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Short, but sweet course

Spring Creek not a typical par-3 layout

By GARY D'AMATO
gdamato@journalsentinel.com

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Whitewater - A lot of serious golfers wouldn't be caught dead on a par-3 course, unless they were teaching their kids how to play the game.

Par-3 courses have long been equated with scruffy conditions, slow and fuzzy greens and young golfers with beginners' clubs or seniors pulling carts.

For years, I had been hearing good things about Spring Creek Golf Center, a nine-hole par-3 course just 3½ miles north of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater campus. But how good could it be?

I found out when business took me to Whitewater recently and I got in a quick nine at Spring Creek. The best way I can describe the experience is to say I can't wait to play there again.

Spring Creek destroys all the stereotypes. It's a par-3 course that is well-groomed and fun to play, with fast bentgrass greens and a variety of short holes that are well-designed and challenging.

"Basically, we took a championship golf course and shrunk it down," said owner Mike Majewski. "It is unique. Everybody thinks a par-3 course is pitch and putt. But most golfers better bring their whole sets (of clubs)."

Majewski was an avid golfer who worked for the U.S. Post Office when he got the crazy idea to build a course . . . crazy because he wanted a top-notch par-3 course. He approached architect Bob Lohmann, who though Majewski was, well, crazy.

"But the more he got into the design, the more he loved it," Majewski said. "He did a terrific job."

Spring Creek opened in 1988. Last year, it was named one of the 12 best par-3 courses in the United States by Golf Range Magazine.

There are three sets of tees: red (964 yards), white (1,394) and blue (1,644). The angles into the greens

change from each tee. Water comes into play on four holes and the greens are protected by strategically placed bunkers.

"From the red tees, it's a pretty open shot," Majewski said. "From the white tees, you might have to go over the corner of a bunker. From the blue tees, it's exceptionally tough."

Steve Stricker, who grew up just down the road in Edgerton, has played Spring Creek many times and has never broken par. In fact, in 18 years only two golfers have broken par from the blue tees.

Green fees are \$14 and there's a 21,000-square-foot, 18-hole putting course that costs \$2 to play.

"I like the way the course is maintained," said Dave Tuten, a teacher in Whitewater who plays Spring Creek several times a week. "There is so much pride in this course. You feel welcome coming here. It's a family atmosphere."

Spring Creek plays host annually to "the No. 1 hole-in-one tournament in the state," Majewski said, with major hole-in-one prizes such as cars, trips to Scotland or \$5,000 shopping sprees on every hole. The date this year is June 2.

"We'll probably never sell the course," Majewski said, "because we have so much fun out here."

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