

Short par-4s, downhill par-3s highlight layout



Photo by Steve Williams

The ninth hole at Gordon Trent GC is one of two par-3s that plays downhill over water.

By STEVE WILLIAMS

Gordon Trent Golf Course has beautiful views, an interesting history and is known for its well-kept greens. What it doesn't have is length. And in this age of trampoline drivers and super-charged golf balls, that could leave a course defenseless. But the Patrick County, Virginia, course can still be a test with its rolling hills, water hazards and undulating greens.

"It's a challenging little course for the good golfers," said Charles Trent, the youngest of Gordon Trent's seven children and the only surviving son. "It's a finesse course. You've got to be right particular around the greens."

Dewey Hinnant, who came on board as the course's professional and general manager last fall, has an agenda to make the course play longer in the coming years. The first project is upgrading the irrigation system.

Hinnant, 37, has been around golf courses since he got his start at age 14 at his hometown Florence (S.C.) Country Club, pulling carts and picking up balls on the range. He played collegiately at Frances Marion University, then returned to Florence as an assistant pro. He moved to Martinsville for an assistant pro position at Forest Park Country Club in 1995 and became head pro there in 1999 before moving to Gordon Trent.

Hinnant is the course's first professional since the death of Leon Martin last April. Martin was a fixture at Gordon Trent for 40 years.

"Dewey brings a tremendous amount of experience to Gordon Trent Golf Club," said Charles Trent, one of the course's owners. "He has a great reputation throughout Patrick and Henry Counties as an instructor, tournament coordinator and as a professional. Hinnant's particular strength is a love for teaching and he has a special interest in juniors. He will be a wonderful asset to our operations, we're very pleased to have him on board."

During his years at Forest Park, Hinnant never had the opportunity to play at Trent Golf Course. He was impressed with his first look last fall.

"I was surprised at the good condition of the course," Hinnant said. "It's a shorter course that technology has hurt but we're developing a five-year plan and a 10-year plan to get some length in here. We would never eliminate the playability for the seniors, just add the length to help bring in some of the younger people who like the challenge of playing a longer

course. We're kind of land-constrained but it's a good, challenging course as it is right now."

The course plays to 5,503 yards from the back tees with four par-3s and two par-5s (Nos. 1 and 18).

The par-3s are particularly scenic. Three of them play beautifully downhill and two are full carries over water.

Most of the 14 par-4s are short, although Nos. 2 and 8 can stretch out to 400 yards. Several others can be reached with a precise drive.

The areas surrounding the greens provide plenty of short- game challenge and most of the greens have their share of undulation.

There are three sets of tees with the middle markers providing a 4,896-yard course and the front tees measuring 4,343.

Hinnant also plans to organize more tournaments at the course and hopes to bring back the Gordon Trent Invitational Tournament, which was first played in 1962 but hasn't been held in the last few years.

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