

Atlantic Golf Club Course Preview

By David Shefter
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Atlantic Golf Club in Bridgehampton, N.Y., has drawn high praise from golf publications since it opened in 1991. The Rees Jones design will be hosting its first USGA championship, the 2010 U.S. Mid-Amateur. (L.C. Lambrecht/USGA)

Atlantic Golf Club, Bridgehampton, N.Y.

Yardage: 7,044 yards

Par: 36-36—72

Opened: 1991

Designer: Rees Jones

Second stroke play course: The Bridge

Yardage: 7,280 yards

Par: 36-36—72

2009 champion: Nathan Smith

USGA championships: This will be the first USGA championship at the club and the first U.S. Mid-Amateur conducted in the Empire State.). Only one other Mid-Amateur has been staged within the Metropolitan Golf Association area and that was the 2002 edition held at The Stanwich Club in Greenwich, Conn.

Championship notes: A couple of holes at Atlantic could play to different yardages, depending on the tee locations. The eighth can measure at 350 yards or 288 yards, while No. 17 is listed at 332 or 294 yards. The par-5 closing hole will play either 611 or 560 yards.

New York state of mind: While it might be the first U.S. Mid-Amateur to be held in the Empire State, a couple of New Yorkers have won this championship. Ken Bakst took the title in 1997 and George Zahringer won in 2002.

Genesis of a club: Constructing new golf courses on the eastern end of Long Island can be a challenging task, given the available land and stern opposition from environmentalists. But Lowell Schulman, a successful developer of corporate office parks in Westchester County and a member of the USGA's Museum Committee, found an ideal piece of property in which to

construct a private club after spending a weekend in the Hamptons in August of 1988. After looking at four parcels of land, he discovered the 204-acre Equinox Farm owned by Francesco Calesi. The topography of swales, ridges and ponds excited Schulman and Rees Jones was hired to design the golf course.

Environmentally friendly: Any new project in the Hamptons faces challenges from environmentalists who want to preserve the precious pieces of land in its natural state. So Schulman reached out to Tom Julius, an environmentally friendly associate, to work on the project full time. He consulted with scientists in various fields to ensure the course would not do any harm to the habitat. Many native grasses were left untouched between fairways and even two endangered species – the Northern Harrier (bird of prey) and tiger salamander – were protected.

Course notes: Atlantic could be described as a links-style layout with plenty of knobs, mounds and moguls looking as if they had been there forever. The routing rises and falls with the topography with the fescue framing many of the holes. Large bunkers take away some entrances to portray a dogleg effect on approach shots. The course is devoid of water hazards, with its main defense being the wind.

High praise: Atlantic had a preview opening in the fall of 1991, but didn't open for full play until 1992. When it did get seen for the first time, *Golf Digest* magazine name it the best new private course for 1992. Its first major championship was the 1995 Met Open won by Darrell Kestner. Atlantic head pro Rick Hartmann, who has played in the U.S. Open, has won the title twice (1998 and 2004).

The Bridge not too far: Also designed by Rees Jones and opened in 2002, The Bridge will be used as the second course during stroke-play qualifying. The club is owned by Robert Rubin, a former commodities trader, and was built on the site of the old Bridgehampton Motor Racing Circuit. The clubhouse is also quite unique. It is glassy and futuristic, and features a Pilates room to go along with the traditional dining room and bar. On the course itself are remnants of the old racetrack, including guardrails and flag stations.

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