

# A little heaven here on earth

Many times, while watching televised golf tournaments from venues like Pebble Beach, Muirfield Village and the famed Augusta National, I've pictured myself walking those fabled fairways and putting on those gorgeous greens, salivating for a chance to do just that just once in my lifetime.

No, I'm no dreamer. I'm a realist. I'll never make a living swinging my golf clubs. But still, just once, I want to play Pebble Beach and hook a drive or fairway wood into the ocean on No. 18.

Monday morning afforded me the chance to get probably as close to that dream as I ever will (for the present and near-future, anyway) when I accepted an invitation to play at the new Green Bay Country Club, located just southeast of the city at the intersection of Hwy. 172 and I-43.

Puffy clouds high in the clear blue skies awaited our threesome as we teed off at about 9:30 in the morning. Tim Bauman, a Ferris State golfer and former Appleton West graduate who is interning at the Country Club this summer, had the unenviable task of taking myself and Mark Daniels of WGEE around the 18 holes of

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rolling hills, thick woods and winding creeks that are the newest addition to the Green Bay golf scene.

We decided to play from the blue tees to get the "championship feel" of the course. It was no problem for either Bauman, who aspires to become a professional golfer, or Daniels, who possesses a long ball off the tee. However, for someone who hits the fairway maybe 50 percent of the time and has trouble cranking a 220-yard straight drive, this was going to be some test.

A tip for those about to play GBCC for the first time: if you can get past No. 1 alive, you'll be in good shape. The first hole offers a target fairway, with dense thicket gulping

short tee shots, a pond swallowing errant tee shots to both the right and left, and a winding creek ready and waiting to collect the rolling shots of long-ball hitters who just "grip it and rip it."

Once on the fairway — a 200-yard drive will put you in good position — you face an uphill shot to an elevated green protected by woods in the back, bunkers on the left and the creek in front. The hole is only 300 yards long from the blues, but you're advised to play it like two par-threes. It's good advice.

From there, you face two long par-fives and two par-fours sandwiched around a pleasant little par-three. The seventh hole is a pushers' heaven: a downhill dogleg right that will gladly accept a slight slice and turn it into a 250-yard-plus drive down a bunkerless fairway, if hit correctly. From there, a wide, expansive green awaits your seven-iron approach with only a small sand trap on the left and creek on the right guarding the landing area.

The eighth is an island green, destined to be one of

the great island holes. Swirling winds above the tree line will force you to think twice about club selection; my six-iron found the right side of the moat.

No. 9 offers the second target fairway on the course, forcing the player to shoot twice over Bower Creek. Or, as in my case, hit twice into Bower Creek.

The back nine offers something for everybody: water (No. 11 is a short par-three over a pond to a well-guarded green), views (The tee boxes on Nos. 10 and 14 sit at some of the highest points on the course and afford a wonderful view of the grounds and surrounding area) and those inevitable target fairways (Nos. 17 and 18).

The third shot on No. 17, a 545-yard par-five, is slightly reminiscent of Augusta's famed 12th hole with creek and bunker fronting a horizontal green and two bunkers backing the green.

And No. 18 is simply a hole of beauty. The straightaway par-four plays down to a wide fairway that will accept a long

iron or short wood; a driver could easily find Bower Creek, that slices across the end of the fairway. The second shot is a classic, playing over the creek to a decked green that sits aside a quarter-acre beach protecting the front and left side of the green.

It took awhile for me — weekend hacker that I am — to figure out how to play the course. And it was as simple as that: play the *course*. Those who try to make up for a short tee shot with a long fairway wood to the green will undoubtedly find themselves in more trouble than they were when they started. It's no sin to lay up short on the fairway. A third-shot pitching wedge to the green is better than trying to fire out of a green-side bunker. And laying up short is better than putting one out into one of the dozen or so water hazards guarding the greens.

Playing within your game will allow you an enjoyable trip around the 18 holes of Green Bay Country Club.

Now all you have to do is find a friend who is a member. It's well worth the bribe.