

# Short courses showcase golf as a brisk outdoor recreation that everyone can play quickly.



Miniaturized versions of their full-size siblings, they follow no formalized number of holes—there are 13 at Bandon Preserve at Bandon Dunes, 17 at The Sandbox at Sand Valley, and 10 each at The Nest at Cabot Cape Breton and the short course at Forest Dunes in northern Michigan, both of which opened this summer.

Because short courses usually accompany one or more

regulation layouts, their architecture is free to offer more radical contour and psychedelic short-game situations. Ideal for matches and light-hearted social play, golfers are encouraged to experiment, to carry just two or three clubs, to chase long bump-and-runs off slopes and backstops, and putt 90 yards tee to green.

The intrinsic nonconformity promotes an anything-

**THRILL RIDE** The 16th at the 17-hole Sandbox course at Sand Valley in Wisconsin.

goes spirit. At The Cradle at Pinehurst you can play barefoot and order snacks at a food truck while music streams through speakers. Goats are used as caddies at the seven-hole McVeigh's Gauntlet at Silvie's Valley Ranch in eastern Oregon (wearing cooler packs, they'll also carry your refreshments). And quirky, severe hazards prompted The Bad Little Nine at Scottsdale National to bill itself as the world's toughest—or at least strangest—par-3 course.

So far, most short courses have been at private clubs or destination resorts, places that cater to captive audiences of golfers already primed for fun. Often played as a kind of nightcap near dusk, in large groups with a beer or cocktail in tow, they are a kind of golf amuse-bouche, delectable bites between and after fuller plates, occasionally flavorful enough to steal the meal. And they can work almost anywhere: along an Ozark bluff (the Mountain Top course at Big Cedar Lodge), a crescent of Caribbean beach (Tiger Woods' The Playground at Jack's Bay Club in the Bahamas) or a few acres of idyllic farmland (The Sink Hole, an addition to The Club at Olde Stone in Kentucky, designed by Jerry Lemons).

More short courses are on the way: David McLay Kidd has built the frolicking new 14-hole Quicksands at Gamble Sands in central Washington. Bill Coore and his shapers are adding a collection of 14 par 3s and 4s at Barnbougle Dunes in Tasmania. Woods is revamping the old nine-hole Peter Hay short course at Pebble Beach.

Unique settings and the natural bonhomie that short courses foster undoubtedly amplifies their appeal. But enjoyment has largely been

limited to club members and committed golf travelers. A better purpose might be as city-based stand-alone designs that promote a faster, more playful game with architecturally ambitious greens and no lost balls. Without rigid expectations of length or hole numbers, they can occupy small ecological footprints, even in urban settings.

We're just beginning to see it. At Grand Oaks Reserve in Cleveand, Texas, Mike Nuzzo has built Three Grand, a 1,000-yard, nine-hole accompaniment to the regulation Nine Grand course. In Verona, Wis., the architectural firm Lohmann Quitno is creating a 13-hole C.B. Macdonald/Seth Raynor template-themed course called Pioneer Pointe. Davis Love III and his brother, Mark, are directing an ambitious overhaul of the historic Belmont Golf Course five miles north of downtown Richmond, Va., involving the restoration of 12 original A.W. Tillinghast holes plus a new six-hole, beginner-friendly short course. Likewise, the city of Chaska, Minn., has hired Benjamin Warren/Artisan Golf Design to build a bunkerless, par-30 design based on classic British and American holes emphasizing affordability and accessibility for newcomers, seniors and golfers with disabilities (adaptive golfers will serve as consultants).

Towns and municipalities once eagerly pursued golf as a wholesome, worthwhile amenity for citizens. If golf hopes to revive its reputation as an integrated community asset and showcase the game as a brisk outdoor recreation that everyone can play quickly and in their own way, short courses would seem to be the perfect vehicle. The model is out there. We just need to bring it closer to home.

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Photograph by Brian Oar