awards:** See the complete list including the individual course winners by architect and year.
- **America's 100 Greatest:** The definitive list of the country's finest courses. *Golf Digest May 2005*
- **The Whitten Index:** Read course reviews by Ron Whitten, senior editor for Golf Digest.
- **Best Places to Play:** With a database of more than 8,000 courses in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Islands, our new, searchable directory of the Best Places to Play has more features than ever.
- **Rate a course:** Your comments are very important. In fact, they're the backbone of the *Best Places to Play* book, letting other readers know the inside scoop.

As for Best New Public Course \$75 and Over, the winner was **Osprey Meadows**, a multithemed design in Idaho that rings true to its alpine locale on the western edge of the Bitterroot Mountain range. It won in something of an upset over highly anticipated and highly publicized Bandon Trails, the third 18 at Bandon Dunes, the wind-swept coastal Oregon resort that most visiting golfers believe is positioned somewhere just short of heaven.

America's Best Remodel featured authenticity of another sort. Original design concepts were retained and enhanced at both the winning course, **The Stanwich Club** in Connecticut, and runner-up, **Country Club of Rochester**, in upstate New York.

The Best New Canadian Course of 2006 is **The Ridge at Manitou**, chiseled from the granite outcroppings and dense forests of Ontario's Muskoka Highlands, the fifth such layout in that locale to have won in this category since 1997. The Ridge beat out the **South Course at The Club at Bond Head**, a prairie design that barely disturbs its Ontario prairie heritage.