

It seems that unless you know what you're looking for, a lot of golf resorts appear to be the same. Such is not the case with Cragun's Golf Resort featuring the Legacy Golf Courses in beautiful Brainerd, Minnesota. Opened in 1998, Cragun's is the mastermind of famed golf course architect, Robert Trent Jones, Jr. It is evident that Jones Jr. didn't just set out to build a golf destination; he set out to create a distinctive golf destination.

Case in point, Cragun's owns the elite status as an Audubon International Signature Sanctuary. It is only the second resort course in the world to be so distinguished (the first being the prestigious Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina). The Legacy has been named among the "Best Environmental Golf Courses in the World" as well. Therefore, all three courses were fit into the land with minimal disturbance including weaving the courses around a 104 acre lake and a stunning waterfall.

Secondly, Cragun's is home to an ultra-cool 9 hole Reversible Par-3 Course. Robert Trent Jones, Jr's. unique style offers the variety of 18 different holes strategically placed clockwise or counter-clockwise depending upon the day you visit. "I only know of a couple of other reversible courses in the US," stated PGA Director of Operations Chuck Klecatsky. "This short Par-3 course tests most shots in the bag. Holes range from 85 to 200 yards and anyone that can go around in 27 or less shots

is a fine iron player. The reversible aspect is great because people can play the course two days in a row and get a different experience. The greens are receptive to shots from both directions, and we get 18 different holes out of the land that it takes for 9," concluded Klecatsky. Adult resident guests play for only \$10, non-resort guests play for \$15, while juniors play at a minimal charge when accompanied by an adult. For tee time availability, call 1-877-UGOLF18.

Looking for more fun even after your four hour thrill ride is over? Trent Jones Jr. has incorporated the flair for the dramatic by designing The Gambler's Hole, or the 55th hole at Cragun's. The 115 to 75 yard par-3 is meant to decide all bets still riding on the course. Even though it's a short iron off the tee, a bevy of bunkers guarding the green will make you pause before firing at the flag.

The uniqueness of Cragun's doesn't stop there as one of their championship courses, The Dutch, features an anomaly of six par-3's, six par-4's, and six par-5's. One of the finest long holes according to PGA Director of Operations Chuck Klecatsky is lucky number 13. "Our 13th hole on The Dutch course is par-5 where the risk/reward characteristic of the golf course is showcased. Players are challenged by one of nine tee complexes on the hole and where the tees are placed influences the options the player has. An aggressive drive



can leave the player as little as 175 yards into a green that is 50 yards deep and protected by a wetland in front of it. The fairway is at an angle to the tees so this hole gets more and more fun the more times you play it," explained Klecatsky.

Klecatsky added: "Dutch #16 is another top hole on the Dutch 18. A generous landing area off the tee presents the golfer with a decision as to where to lay up before approaching the green. A wetland bisects the fairway from 225 to 150 yards from the green so there are two routes the player can take to lay-up."

Being a member of the media means I get deluged with a "Top List" for everything in the world of golf almost on the daily basis. I receive press releases exalting the best new courses, old courses, remodeled courses, and even courses affiliated with casinos. But for my money, there is only one list that truly defines greatness. No it's not MGM's annual

Editor's Choice Awards, its Golf Digest's Best Places to Play 5-Star Rating System. The list features the coup de grace of courses throughout America, and consists of only 24 properties total. In 2008, The Dutch Course was added to that exclusive list based upon many factors including layout, conditioning, service, and overall experience.

The other championship course on site is dubbed Bobby's Legacy. The par 73 layout plays to 6,755 yards and features more elevation changes than the Dutch 18. According to Chuck Klecatsky, any hole that has an "8" in its number is a sure-fire winner! "Bobby's Legacy has a beautiful green site at the end of number 8. In order to get there the player must hit an uphill tee shot that looks harder then it plays. A long second shot leaves a mid to short iron into this elevated green. A waterfall and stream protect the right side and front of this green. Once up to the putting surface, the calm and serenity of this sight can seemingly only be broken up by the occasional three-putt."





The Perfect Week to Play in Brainerd

The entire Brainerd Golf Trail has a distinctive package available from May 6th-9th, 2010. Stay at any of the resorts on the Trail and then play on all the courses (unlimited golf with cart) for one rate. Two nights and three days of golf is \$369 + tax per golfer, and three nights and four days of golf is \$479 + tax per golfer. This package has been designed to give golfers the true flavor of all the great golf on the Trail for one price. Interested golfers can call 1-800-CRAGUNS for details and reservations.



"Another top hole on Bobby's Legacy is number 18. This mid-length par-5 plays around a large wetland in a horseshoe shape. Depending on the amount of wetland the player bites off, they can end their round with an eagle chance or a birdie! Shorter hitters play it as a three shot hole and can still end their round on a good score, "concluded Klecatsky.

Both of Cragun's Legacy Courses have rightfully carved out an impressive niche in regards to group play. Trent Jones' really has thought of everything for group and tournament play, as both the Dutch and Bobby's Legacy courses connect each other at the clubhouse, so groups can play the two 18-hole courses per day without having to travel. And their exciting Legacy Par-3 Course is right in the golfing complex if you're in a hurry or want to practice your iron play. This reversible 18-hole course is a truly unique concept in golf with two 9-hole courses that consists of 18 tees and 11 greens.

Plus, their adjacent driving range and full-service practice area lets you get your swings in before your big match. Next, their golf carts have the latest GPS Systems installed as well. The Clubhouse can accommodate groups of up to 270 in the Pavilion plus 152 in the dining area for golf banquets, award dinners or other event receptions. Finally, the second level Audubon room, featuring majestic views of tees and waterfalls, has the ability to host smaller events. If you would like Cragun's to host your golf group this year, visit www.craguns.com or call 1-800-272-4867.

