The Loneliness of Fred Couples P.78

THE GOLF MAGAZINE INTERVIEW *by Cameron Morfit*

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THE FLORIDA YOU DON'T KNOW

Try something new with these four terrific under-the-radar courses *By* JOE PASSOV

THE Sunshine State is home to more courses than any other state in the nation, so it's not surprising that a few quality tracks have yet to register a blip on your radar, even if you are a well-traveled golfer. If you're looking for a terrific layout—without the spring crowds—here are Florida's four best public-access courses that have managed to remain hidden gems.

Shark's Tooth Golf Club

Lake Powell, Fla.

7,204 yds, par 72; **Fees:** $90-$150; 850-534-5000, **sharkstoothgolfclub.com**

This outstanding Greg Norman design is now part of the golf collection at WaterColor Inn & Resort in the Panhandle. Outside play is limited to hotel guests, but it's well worth the tariff to play here. The second nine has a few stunning holes, like the par-5 13th and par-3 14th, which feature Lake Powell lurking on the right side. Fairways flow straight into the low profile greens while the forced carries over wetlands add beauty and menace. Shark's Tooth may just be the best public-access course you've never heard of.

The 6th (main photo) and 15th holes at Shark's Tooth.

BUFFALO COMMUNICATIONS (2)

The Deltona Club
Deltona, Fla.

7,016 yards, par 72; **Green fees:** $45; 386-789-4911, **thedeltonaclub.com**

Following a renovation by Bobby Weed, Deltona reopened in 2008 and is now one of the best values in the entire state. Located between Orlando and Daytona Beach, the course is distinguished by atypically rolling terrain interrupted by sprawling splashes of sand. These are technically not bunkers (you can ground your club in them), but they're still not the place to be if you want to play to your handicap.

LARRY LAMBERCHT/ROBBY WEED DESIGN

The huge, sandy waste areas at Deltona help keep even the best players on their toes.

LARRY LAMBERCHT/GOLDEN HILLS GOLF & TURF CLUB

Tight, oak-lined fairways and watery trouble highlight the 17th at Golden Hills.

Golden Hills Golf & Turf Club
Ocala, Fla.

7,301 yards, par 72; **Green fees:** $40; 352-629-7980, **goldenhillscc.com**

Perhaps Florida's ultimate hidden gem—and almost certainly its best bargain—is this surprisingly hilly track located between Gainesville and Orlando. Rees Jones renovated the 45-year-old Golden Hills course—which is scheduled to host the 2009 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur—in 2004, and he cites the "phenomenal topography and tremendous routing" as two of its strongest attributes. You'll need the punching power of founding member Rocky Marciano to conquer the 450-yard, par-4 18th, which darts among oaks and bunkers. The public can play here after noon, and the ridiculously low green fee includes a cart and a new sleeve of balls.

You'll need the punching power of founder Rocky Marciano to conquer the 450-yard par-4 18th at Golden Hills

Gasparilla Inn & Club
Boca Grande, Fla.

6,942 yards, par 72; **Green fees:** $95-$117; 800-996-1913, **gasparillainn.com**

You can almost smell the old money in this legendary resort between Sarasota and Fort Myers. Pete Dye redid the course a few years ago, and while not completely defanged, it is a gentler effort than most of the fearsome Dye products you've seen over the years. The 6,942-yard layout has vexing green complexes and beautiful views across Charlotte Bay. You must be a hotel guest to play, but on the plus side there are no tee times at the course—there just isn't enough traffic to warrant it.

GASPARILLA INN & CLUB

Dye's work at Gasparilla may be softer, but it still has teeth.

GASPARILLA INN & CLUB

The gorgeous views of Charlotte Bay make even a tough round at Gasparilla worth the price of admission.