

Small Budgets, Big Courses

By Bernice Phillips

The new Beeches Golf Club, designed by W. Bruce Matthews III of Matthews Golf Design and reviewed in this issue, is yet another example of how the firm can produce a memorable course with a small budget. Matthews learned about golf design from his grandfather and namesake W. Bruce Matthews

(<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show16/>) and his uncle, Jerry Matthews of Natural Course Design (<http://natural-coursedesign.com>). In 1990, Matthews broke loose from his uncle and started up his own firm.

During the highflying 90's when hundreds of golf courses

were being built throughout this state, the Matthews firm got its fair share. However, big budget courses like Egypt Valley, The Fortress, Thoroughbred, Bay Harbor, Ravines, Thousand Oaks, St Ives and Black Lake went elsewhere. Matthews' designs were solid, but the land he worked in many cases lacked the drama of other courses.



Photo by Art McCafferty

Emerald Vale Hole No. 10

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The fabulous 18th at Hidden River Golf and Casting Club

A partial list of W. Bruce Matthews III courses

- **Angels Crossing**, Vicksburg, Michigan 2004
- **Beeches Golf Club**, South Haven, Michigan 2005
- **Brookshire Inn & Golf Club**, Williamston, Michigan 1993
- **Cedar Chase Golf Club**, Cedar Springs, Michigan 1992
- **Emerald Vale Golf Club**, Manton, Michigan 1997
- **Hankerd Hills Golf Club**, Pleasant Lake, Michigan 1997
- **Hickory Hills Golf Club**, Jackson, Michigan 1998
- **Hidden River Golf & Casting Club**, Brutus, Michigan 1998
- **The Jackal**, Brighton, Michigan 2001
- **Marsh Oaks Golf Club**, New Haven, Michigan 1997
- **Moss Ridge Golf Club**, Ravenna, Michigan 1999
- **Oak Ridge Golf Club**, New Haven, Michigan 1997
- **Pine Hills Golf Club**, Laingsburg, Michigan 1993
- **Richmond Forest Golf Club**, Lenox, Michigan 1993
- **Rockford Golf Center**, Rockford, Michigan 1995
- **Rolling Meadows Golf Course**, Holland, Michigan 2001
- **Selfridge Ang Golf Course**, Mt. Clemens, Michigan 1999
- **Seven Lakes Golf Club**, LaSalle, Ontario 2003
- **Timber Wolf Golf Club**, Kalkaska, Michigan 1998
- **Uby Heights Country Club**, Uby, Michigan 1998

<http://matthewsgolfdesign.com>

Then in 1998, Hidden River Golf & Casting Club opened and it was a smash hit. The land had some unique features with the river and a chasm here and there plus a budget that allowed some extra trappings on the course. The good news about the Hidden River course was the great reviews, the bad news was the fact that new course development was starting to dry up and the firm had limited use of its new acceptance.

The Beeches, his newest creation in South Haven, will open the back nine in September and have the grand opening some time next spring. Currently, there is only talk about new courses and Matthews Golf Design has been turning more increasingly to remodeling work to keep his company going during the current economic times. *MG*



Photo by Art McCafferty

Joe Bruhn, owner of The Jackal, and Bruce Matthews, the architect.