

Basking Ridge Beefs Up Course *and Adds Short Game Facility*

By Fred Behringer

Basking Ridge Country Club has strengthened its golf course during an ongoing improvement program while enhancing its practice facilities so members can prepare better to meet the challenge.

New tee boxes, added length, larger greens and additional bunkers combined this year to stiffen holes 13 through 17, while the 198-yard par-3 18th hole remains a testing conclusion to the round. The course is about 300 yards longer at 6,906 yards from the blue tees and 6,423 from the member tees.

Meanwhile, the club installed a short game area to go along with its practice greens and range. The new area lets players work on their chipping and bunker play with a large, three-tiered green, sand and grass bunkers.

John McDole, the director of golf and head professional, advises members to spend 75 percent of their practice time on their short game.

They'll still need to pay attention to their full swings, though, especially when they tackle the final six holes.

At the par-4 13th, new elevated tee boxes added 40 yards to the hole,



Young golfers in Basking Ridge Country Club's Swing for Life program use the club's new area designed for short game practice.

stretching it to 452 yards from the blue tees. With a green nearly twice the former size and new bunkers, member say the hole seems entirely different from its predecessor.

The most noticeable changes in the 80-year-old course, designed by Alex Findley, come at the par-5 14th, which

is 125 yards longer at 546 yards from the blues. The hole is now a dogleg left with the green cut into the woods. Once considered Basking Ridge's easiest hole, "it's now the hardest hole on the golf course," says McDole.

There's no breather at the par-4 15th, now 461 yards from the tips, with bunkers placed to keep longer hitters from shortening the route to the hole.

The 16th was a one-shotter of 153 yards with the green obscured from the tee. Golfers now can see the green from the new elevated tee but must carry their tee shot 179 yards to reach the small, narrow putting surface.

The green at the 404-yard 17th is much larger, but a new sand bunker makes it more difficult to execute a run-up shot.

"You really have to get your score before you get to the last six holes," McDole says, "because it's hard to get any strokes back.

"It's a traditional golf course. It's playable. If you play the back tees, it's



The Basking Ridge Country Club clubhouse.

really tough. From the white tees, it's fair and challenging. The fairways are very narrow. The condition is always immaculate. The superintendent [Tim Reinagel] has turned the place completely around. People who have come here recently say it's not the same course."

Another new development at Basking Ridge is the three-week Swing for Life program for boys and girls 9-13. They spend six hours a day, four days a week for instruction that includes video analysis and information about golf rules, etiquette and history. They are prepared to take to the course before the program ends.

"This is going to be a growing program for us," says Mat Kent, the club's director of instruction. The program is open to the public as well as to children of members.

The Basking Ridge Golf Academy offers a plethora of instructional opportunities for all ages, including beginner to intermediate clinics, junior clinics, Swinging in the Sandbox clinics for juniors 9 and younger, advanced



A long 3 par concludes Basking Ridge Country Club's testing final six holes.

junior training, short game schools, a day with the pro combining instruction and a nine-hole playing lesson, and individual and group lessons.

While Basking Ridge Country Club opened in 1926, this year it is observing its 20th anniversary under its present name and under the ownership of the Mahan family.

As a privately owned club, it does not require a bond or initiation fee. It is offering a year-and-a-half membership program with dues covering the rest of 2006 and all of 2007.

Information is available from Kara Bosi, director of membership, 908-766-8299, ext. 114, www.baskingridgecc.com