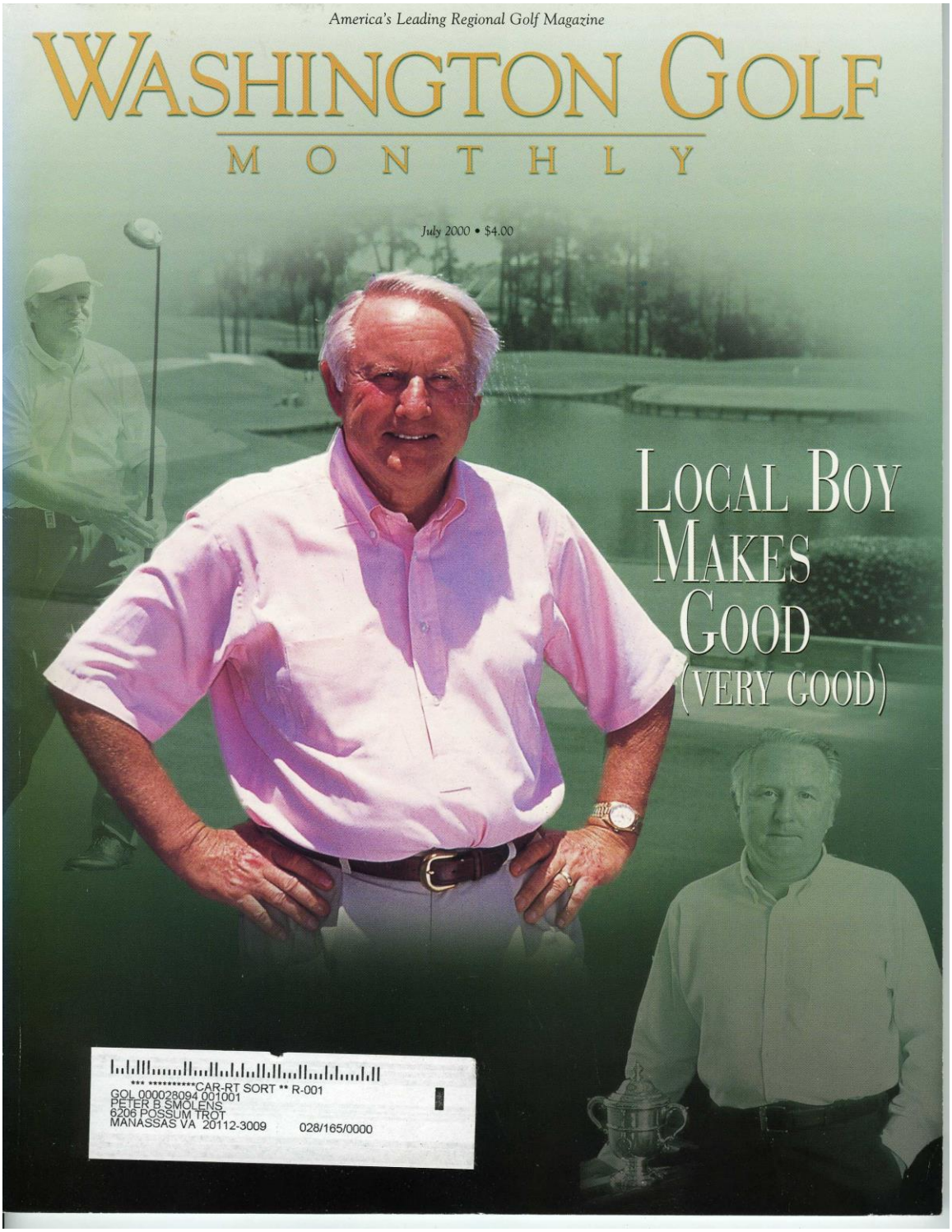
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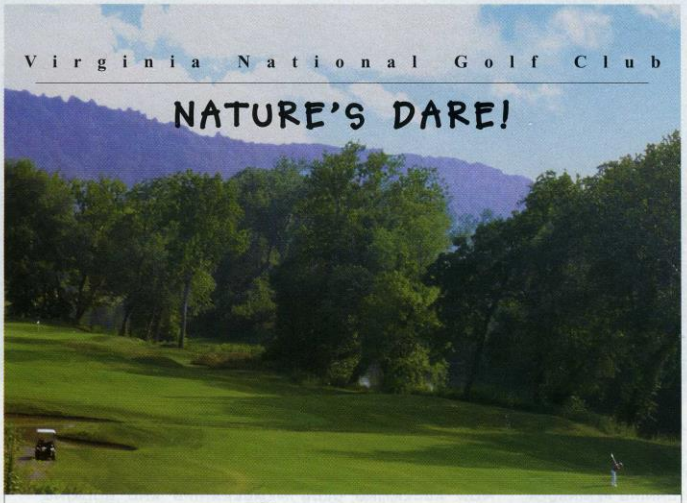
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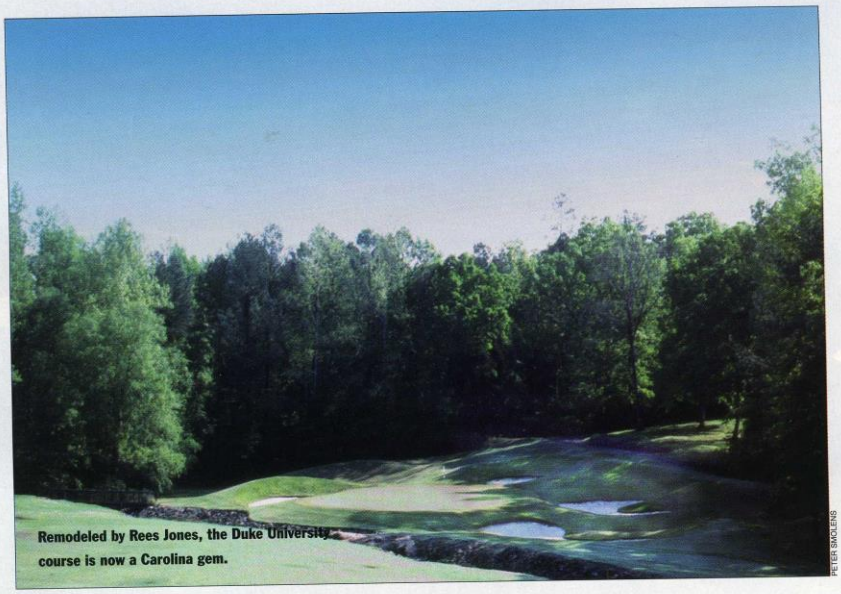
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BPA INTERNATIONAL



Remodeled by Rees Jones, the Duke University course is now a Carolina gem.

PETER SMOLENS

The Blue Devil

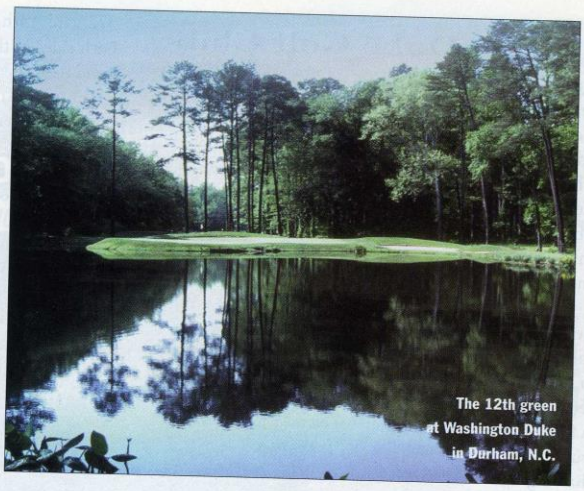
The way Duke University Golf Club head professional Ed Ibarguen tells the story, it took getting on both knees to convince Rees Jones to update his father's original design. A little groveling can go a long way. Rees Jones finally agreed to do the renovation, and, as with every other one of his father's courses that he has touched up, the results were almost too good to be true. Duke University now has a college golf course to envy, and golfers in the Durham, N.C., area have a new upscale course to put on their rotations.

Whether you play for the Blue Devils golf team or are a 15 handicap who lives in the area, the golf course has become a wonderful track of picture-perfect golf holes that make you think about each shot.

Located on the campus of Duke University, the golf course was originally conceived in the 1930s. Golf coach Wallace Wade, basketball coach Eddie Cameron (of Cameron Indoor Stadium fame) and university President William Preston started the process. In 1941, renowned architect Perry Maxwell drew up plans for a course layout. But college politics and World War II intervened.

When the war ended, the idea of a golf course at the university resurfaced. This time a new location was selected and the new kid on the block – widely respected Robert Trent Jones – was selected to design the course. His credo

was "The routing of the course is the most important element of design. Designing a great golf course is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. In almost all cases, it is best to let the land suggest the course. Use the land; don't abuse it. Fit the holes into the terrain, moving as little dirt as possible. The great architect should create the illusion that the golf holes were on the ground just lying there waiting to be grassed over."


The 12th green at Washington Duke in Durham, N.C.

The results of Jones's work opened in 1957. What golfers found was a perfect example of Jones credo. Cut through rolling sand hills surrounded by the towering North Carolina pine trees was a golf course where the land looked like it had just been waiting to become golf holes.

The course served the university well for 26 years. Unfortunately a great design will not keep its shape if the golf course is not maintained properly. For years the course was known as a great layout in lousy shape. In addition, the course was sucking university money down the drain.

One of the regular players was Tom Butter, Duke University president and director of athletics. He was the first to see the potential in this golf course. After years of neglect he put together a five-year plan to maximize investment in the course. First he hired well-respected USGA teaching professional Ed Ibarguen. Ibarguen quickly shared his vision about the potential golf course.

It was Ibarguen who first approached Rees Jones about updating his father's work. Although Jones' wife went to archrival University of North Carolina, his daughter Amy, a high school senior at the time, was considering Duke as a college choice. During one of many conversations, Rees Jones said if his daughter attended Duke he would consider the request. Although Ibarguen swears he had no influence in Amy getting into the university, he kept close tabs on the girl's admission status. When she was finally accepted, he sent Jones a Duke jacket with a note saying, "You're



part of the team."

Rees' challenge was to improve the course while still keeping the excellent layout intact. What Rees Jones accomplished was to turn a nice layout into a visual feast of sculptured bunkers and dramatic series of holes where shot making is crucial. Making subtle changes to make the course more playable, Jones used modern course design techniques so that you will never play the same shot on consecutive holes.

Some of Jones' most notable changes come early. He added several fairway bunkers in the landing area to the third hole and more in front of the green, which he moved to a new location in front of a pond. What was a solid hole built by his father has become a more challenging hole that requires some thought and shot-making skill.

Rees cut a small creek in front of the seventh green, taking nice par 5 of his father's and turning it into a spectacular 572 yarder with a green built into the side of the hill. The par-5 11th also features a creek in front of the green, and it begins a series of holes that are pleasing to the eye but trying to the scorecard.

Ibarguen says he likes to think of the 11th as the beginning of North Carolina's version of Amen Corner. This visual feast includes the short par-3 12th, where you must hit your tee shot to a small green protected by water on three sides, and the 372-yard 13th, where creeks run down both sides of the fairway and feed into a pond near the green.

Jones' design is deceptively long, especially after a night of rain softens the Bermuda grass fairways and makes the rough thick and wet. The undulating bentgrass greens make putting a fair challenge.

But since the course features five sets of tees, all golfers can play a course that is right for them. For most golfers, the regular tees will offer plenty of challenge. The Devil tees are a great challenge for the low-handicap player.

The original goal way back in the 1940s was to build a tournament-worthy golf course that could hold a U.S. Open. It's taken almost 50 years, but in 2001 the course will get its first test when it hosts the NCAA golf championship. This is often the first test for a golf course on it's way to becoming a big-time tournament course. In the heart of basketball country, golfers will be watching to see how well some of the country's top amateur golfers play a modern classic. ◆

– Peter Smolens

Duke Golf Club

Par 72	7,045 yards	74.5	139
Par 72	6,721 yards	72.87	136
Par 72	6,207 yards	70.6	128
Par 72	5,505 yards	71.5	124

Location: Durham, N.C.
Architect: Robert Trent Jones Sr. & Rees Jones
Director of golf: Ed Ibarguen
Fees: Weekdays $45, cart $18; weekends & holidays $60, cart $18; Twilight: after 3 p.m. $40 on weekends, $22 weekdays.
Spike policy: Non-metal
Tee times: (919) 681-2288
Directions: From I85 South to Route 15/501; takes exit 107; left off the ramp; third light go right. Pro shop is in the Washington-Duke Inn.

