

GOLF PRO GIVES ISLAND COURSE BIG THUMBS UP - “A WEE BIT OF SCOTLAND ON THE EMERALD ISLE”

By Mike Affeldt

We have been coming to Beaver Island for the better part of a decade now. My brother-in-law Mike Reed and The Reed Family have graciously hosted us, and we fell in love with everything that makes the Emerald Isle so unique and so special. But it was only this year that we finally got to play Beaver Island Golf Course.

First, as an avid and relatively accomplished golfer, I have had the good fortune of playing many of the country’s and world’s best courses. I competed in college at the University of Michigan (GO BLUE!) and played professionally for a few years after school. I also am a panelist for Golf Digest and have the privilege of rating some our nation’s finest courses. I serve on the board of The First Tee of Greater Chicago as well as the board of my home club. My love and knowledge of the game knows no boundaries.

Great golf courses aren’t always the ones that show up in the Top 100 rankings. Enter in the chat: BIGC. It won’t be found in anyone’s “best of” list...In fact, safe bet most golfers in the state have never even heard of BIGC. However, after playing it a few times over the 4 th of July week (my fourteen-year-old nephew Patrick Reed has recently taken up golf and has a TON of game already...he was eager to go the course as much as possible) I can say without reservation BIGC is a hidden gem!

As the tag line states “a wee bit of Scotland on the Emerald Isle” it most certainly has a feel of a Scottish links or heathland course. The small tees and undulated greens are all irrigated, and the rugged fairways have some “bounce” and play firm and fast as they are not irrigated. Most greens are protected by grass bunkers with tall native grass, a definite penalty for a wayward approach. The routing of the course is superb, taking advantage of the island’s natural contours.

The short par 4 first hole is a friendly opener allowing the player to hit the generous fairway and is a great way to start a round on the Island. The second hole is a longer par 4 with a “gorse like” bush that prevents you from seeing the left half of the fairway, this tee shot really gives you the feel of being in Scotland. Hole three challenges the player with a very narrow tee shot, almost out of a chute. The diminutive green is tucked in a grove of trees and will provide some shade on a warm summer day. The par three fourth is about 170 yards and has a cavernous grass bunker that protects short right and a small man made “pond” that will grab any ball that comes up short left. When you walk under the pines and arrive on the fifth tee, there is good chance you will be greeted by one of the rescue dogs on the adjacent property on the other side of the fence. The owners have laminated pictures and descriptions of the pups and even have some doggie treats for you to give them! The fifth, and the rest of the course features native fescue grass off the fairways. In true links fashion, you will almost certainly find your golf ball if you hit it in there, but your lie will be a roll of the dice ...just the way it should be!

The sixth hole may be the best hole on the course. The 170-yard downhill par three gives you a little feel of Pine Valley. (Yes, that Pine Valley, aka the #1 rated course in the country) The slightly elevated tee shot requires you to hit a high and soft iron over a bunker to a small target. The long par five seventh gradually moves left but not before it requires you navigate a pond that features the Island’s only alligator (ok, it may be a raft). As hole seven moves slightly uphill and to the left, the par four eighth does the opposite, moving left to right and slightly downhill. The approach to the green is slightly blind and requires the player to be very accurate. The final hole, the ninth, is a medium length par four back to the clubhouse, slight dogleg left (draw preferred off tee) to small green that slopes from back to front.

BIGC fits perfectly into the island’s relaxed and unhurried nature. This is golf as it is meant to be. If you are looking for a great walk with family or friends on a really cool golf course, BIGC is your spot! (Just don’t tell too many people)



Mike Affledt



Photo credit: Beaver Island Golf course, Mike Affeldt



Patrick Reed

 **Don't forget to tune in and watch the PGA Tour Championship on August 24-27**
Rory McIlroy will be defending his 2022 Title