

COMMENTARY

Legacy sees stars

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EAST GULL LAKE —

One stop shopping might be the new motto for the Legacy Courses at Cragun's Resort in East Gull Lake.

In Golf Digest's 2006 "Places to Play" rankings, which came out in May's edition, Bobby's Legacy and the Dutch Legacy both received 4 1/2 stars out of a possible five. It's the first time either course received 4 1/2 stars and the first ratings of any kind for Bobby's.

The two Legacy courses join Grand View Lodge's Pines, Preserve and Deacon's Lodge with 4 1/2-star distinction for this area.

The Classic at Madden's Resort in East Gull Lake became only the second lakes area course to receive 5 stars. The Pines earned the first 5-star ranking in 2002. The Classic was the only course in Minnesota to earn 5 stars.

The Legacy's catch is it's the only resort in Minnesota with the distinction of having both courses facilitated with one clubhouse.

"That's the highlight of our nine-star rating," said Chuck Klecatsky, director of golf at the Legacy. "People can come up and enjoy a round of golf on one course, have lunch and go right back out and play another 4 1/2-star course. They don't have to drive anywhere.

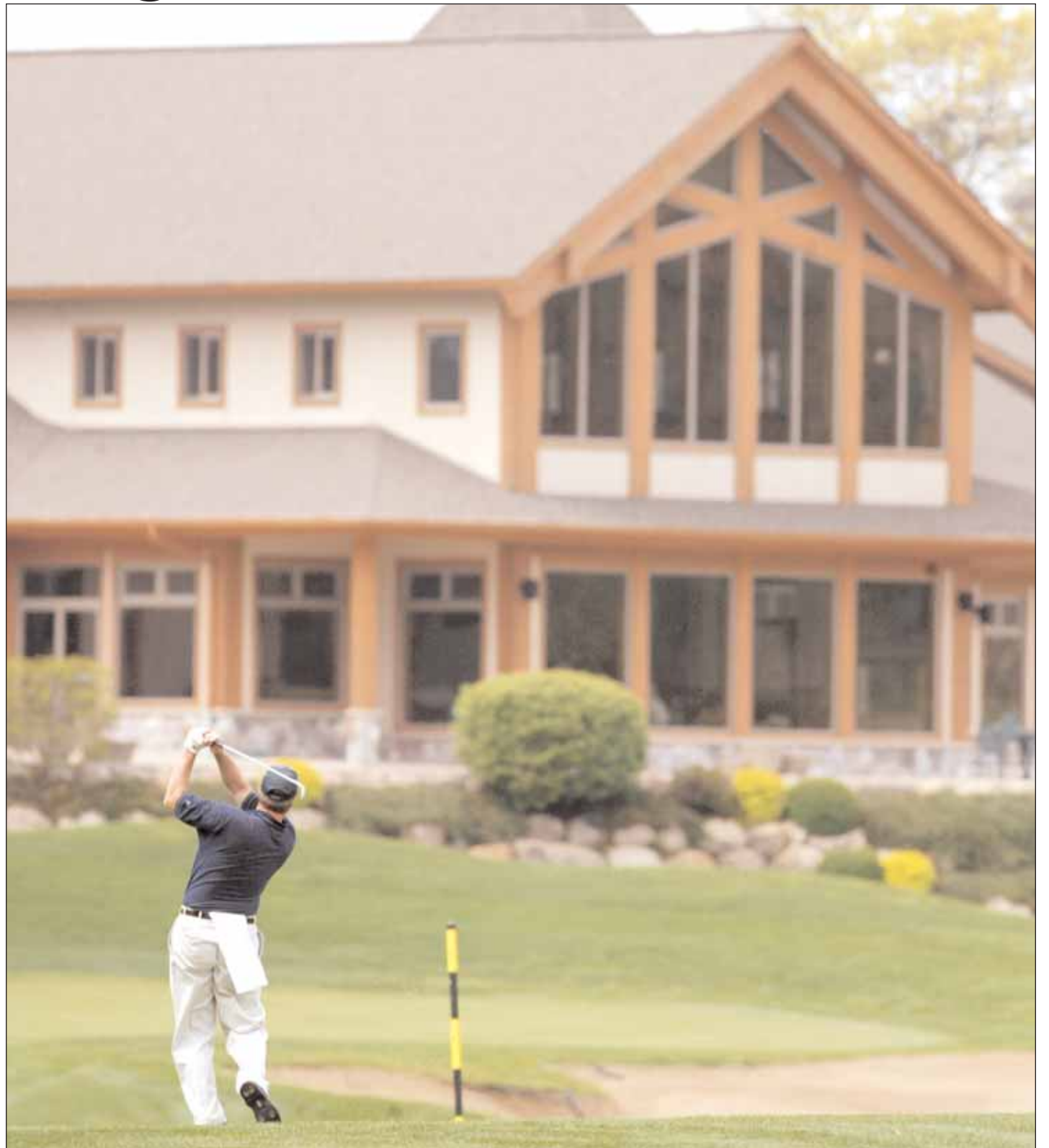
"Plus, if we have a tournament on one course, the remaining players don't feel like they're getting the ugly stepsister."

Cragun's made a commitment to improve the condition of its courses. Then it backed the commitment with a monetary investment in equipment.

Resort owner Dutch Cragun said new greens mowers made a significant difference in putting and in the overall playability of the greens.

"What we're hearing is how true the greens are," said Klecatsky. "Matt McKinnon and his staff took the funding that Dutch provided and transformed the courses from new construction into something the public, and specifically the people at Golf Digest, feel is worthy of the rating."

Cragun said he tired of hearing about how many golf balls players lost. In keeping with its Audubon International Signature Sanctuary



Brainerd Dispatch/Nels Norquist

The clubhouse at the Legacy Courses at Cragun's is the home of two 4 1/2 star rated courses according to Golf Digest.

guidelines, Cragun's cleared underbrush to help players find their stray shots and quicken the pace of play.

Cragun's also reconstructed the 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th holes on Bobby's course. The plan was to make those holes and the entire course more playable.

"The opinion was Bobby's was too tough," said Cragun. "We wanted to balance the two courses out and make them different, but equal. We worked hard on those four holes to do that. The best indicator that this worked is our Thursday men's league is completely willing to play either of our 18-hole courses."

The condition of the course, and pace of play, were two of five criteria Golf Digest readers used to rate courses. The other three were overall golf experience, value for the money and standard of service at the facility.

More than 20,000 Golf Digest readers filled out ballots on more than 6,500 courses in North America.

"These ratings come without any gimmicks and are totally unbiased and unexpected," said Cragun. "It was just players coming to our course last summer who liked what they saw. That brings real pleasure because it wasn't manipulated."

"To have two courses with the same rankings coming out of one clubhouse, I guess you could say I'm in golf heaven. It validates the risk we took at age 65 in building these courses."



LEGACY
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