

Coming in Spring: The Cardinal

By Tom Lang

There is growing anticipation for the grand opening of The Cardinal, a new 18-hole championship course at the formidable Saint John's Resort in Plymouth.

There is a reason the property used to be a full-time Catholic Seminary – turned luxury resort with a stunning wedding chapel dating back to the 1940s – as one could literally call the landscape 'God's Country.'

The beautiful, rolling land surrounding the seminary-turned-high-end hotel and conference center is the current-day setting for the new golf-centric development. Picturesque, tree-lined, and filled with wildlife is not an often expectation in such a densely populated surrounding area very close to I-275 and I-96/M-14.

After playing there in early October, what went through my mind was: A nature preserve with tee boxes and flag sticks.

The massive remodel in Plymouth – turning the former quaint 27-hole Inn at St. John's Golf Course property into a championship level 18-hole course, with a bonus 7-hole par 3 short

The new course at Saint John's Resort will marvel many



Hole 9

course and a 1.5 acre 18-hole putting course – has transformed the property at Five Mile and Sheldon Roads.

And in the process, resort golf has become a reality in metro Detroit. The Cardinal is slated to open in the spring. It is a public golf course with a country club atmosphere and experience.

Award-winning designer Ray Hearn headed up the project and believes all the elements are there to attract golfers of all skill levels – people who are just getting into the game, as well as families and friends of wedding parties or corporate outings who just want to have a little fun on the large putting course while they visit the resort for socializing or business.

“The growth of par 3 short courses and putting

courses nationwide make great sense, especially with a hotel on property,” Hearn said. “You’ve got a lot of new people entering the game of golf. People want to have some quick fun, and then there’s Carl’s Golf and right there with a driving range and all the equipment.

“With a set up of 5-tees (on The Cardinal) you can do what you want based on your skill level. Pick the right tees and you’ll have a good time. You’ve got it all there with the longer 18, to play nine – or go to the 7-hole short course or 1.5 acre putting course.

“It’s Southeast Michigan,” he added. “This site is surrounded by buildings and residential and commercial sites to the north and west, yet this property is a beautiful oasis.”

All the investments have been made by the Pulte Family Foundation. After expenses are paid, all revenues will go into the Foundation for distribution to worthy charities. Golfers will literally golf for a good cause.

Typically in course reviews I pick my favorite 3-hole stretch. This course is so good I have expanded it to six – holes 13 through 18 – an excellent culmination to the end of a half day on the course.

The 13th is a par 4 with a sharply left-to-right slopping fairway to try holding, before the approach to the elevated green.

The 14th goes over a pond to the large par 3 green. Then 15 goes over the same water (from the back tees) to a fairway highly protected with a huge bunker on the right.

Hole 16 is a gorgeous par 3 with the tee and green level to each other, but with a huge natural valley splitting the gap. No. 17 is a shorter par 4 slight dogleg right, followed by the closing 18th hole. What used to be a short closing hole has been changed to a longer par 4 with an uphill blind tee shot (aim for the brick tower) to a wide fairway and green complex guarded by a large pond on the left that wraps behind the green.

Come back to MI Golf Journal in April for a longer review, and visit:

<https://www.saintjohnsresort.com/plymouth-michigan-golf-course-st-johns> **MGJ**



Hole 14 Par 3