Artistry, craftsmanship, and attention to detail never go out of style

SWEETENS COVE GOLF CLUB

Ran Morrissett

Author, *The Confidential Guide to Golf Courses, v. 2**

"Sweetens Cove is one of the most audacious designs we've seen. [King-Collins] built one of the most diverse and entertaining set of green complexes found anywhere. This kind of fun, inventive, quick golf is more commonplace in the UK, which is why the game is so much healthier there than in America. If you leave [Sweetens Cove] smiling, don't panic: golf is supposed to be fun."

*Sweetens Cove received the highest average rating of ALL golf courses in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, & Louisiana.

Golfweek Magazine

Sweetens Cove claimed the title of the #1 "Course You Can Play" in Tennessee in the 2016 rankings.

Golf Inc.

January/February 2016 Issue

Rob Collins nominated to the *Most Influential Architects* list by Ran Morrissett.

Adam Lawrence

Editor, *Golf Course Architecture*

"Sweetens Cove is the best nine hole course I've ever played and a truly outstanding piece of golf design and construction."

"It's not totally unusual for a golf architect to leap out of the back room into prominence. David Kidd did exactly the same when he built Bandon Dunes in the late 1990s, and he hasn't been the only one. If the right opportunities fall into his path, I would be pretty confident that Rob will ascend to that level. His work at Sweetens Cove is remarkable: to take a flat, boring nine hole course and build something so visually dramatic and yet such damned good fun to play is, in my opinion, one of the more impressive golf architectural achievements in recent years. Some will say it is too bold; I disagree. The first and most important job of a golf course is to put a smile on the face of those who play it; well, I came off Sweetens Cove wearing the biggest grin for some considerable time..."

Anthony Pioppi

Author, *To The Nines*

"Sweetens Cove is a better golf course than the Dunes Club. It is the best nine hole course constructed in the United States since WWII."

"Sweetens Cove...harkens back to one of the most influential golf courses ever built in the United States [Augusta National]...Collins and his partner, [Tad] King, have embraced the original MacKenzie-Jones tenets with gusto. Writing about Augusta then, MacKenzie could have been describing Sweetens today.

Graylyn Loomis

Assistant Editor, *Links Magazine*

"Rob Collins and his team transformed a featureless and flat existing nine-hole course...into a fun and challenging golf experience that harkens back to the quirky links play at the likes of North Berwick and Cruden Bay...Sweetens embodies my favorite type of golf and I cant wait to see the next courses that Rob Collins and his partner, Tad King, create."

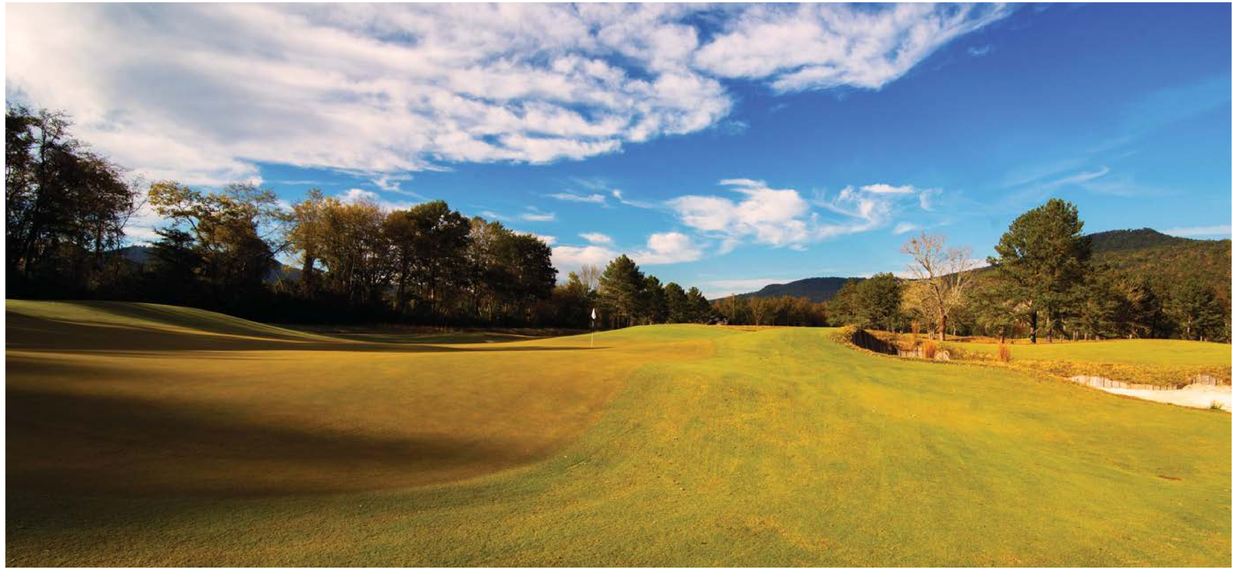
The broad swath of the par 5 first hole stretches out beneath the tee complex, which is benched into the hillside near the clubhouse. This visually stunning hole introduces players to many of the larger themes of the golf course, as strategic options, tightly mown turf, the absence of rough, and artistically inspired construction set the tone for the remainder of the round. The reverse redan, punchbowl green complex, which is guarded by a massive bunker lined with railway sleepers, presents golfers with an infinite variety of possible outcomes and shot-making scenarios. These indelible characteristics conspire to create a unique sense of place and a level of texture uncommon to all but a few layouts.

HOLE

1

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION



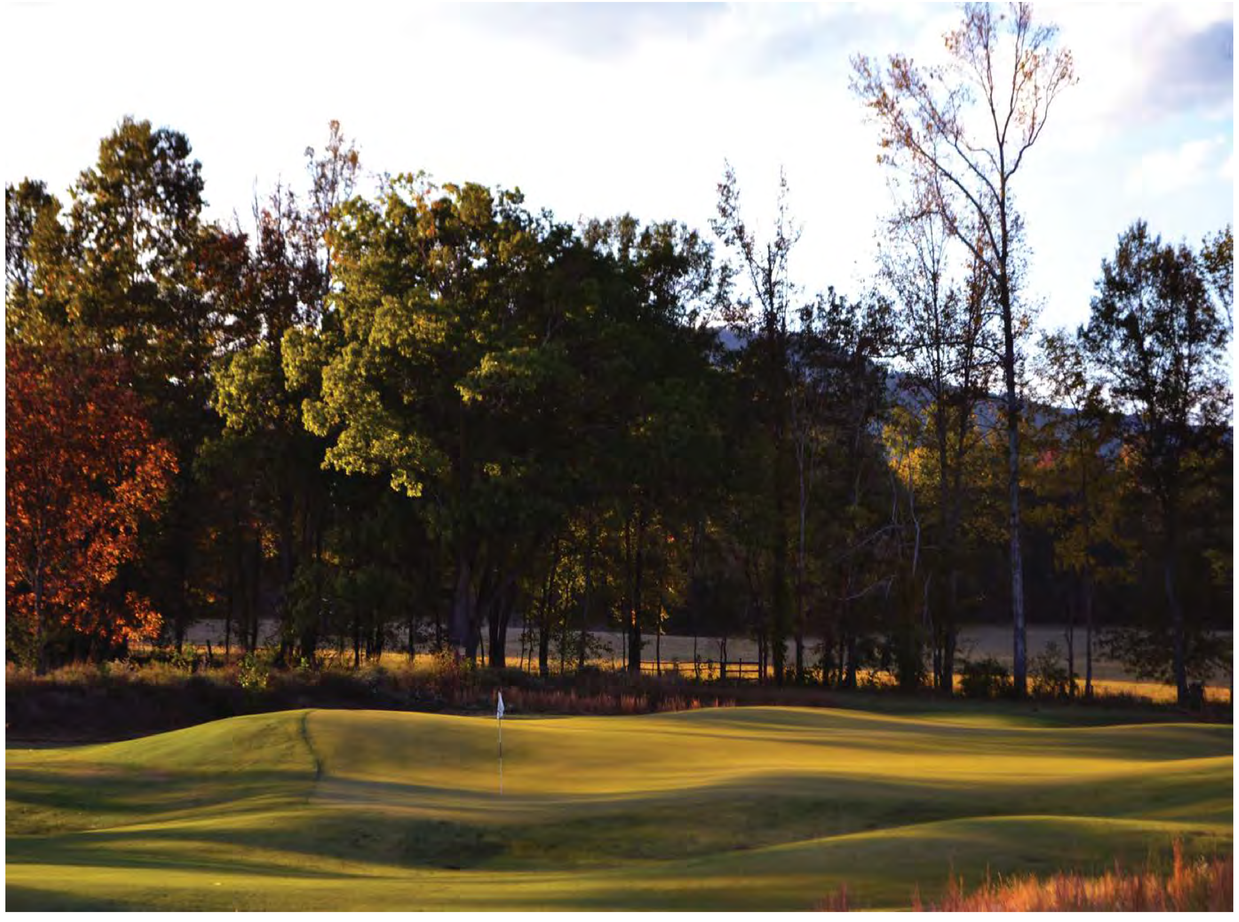
The 353-yard second hole is a sleeper on the dramatically improved layout. In contrast with the first, the bunkering is much more understated, but no less strategic. A lone, centerline pot bunker seems too small to hit from the tee, but is maddeningly adept at gobbling tee shots. In concert with the remainder of the layout, much of the strategy is dictated by the contours in and around the green complex. A 'valley of sin' contour, which is reminiscent of the famous feature on the home hole at St. Andrews, guards the left side of the green and complicates shots for golfers who choose the safe route to the left of the central bunker. Clever golfers will often find that the best way to negotiate the challenges of the bold and intricately detailed putting surface is by using its contours to play away from trouble and have the slope bring the ball around to the hole.

HOLE

2

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION



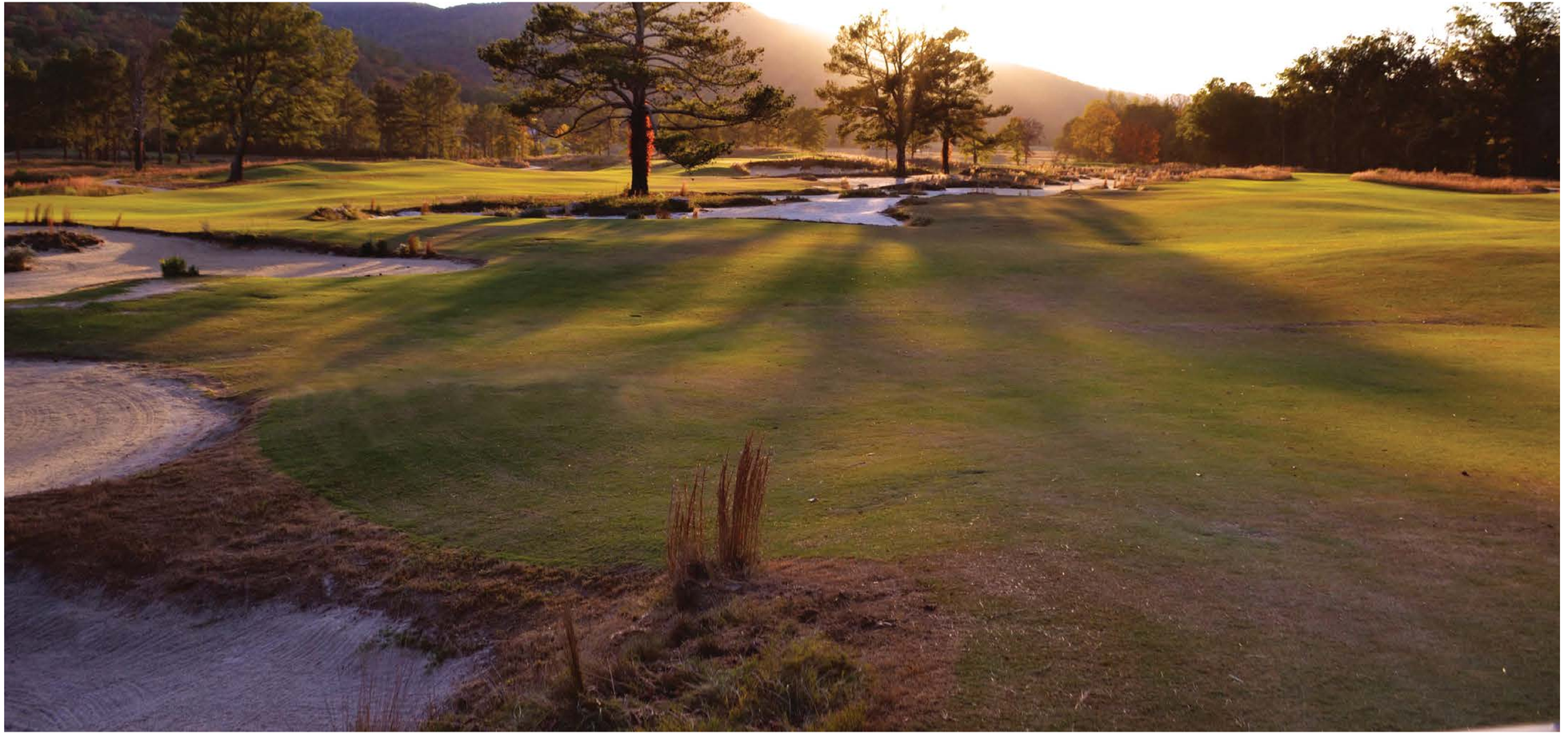
The formerly featureless and utterly bland par five third hole now sports one of the most striking, highly detailed bunkers anywhere on the planet. This massive waste area, which ties into the shaping, strategy, and visual aesthetic of the third, fourth, and fifth holes is the golfer's introduction to our clever use of scale on the renovated layout. The broad, open expanse of the land and the accompanying long views across the property are a central and iconic characteristic of the course. Accordingly, we built features that compliment, rather than detract from, this broad scale. The bunker itself was meticulously hand detailed over thousands of man-hours and, as a result, its refreshingly bold and natural appearance provides a stark contrast to the wholly insipid hazards found on most golf courses. Strategic decision-making again confronts the golfer on every shot. The green, which was constructed behind a large oak tree, begs golfers to attempt creative shots around, over, or underneath its canopy. The boldly contoured putting surface figures directly into the strategy and, again, golfers are asked to consider playing away from certain hole locations in order to work the ball along the ground in order to lie dead at the hole.

HOLE

3

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION



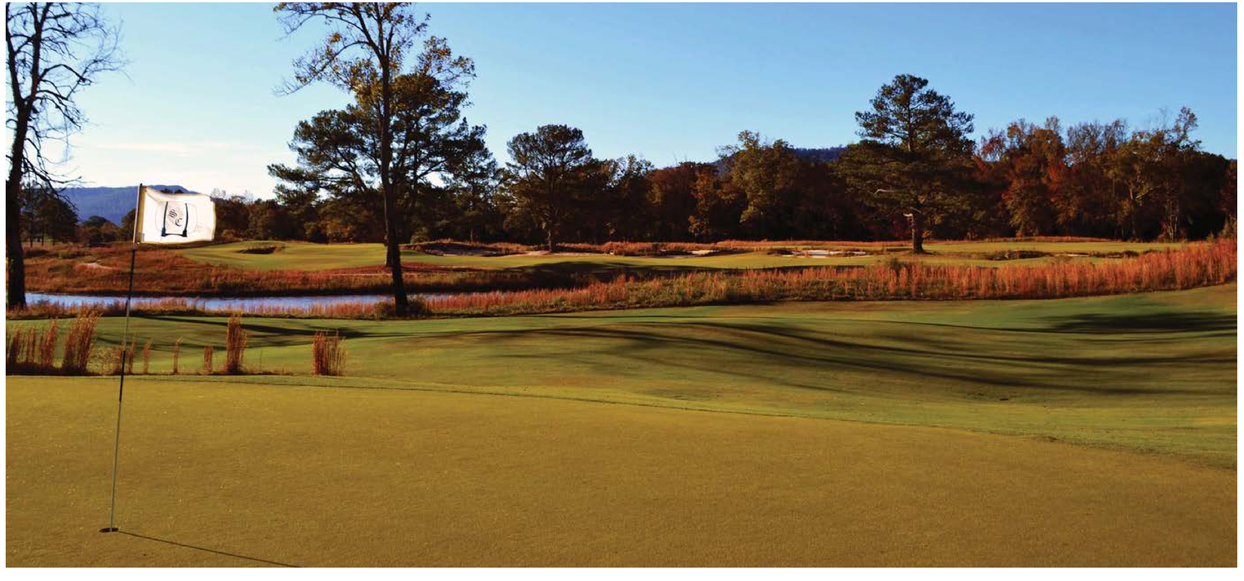
While the first three holes guarantee that players new to the layout are aware that they have encountered a highly unique golf course, the fourth hole obliterates the mold for par 3 construction. While this outrageous and endlessly entertaining hole, which can play from 90 to 200+ yards, borrows characteristics from the Himalayas hole at Prestwick and the 10th at Friar's Head, it manages to boldly present its own distinct characteristics to golfers. Two massive tees, which stretch out perpendicular to the line of play, add endless variety to the hole, as the angle of play, degree of visibility, and distance can vary daily depending upon the placement of the tee marker. When the serpentine 20,000 square foot, heavily undulating green and its endless potential pin placements are added to the unique teeing ground, golfers are ensured that they will encounter a new look and shot-making dilemma each time around.

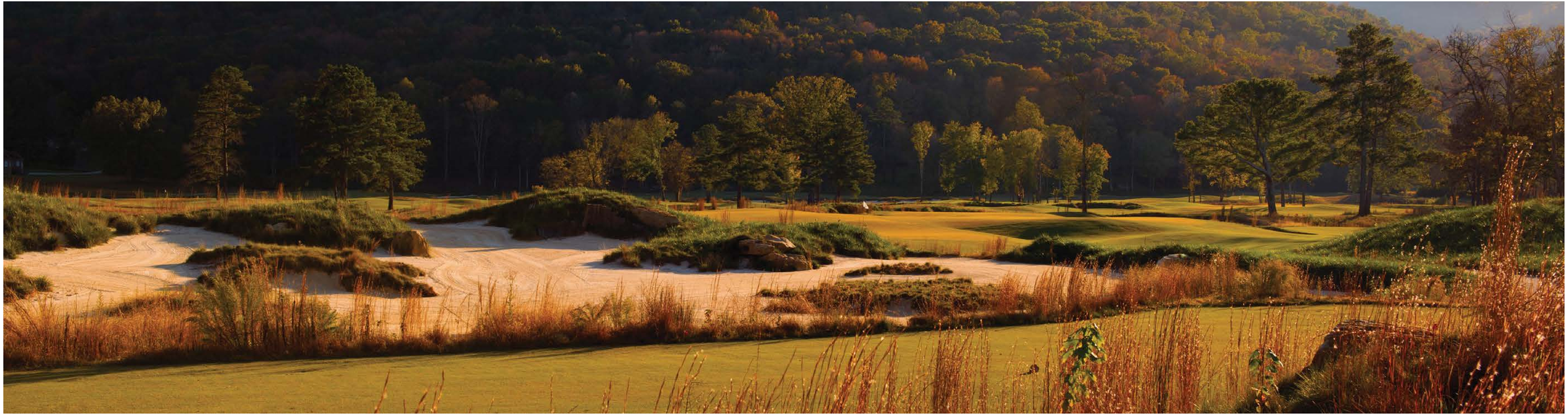
HOLE

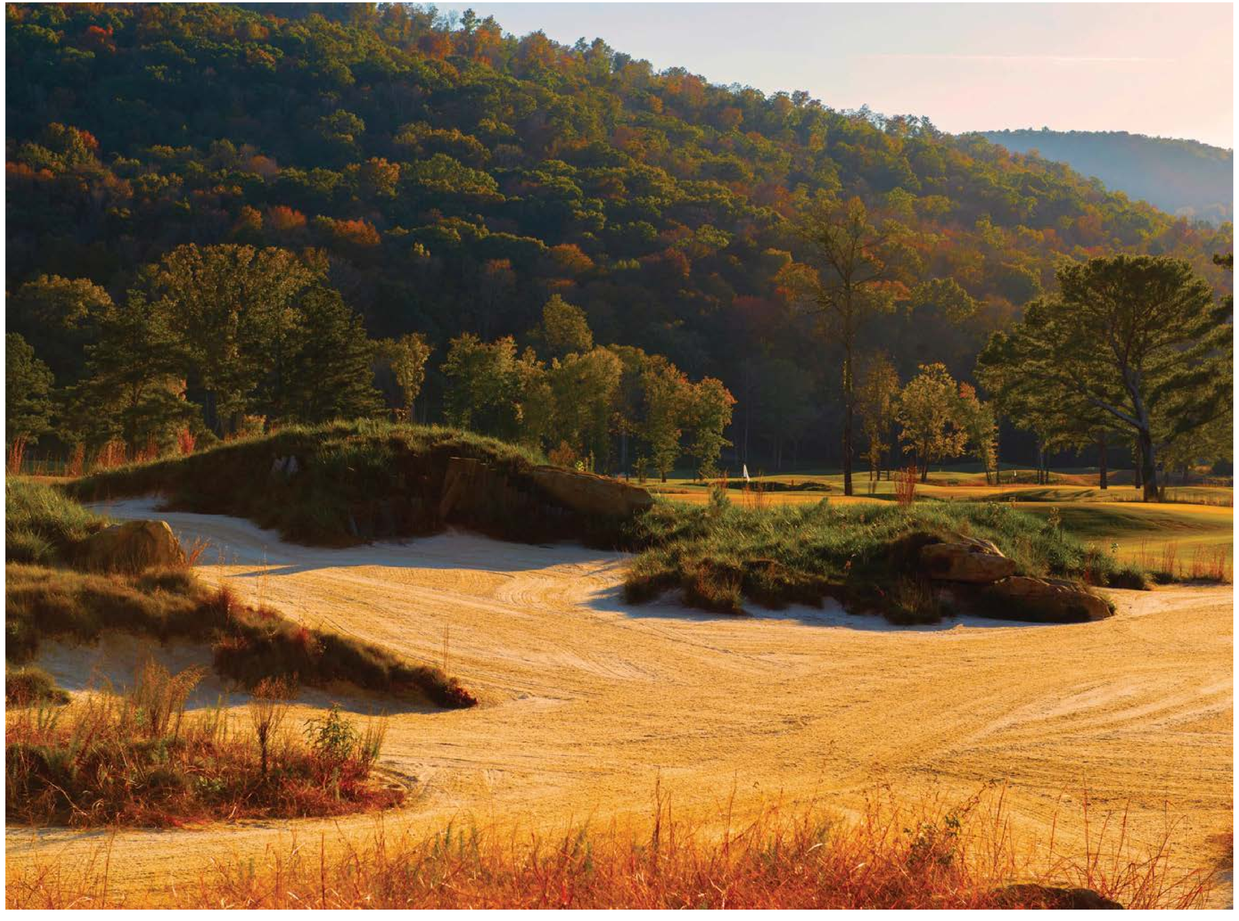
4

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION







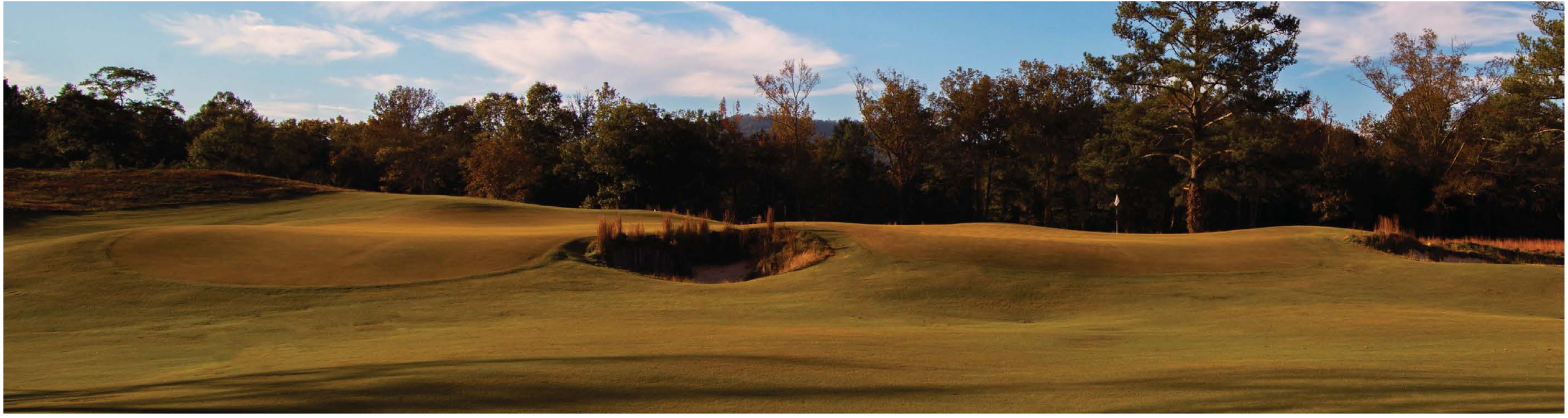
Drivable par fours are considered by many to be the most fun and, when executed properly, the most strategic of holes. It would be understandable to have somewhat of a letdown after the tremendously dramatic fourth hole, but the 283-yard fifth refuses to take a back seat and, as a result, immediately establishes itself as one of the most highly entertaining and strategic short par fours in the world. After a short stroll from the fourth green, players walk across a beautifully constructed boardwalk, through the waste bunker and onto the elevated back tee, which provides a commanding view of the 100-yard wide 5th fairway, waste area, and third fairway. Strategic dilemmas abound as golfers who choose a layup must consider the correct angle of approach into the boldly contoured, boomerang green, as the pin placement will exert a great deal of influence over the optimal area from which to approach the hole. Bold golfers intending to reach the green on the drive must deal with a beautifully constructed greenside hazard, which is adjacent to the waste area, and a devilish, centrally positioned ten-foot deep pot bunker lined with railway sleepers. Once in this hazard, it is possible that multiple strokes will be necessary to successfully escape its depths. Combined with the putting surface and the tightly mown surrounds, this feature ensures that scores ranging from eagle to triple bogey will be common. It is a rare and beautiful paradigm when dramatic opportunities for success and failure reside in such close quarters.

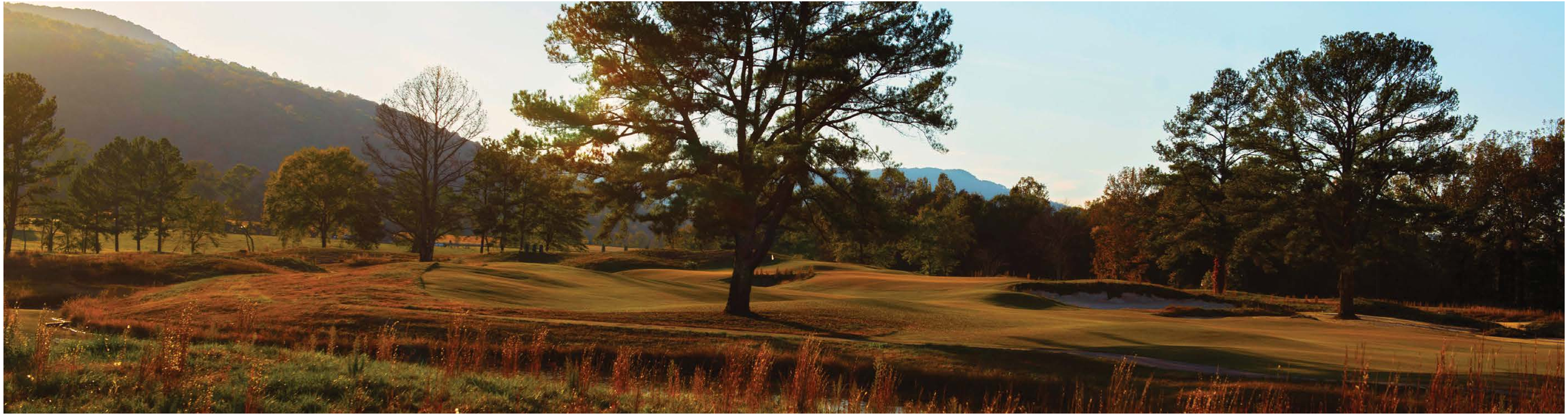
HOLE

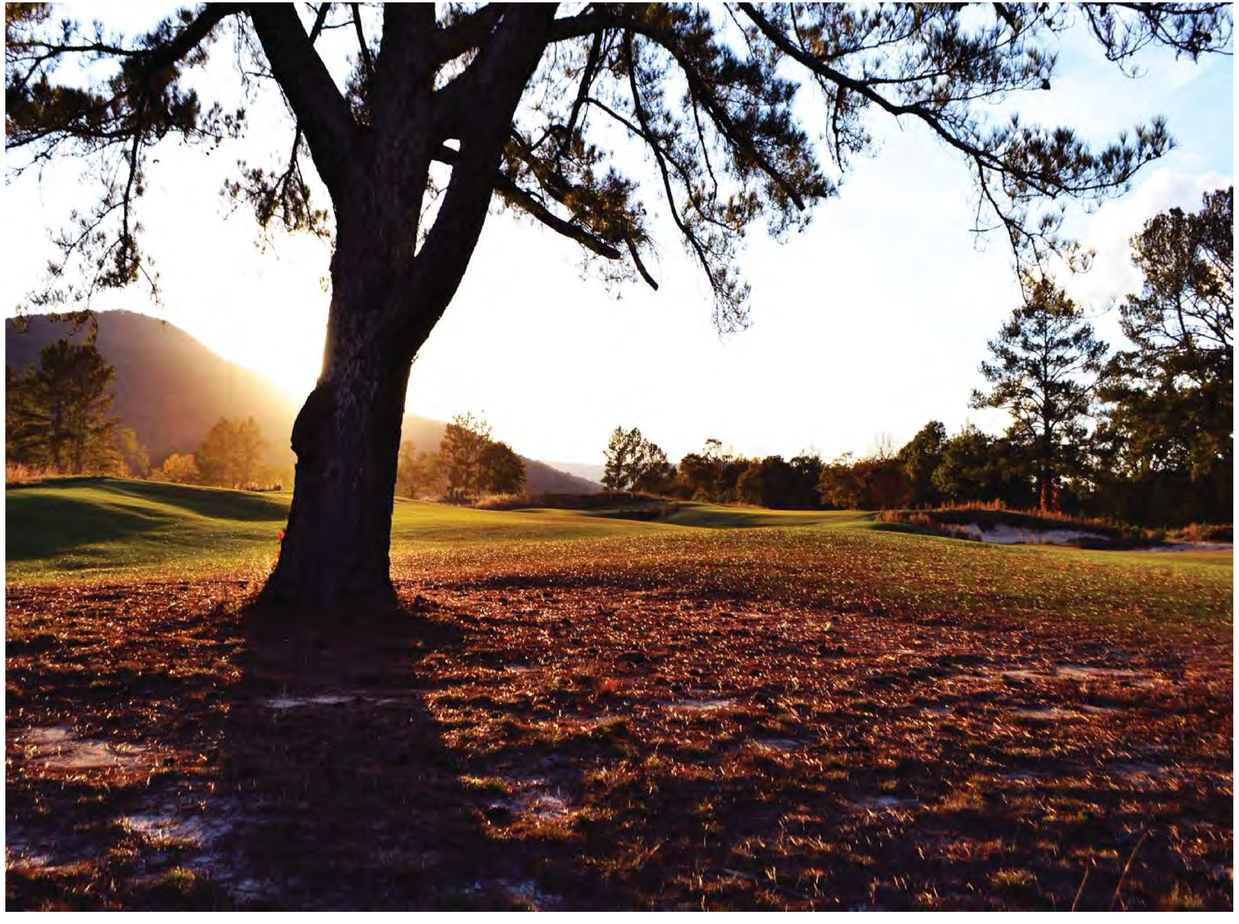
5

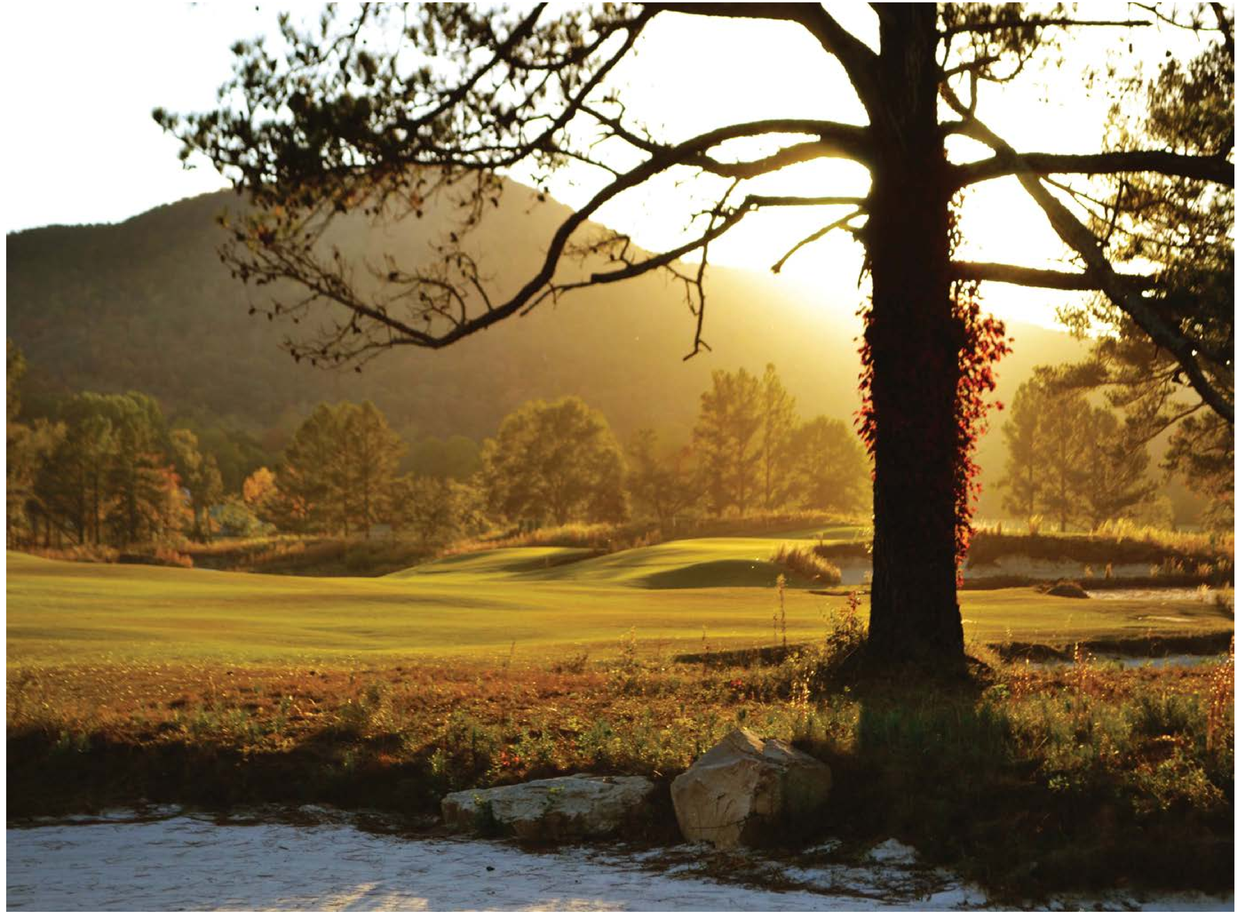
PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION









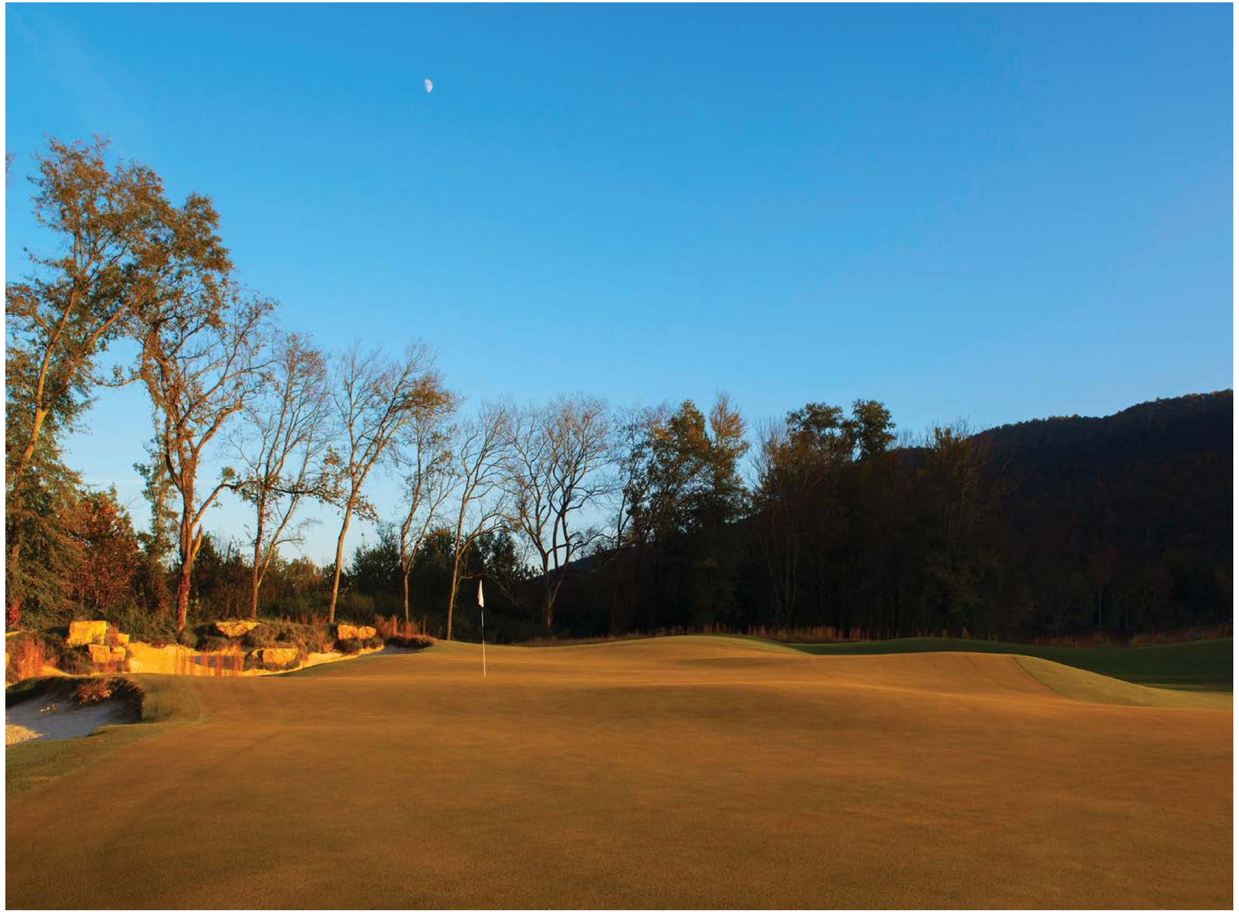
One of the most enjoyable aspects to one's round on the course is the natural ebb and flow of the routing. After playing the reachable fifth hole, players are confronted with a 440-yard cape hole, which is the longest par four on the course. The diagonal of the tee shot and green setting, with a far left pin that dangles over the edge of the lake, create a wonderful strategic scenario where players will have the option to attempt an all-or-nothing heroic carry on their approach. For the first time on the course, the players are not asked to deal with any fairway bunkering. Instead, the simple, but effective strategy of the water left and an expansive, 80-yard wide fairway to the right create the challenge, interest, and visual drama on the tee shot. The right-front side of the green is also open, and the uniquely angled putting surface is highly receptive to run-up shots for players who choose to avoid the water on the approach. The most cleverly played shots along the ground also have the opportunity to take advantage of a strong central roll in the green, which can help re-direct balls toward the more difficult to access left-hand pins. For a course that is beautifully arranged for match play, the sixth hole, with its heroic characteristics, will play a central role in determining the outcome of many matches.

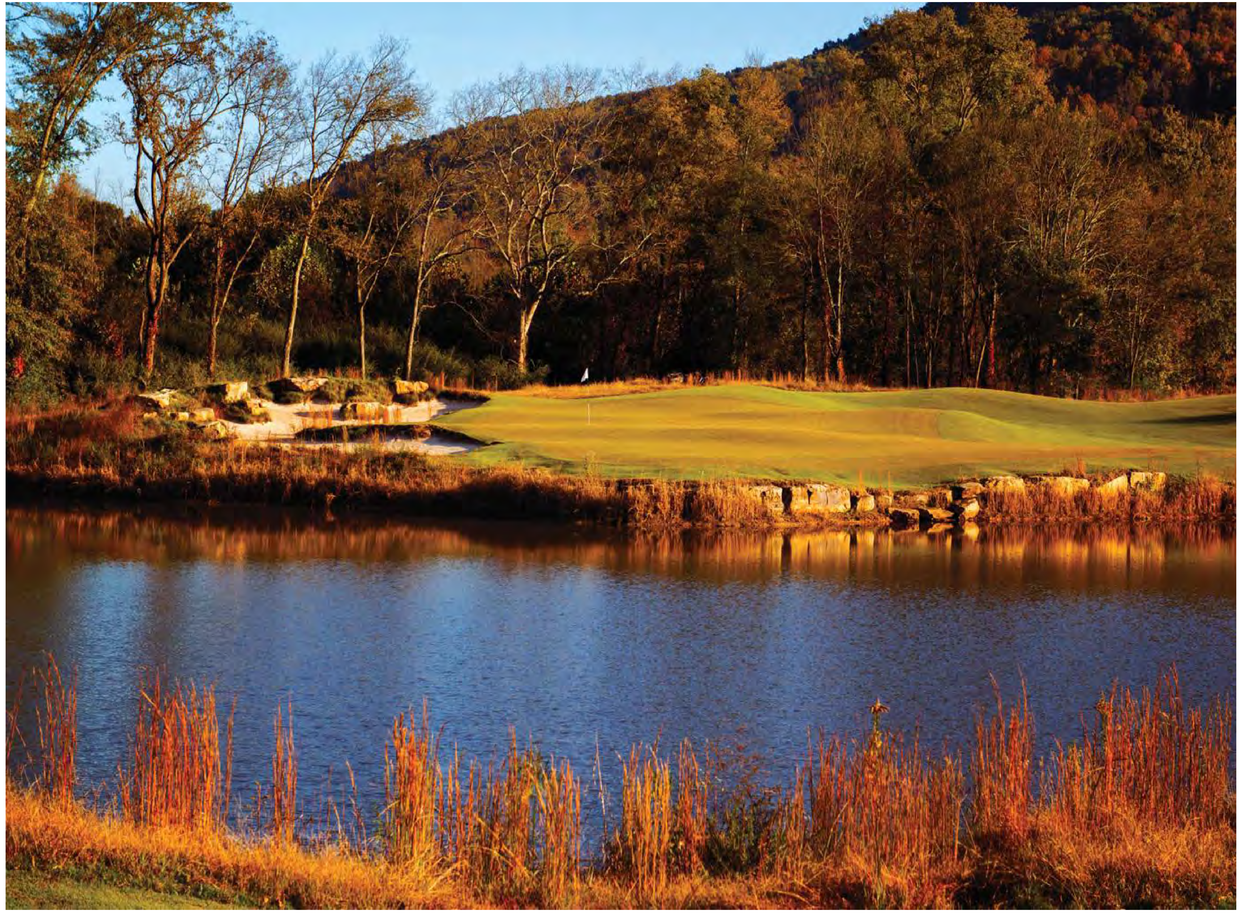
HOLE

6

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION





Prior to construction, the seventh and eighth holes were far and away the worst holes on a desperately decrepit layout. The playing corridors on both had been senselessly choked out by excessive tree planting campaigns over the 60-year history of the club. Miniature playing corridors, hideous maintenance standards, and bland, target golf were the unfortunate norm for these holes. As if these conditions were not enough, an open concrete ditch bisected the two holes, making lost balls common and already skinny fairways entirely unplayable. When this prior reality is contrasted with the outrageously strategic and fun golf holes that currently occupy the same ground, it is difficult to imagine how this transition was even possible. In a testament to the power of sheer grit and talent, our team transformed these holes into what they are today: back-to-back, short par fours that utilize timeless strategic lessons to their best mutual advantage. Seven and eight share a 150-yard wide fairway full of ridges, strategically placed bunkers, and irregular contours. The previously introduced concept of 'tightly mown short grass as a hazard' is the defining characteristic of the two holes. On the 310-yard seventh, two wonderfully artistic and strategic bunkers set the tone for the hole. While the fairway is nearly endless in its scale, clever players will find the skinny section of turf that is most likely to yield birdie putts after the approach. From a difficult to reach slot on the far right side of the fairway, players will learn that the domed green is most receptive from this angle. However, the difficulty increases exponentially the farther you move off of the ideal line of play, as the left side of the green steeply falls away and deflects anything less than a perfectly struck shot. Additionally, the central ridgeline can create visibility and depth perception issues for the golfer who fails or refuses to challenge the bunkering off of the tee. The style of recovery shot chosen around the green will be plentiful, as anything from a putt to a flop shot will be common as players attempt to navigate the challenges presented by the daunting contours in and around the green complex.

HOLE

7

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION

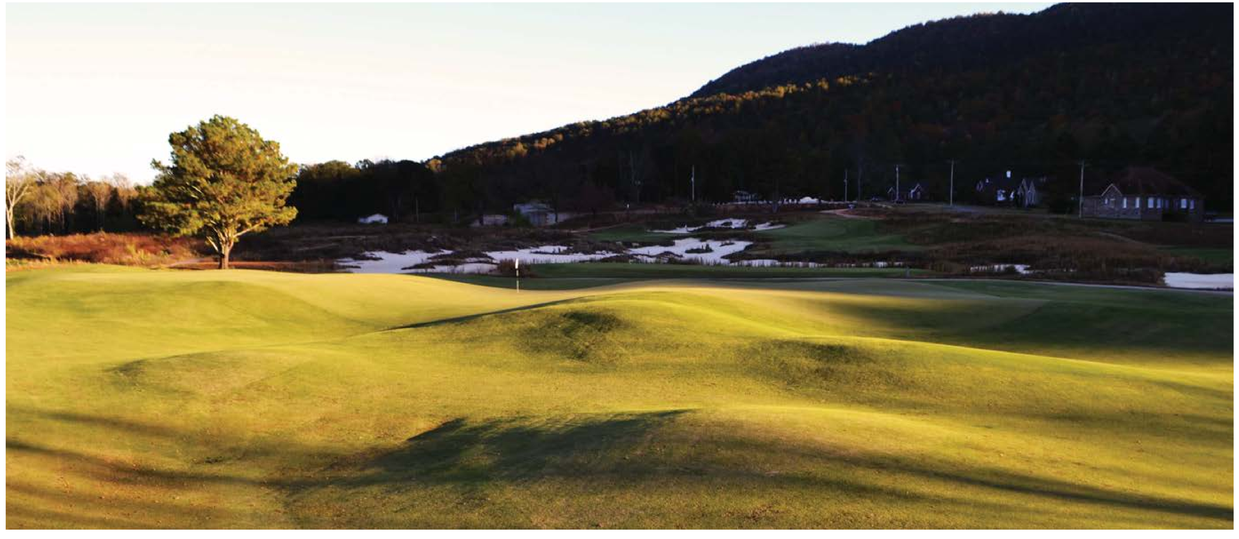
At a mere 355 yards, there was a danger that the strategy and playing characteristics of the seventh and eighth holes could be seen as being too similar, and would, therefore, become monotonous over time. At this stage of the round, any such mistake was entirely unacceptable. Fortunately, the eighth stands alone from its cousin, the seventh, but shares important cohesive strategic and shaping characteristics with its natural relative. In contrast with the prior, smallish putting surface, the double plateau eighth is a behemoth at 12,500 square feet, the second largest on the course. Additionally, the angles required for success on the seventh are irrelevant on the eighth, as pin placement on the massive green will dictate the optimal angle of approach from the outrageously wide fairway. Counterintuitively, play from the center of the fairway is the least likely spot to yield low scores or shots that have a reasonable chance to rest near the hole. Instead, the well-protected outer margins of the hole will provide the clever player with the best angle of approach to the surreal putting surface. As if it were a clock in a Salvador Dali painting, the green seems to drape over its surroundings, the outrageous contours deflecting any less than ideally struck shots to the immense, tightly mown and topographically heaving surrounds. In a flattering comparison, the eighth green has drawn comparisons to the all-world sixteenth at North Berwick. While it is impossible to re-create the feel of an iconic masterpiece like the aforementioned green, our eighth certainly provides immense playing interest with its massive playing corridor, irregular topography and green that contains a 4-6' deep swale running through its interior.

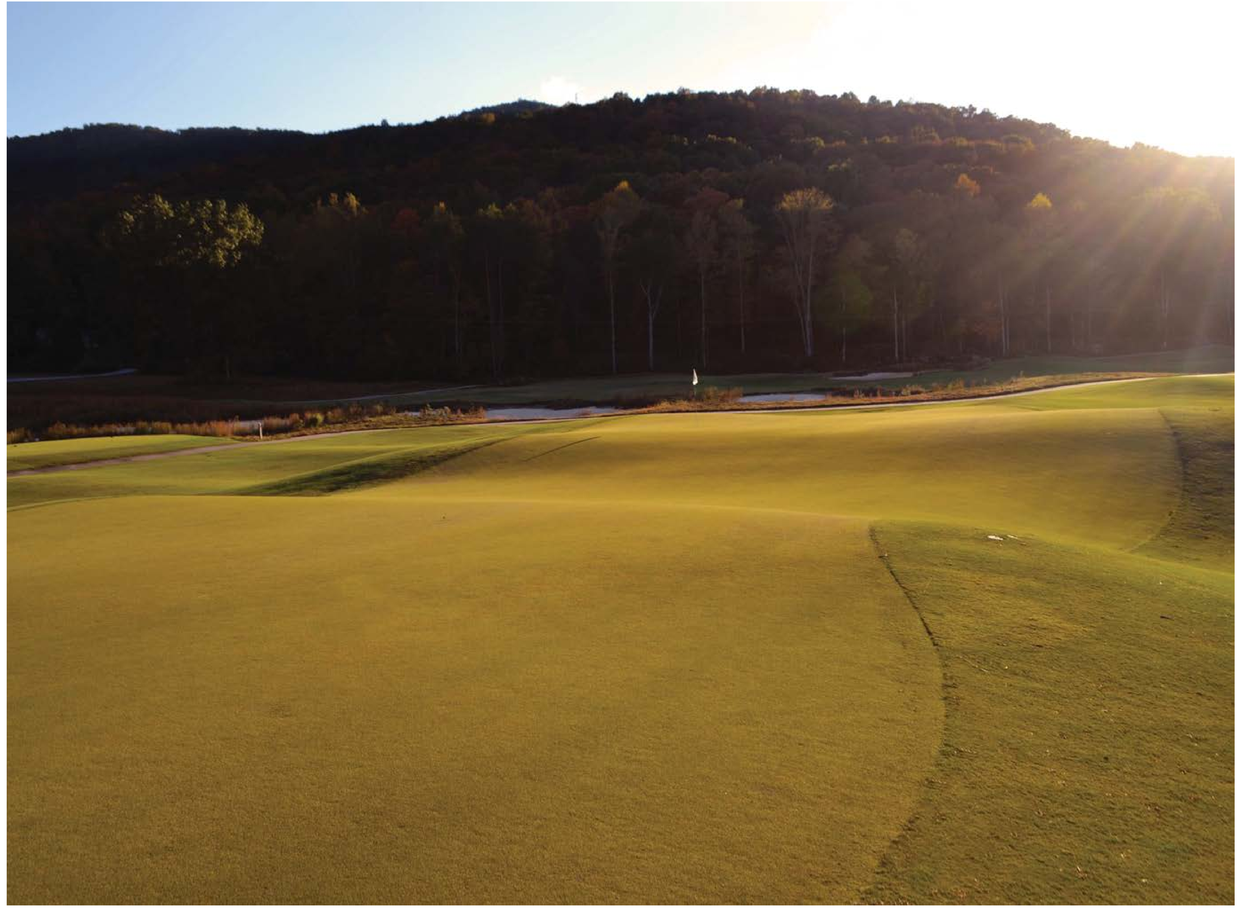
HOLE

8

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION

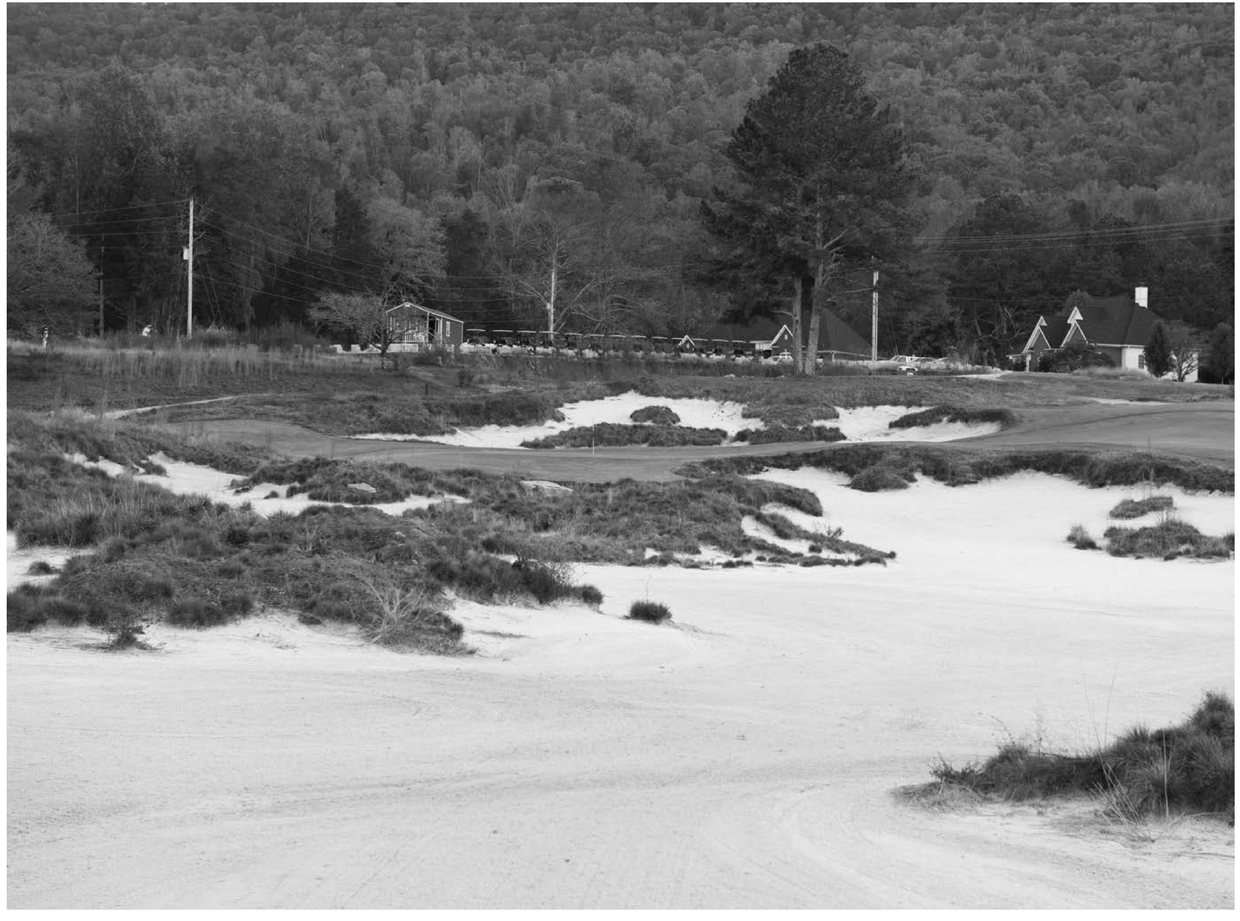




On a golf course intended to sustain and promote the superior form of golf, match play, it was of paramount importance to end the round with a bold, strategic, and highly visual flourish. How to accomplish such lofty goals on a site that would only yield a short par 3 finish of only 90-140 yards? The flamboyant answer to this question is our ninth hole, a hybrid of two of the most iconic par three designs in the world, the 'short' and the 'redan'. Nowhere else on earth is there a green that captures the soul of these seemingly divergent design templates in one hole. Depending upon the tee and pin location, the hole can play within either style or as a hybrid. On a course full of extreme, but highly playable features, the ninth stands alone as a bold and singular test of one's mettle to stand on the tee, with a match on the line, and hit the shot necessary to achieve success. The green, through intensive site work, maintains its playability in spite of a ten (10') foot fall from its highest to lowest point. Brilliant shots to the far left pin may avoid the highly artistic, but intimidating, front and back bunkers by utilizing the slope to carry the ball along the ground for roll of over 120'. As if this dramatic shaping was not enough, the hole is cut directly underneath the amphitheater-like clubhouse setting, an area from which friends will watch friends succeed or fail on the final shot on our remarkably distinctive layout.

HOLE

9

PRE-CONSTRUCTION

CONSTRUCTION