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April 2008

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Some Are Better Off Forgotten





Lake Presidential

D.C.'s Newest Landmark

Lake Presidential Readies for Opening Day

By Chris Counts

The long awaited debut of Lake Presidential is finally upon us. In May you can discover for yourself why this golf course will get plenty of nominations for the new *Commander in Chief* of the Capital Golf Scene.

The golf course, while ready for sometime now, has just been sitting, breathing and blossoming in anticipation of spring. Not many golf courses are afforded the luxury of rest, but then again, this is not just any golf course.

The project is that of Landmark Land Company, responsible for revered layouts such as Oak Tree, the Ocean Course at Kiawah and PGA WEST. Lake Presidential is now set to take hold of that tradition. In fact, the company is so high on the golf course; they moved their entire operation to the Washington area. It's 20 minutes from the White House. Pennsylvania Avenue literally leads you right into Upper Marlboro and the Lake Presidential grounds, and a spacious clubhouse which overlooks the scenic 9th and 18th holes and a shimmering 30 acre lake.

My tour of the course was on a beautiful late afternoon. The sun highlighted the track just right. It painted the front nine as marvelous, and the back nine as a masterpiece. Eighteen challenging, equally unique golf holes await.

Recently I sat down with three influential team-members: Course co-designer (along with Jeff Potts) Chris Cole, Head PGA Professional Nathan Presnal, and Landmark Director of Communications, Brian McCallen. Together, they provided a better story than I could ever write. The story of Lake Presidential Golf Club, as told by those who, everyday, write new pages. *(continued on page 28)*

Hole #18 515 yards Par 5

Photo: Steve Uzzell



Cover Story



Tell us a little bit about Landmark, the company's style and philosophy?

Brian McCallen:

In terms of building and managing golf courses, Landmark's philosophy is analogous to what Donald Ross did. Donald Ross didn't just send the plans in. He built the golf course. He lived it. And these guys design it, build it and then Landmark operates it. So there is a lot more ownership.

Chris Cole:

We are generally involved as we say, from the womb to the tomb. We are building our own baby. It's not going to get adopted. I'm not going to give it to you and say, "Thanks for letting me design your course. Now good luck." We are doing it for ourselves. Pride in authorship. We are going to put our name on it. We are going to put our reputation on it. We want to do it all, or we don't want to do the project.

What excited you most about the D.C. market, so much that Landmark moved its headquarters on-site here at Lake Presidential?

Chris Cole:

The company chose Washington, D.C. from a location standpoint. We picked here for airports, the market. This is the best piece of ground that we've seen. (hand motions) "Let's go there!" We didn't come here to build an average golf course. We originally had the location and wanted to begin in 1999. The county however had other concerns than building a golf course at the time. So we did Doonbeg in Ireland, Arcos Gardens in Spain and others. But we always stayed at Lake Presidential, saying that, "we're going to build this golf course."

So what kind of vibe did you hope to capture, especially as it went into naming the course?

Chris Cole:

We're in Washington. Go back and look at all of the Presidents. Every president other than Jimmy Carter played golf. The leaders of our nation since WWII have all been golfers. Every one of them except Carter. Why not highlight the Presidents and the political involvement in golf.

Brian McCallen:

The Walls have gone up at those exclusive private clubs. If I'm an ambassador or dignitary visiting in the DC area and I want to play golf, my choices are very limited. This golf course should be able to step in and fill that void. Lake Presidential is positioned to become one of the top courses in the Middle Atlantic immediately.



Photo: Steve Uzzell

Nathan, as the Head PGA Professional you've been given the reigns, tell me about the ramp up to opening day and some of the folks that you brought in help bring everything up to speed from the golf operations standpoint?

Nathan Presnal:

Putting a staff together was easy. Everybody we asked, already wanted to work here. Each member of the professional staff came from an exclusive club in the area: Chevy Chase, Columbia, Baltimore CC, Queenstown. We recruited the best; People who know how to take care of people, at some of the finest courses in the area. The staff will go the extra mile to pay attention to detail; we didn't want to have to build that into anybody, that should already be there.

Chris Cole:

If you go to Kiawah or PGA WEST or any of our courses, and you didn't get the best service. We're ticked off. You were supposed to be treated the best. I didn't see that when I first came to this area. I'm not naming names. It was a prevailing attitude that was (pause)... extremely lackadaisical. That is not what Landmark has been about.

Brian McCallen:

This is the golf savviest company in the industry. We anticipate the needs of golfers because frankly the decision makers, they are all accomplished golfers. The company has championship standards. Go to any of our courses. Lake Presidential comes out of that tradition.

Nathan Presnal:

We feel that it's our privilege to have you here. It's not your privilege to be at our place. We will never give the vibe of, "you're lucky to be here." We want to develop a personal relationship with everyone.

Chris Cole:

It's over and above producing a great product; then you have to produce the experience. If you have a great product and you have the experience, then nobody can beat you.

"Lake Presidential is positioned to become one of the top courses in the Middle Atlantic immediately."

– Brian McCallen,
Director of Communications
Landmark Land Company

"We came in with the ambition of building something really, really good. And hopefully we've done that."

– Chris Cole
Course Co-designer
Lake Presidential Golf Club

"We feel that it's our privilege to have you here."

– Nathan Presnal, PGA
Head Professional
Lake Presidential Golf Club

Hole #6 435 yards Par 4

Photo: Steve Uzzell

Let's talk about the golf course. As the co-designer, Chris, what are your overall thoughts on the property that you were given to work with?

Chris Cole:

"We came in with the ambition of building something really, really good. And hopefully we've done that. We had all the resources and the ability to build naturally, instead of having to create. Instead of falsifying things with mounds and trying to create something. God gave us the piece of ground, you can just go build, and now I'm going to build it to the tree lines so it looks even more natural.

Nathan Presnal:

I think the maturity factor. You've got 80-100 ft. tall trees. It's pretty remarkable.

Chris Cole:

When it opens it's going to look 20-25 years old.

But better yet, how's it going to play?

Brian McCallen:

As far as the challenge to the golfer goes, the way I see it from the standpoint of an avid, amateur golfer, is this is a strategic golf course. The golf course has a lot of different looks. It doesn't favor one type of game over another. A short precise hitter can do just as good as a bomber here, if not better. It's a thinking man's golf course. But I'm sure Chris has some things to say on this as well.

Chris Cole:

I think you are right. We try to work a lot with angles, a whole lot with mixing up the golf course with par 4s and 5s. The finish; oh man let me tell you. 17 it's a little par four that feasibly you can drive. If you can get it over the hill it will roll right to the green. And then you finish with a risk reward par-5, and you can get there. Now if you miss it left, you are in the water. If you miss it right, you ain't gonna to like your chip shot.

Cover Story

Lake Presidential Golf Club
2817 Crain Highway
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774
301-574-3330
www.lakepresidential.com

Hole #1 485 yards Par 4

Photo: Steve Uzzell

Chris Cole: (continued)

But mixing up the holes to give excitement. I think we made it where, Aunt Minnie can play the golf course from her tees. "Never give her a flight further than 65 yards," Alice (Dye) would always tell Pete and myself also. "Aunt Minnie and Uncle Tom better be able to play that hole." Let's be serious, average is a 100 player. They play the game on the ground and they have a chance to run the ball onto most of the greens out here. You can give that opportunity and still build in my opinion a golf course that will challenge the hell out of people.

Nathan Presnal:

If you are in the car ride home, I think you are going to remember each and every hole. They are all so different. That's another thing that this golf course provides.

Chris Cole:

I can tell you about every shot from the first time that I played Pebble Beach. I can remember every hole. And I think that Lake Presidential has no hole that looks like another.

What kind of hidden amenities might we expect, though we never notice?

Chris Cole:

I learned this at the Ocean Course, when the wind is blowing a certain direction; it's our obligation to go put the tees where they need to be on a given day. We have got to go respond to the conditions, and every day, move those tees. These are the blues today, and trust me. You are going to thank me when you are through.

Brian McCallen:

On Chris' point, it's not like some operators choose not to do these things. They don't even think that they need to.

Chris Cole:

Now on some days, if you want to set it up for a tournament. I was telling those guys. "Do you want to bet me that you can break par? You go to the back tees and bet however much you want to bet. I'll bet you can't. It's out there. But that's not what the everyday client wants.

Nathan Presnal:

We have to be very proactive and do things in anticipation of the golfers needs. We plan everything that we do so far ahead we're able to make it really good instead of doing something half way. We're anticipating what it's going to take to have that golfer come back.

I get the feeling that you guys are ready for the public to see Lake Presidential for themselves?

Brian McCallen:

Memorability, aesthetics and conditioning. This golf course is going to be very well conditioned. It was held back a year. It's bentgrass tee to green. At this price point in the middle to upper range, people expect nice fairways. They expect speedy greens. And they are going to get them. Beyond having a course that we feel may be equal to any in the state of Maryland, I think that this will be a national buzz golf course.

Nathan Presnal:

We'll do our thing. People will draw their own conclusions as to how good Lake Presidential will be.

Check out www.lakepresidential.com for an official countdown (to the millisecond) to opening day.

