



**Elk Ridge Golf Club**

# Sweet, Sweet Summertime, Michigan

**Jack Berry**

**I**n the words of rocker Bob Seger, it's "sweet, sweet summertime, Michigan summertime."

It's time to lift up our heads and shout about Michigan with all our lakes, four of them veritable oceans, our beaches, our cherries, peaches and sweet corn, our vineyards, our resort towns, and more public courses than any state in the

country, courses that consistently rank not only among the best, but are far better than most with great terrain left by the glaciers eons ago.

And finally, at long last, state government has awakened and is promoting Michigan's enormous recreational facilities with radio and television commercials going into national markets.

I read that 40 states have budget surpluses. Michigan isn't one of them so, more than ever, Michigan must flaunt its riches. Bring in the traveling golfers, the tourists. And not make it a one-time effort. Does Myrtle Beach ever stop promoting?

A recent assignment took me to 19 courses in the Traverse City area and the variety in just that small area is outstanding, excellent

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### Timberstone Golf Course

courses with great views, forested hills as far as the eye can see, views of Grand Traverse Bay, of Torch Lake and Crystal Lake, courses that are fun to play and not an Oakmont monster in the bunch although I have to say that The Chief in Bellaire would test Oakmont members. And don't blame, or credit, Canada even though the designer, John F. Robinson is a Canadian. Robinson is a University of Michigan alumnus who started out working for another Wolverine, Bill Newcomb, and he did ease up on Hawk's Eye.

Despite first visiting Traverse City in the early 1960s, covering 20-plus Michigan Opens at Grand Traverse resort, running the Cherry Festival 15K, up and down Killer

McKinley Hill and running along the parade route, I'd never managed to squeeze in a visit to a winery or to climb Sleeping Bear sand dune. Sleeping Bear is going to have to wait but I did manage to taste the wine and cheese at Black Star Farms on the Leelanau Peninsula. Terrific.

Mentioning fruit of the vine, the choices at Trattoria Stella in the bowels of what once was the state mental hospital will match any place in the state. It's hard to imagine this one-of-a-kind spot but the restaurant, with brick arches separating small dining areas, and adjacent art galleries, are another Michigan plus.

Go all the way up the west coast, from the Indiana border to

the Mackinac Bridge, and there's an attractive small town and village, and golf course, one after the other. The newest course is the Beeches at South Haven where blueberry farmer Larry Bodtke is one of the principals. Designer Bruce Matthews III made sure he left the huge, signature beech tree standing, guarding the left side of the 18th green, and just as distinctive is the red clubhouse with cupola that would beg to be an Edward Hopper painting.

I've known Matthews since he did Bird Creek in the Thumb, then Hidden River at Brutus and Angel's Crossing at Vicksburg and he said he always thinks of me and my dislike of cross hazards. He also thinks of we distance-challenged

seniors and puts tees on the other side of the hazard. Like Angel's Crossing, Matthews has some enormous putting surfaces while converting a corn field into a very playable course with what Matthews calls "a newspaper" par 5 - 670 yards from the way back tee. In other words, it's a gimmick and no one should play it. But they do cut the grass on the tee. The blue tee is 580 yards.

My 12-year-old granddaughter's final day in a junior clinic drew me to Pilgrim's Run, north of Grand Rapids. I hadn't been there in a few years and had forgotten how hilly, pretty and well-conditioned it is. You look at it and it says "This is Michigan golf." A beautiful setting. Pilgrim's Run celebrates its 10th birthday this summer. It's a brew of

eight "chefs" - the owner, Robert Van Kampen, invited six friends to each design three holes and superintendent Kris Shumaker routed the holes. Then Mike De Vries designed the green complexes and the unusual "recipe" turned out brilliantly.

**T**he east coast, the Sunrise Side, is less populated than the west and generally is less expensive but with fine golf. There's surprisingly hilly Verona Hills at Bad Axe in the flat Thumb, chicken dinners and golf at Frankenmuth, Huron Breeze at Au Gres, Red Hawk at Tawas, the three courses of Lakewood Shores at Oscoda and White Pine National at Hubbard Lake.

All across the I-94 southern cor-

ridor from Chicago to Detroit there's golf, Angel's Crossing at Vicksburg, Yarrow and the Scotts' Gull Lakeview collection that also includes strong Bedford Valley, home of the Michigan Open in the 1970s, and Eastern Michigan's Eagle Crest, Fox Hills, Salem Hills and Stonebridge in Washtenaw County.

It's good golf all the way up the middle of the state on US-127, Eagle Eye and Hawk Hollow on the north side of Lansing, the Majestic over on US-23 at Hartland, back up US-127 to the Emerald at Maple Creek, the nice collection of courses around Mt. Pleasant, the Pohlcat, Buck's Run, Tullymore and St. Ives, then Grayling and Gaylord with a strong package of courses includ-



Photo courtesy of Treetops

**Treetops, Rick Smith Signature**



Photo by Art McCafferty

### Thunder Bay Golf Club and Resort, Hillman, Michigan

ing the Tom Weiskopf-designed Forest Dunes, Michaywe, the superb courses at Treetops, the Tribute at the Otsego Club and on up to Rees Jones's high-ranked Black Lake.

And despite all the jokes about July 4 being summer in the Upper Peninsula and fall starting July 5, there is good golf above the

bridge. There's Sault Ste. Marie Country Club where, in the 1950s and 1960s when the Red Wings trained in the Soo, General Manager Jack Adams, after the morning practice, would order the team to play golf to strengthen their legs. What a boss!

Mike DeVries's Greystone at Marquette and Jerry Matthews'

Timberstone at Iron Mountain in the western U.P. have drawn raves. Michigan definitely is golf, border to border, both peninsulas, more than 800 public courses. Sweet, sweet summertime, as Seger sang. And, incidentally, Seger recorded that 27 years ago in June at Cobo Arena. The sweet, sweet summertime. *MG*