

Rockledge Golf Club

Maintaining the charm of classic course design

At Rockledge Golf Club, there are no island greens or 600-yard holes, no man-made water hazards, artificial mounds or theatrical bunkers. No, you won't find any of the gimmicks that make modern courses almost indistinguishable from each other.

Instead, Rockledge harks back to the days of classic golf course design. That's how Rockledge began and that's how it remains, a course that flows with the landscape. Holes run side by side separated by mature trees and native rough, with several creeks, streams and brooks meandering through the course.

Even a series of tweaks and alterations over the years has retained the overall character of this West Hartford landmark, improvements that never detracted from Rockledge's endearing charm. Most recently, new drainage and rebuilt bunkers have enhanced the look and condition of

Rockledge, while new tee placements on the back tees have created a course that plays tougher for the better player.

"Over the years we have made changes to some of the holes but always kept in mind the original design," Crowe said.

Tradition and history are mainstays of the Rockledge experience. The course—one of the oldest municipal layouts in the state—began with 14 holes built in 1924 by Mike Sherman. After World War II, the course was revised by William Mitchell and extended to a full 18-holes, then acquired by the town of West Hartford in the 1960s.

Through the years, many notable golfers have played at Rockledge or called the course home. Golf legend and Connecticut native Julius Boros, a two-time U.S. Open winner, played Rockledge frequently. Another U.S. Open winner, Tommy Armour, once served as head professional. And in recent times,

LPGA player Elizabeth Janangelo learned the game and honed her skills at Rockledge.

The course also has hosted many top amateur tournaments in the state, including the CT Women's Amateur and the CT Public Links championships, a testament to Rockledge's conditioning and its challenging layout.

Not long by today's standards, Rockledge is a par-72 that plays 6,436 yards from the back tees. Most of the holes put a premium on accuracy and placement, requiring the proper setup for your approach.

One of the best challenges at Rockledge is the par-3 8th. This scenic hole plays 188 yards from the back tees and rises up in the distance against a tree-lined backdrop. The elevated green has a front and back tier, and two imposing bunkers guard the green in front.

Needless to say, it's all carry off the tee, so your club selection on this hole is absolutely critical. Crowe recommends using one or two clubs longer than what the distance measures. "Reaching the green is only half the fun," he says. "Walking off the 8th hole with a par is a good hole played."

Another good test is the 529-yard 14th hole. A good drive on this par-5 gives better players the opportunity to reach the green in two. But your second shot either way is the most important. The hole turns slightly to the right toward a green guarded by bunkers on the left, mounds of tall fescue in the back and water to the right and front. The safe play would be to lay up short.

Heading for home, the 401-yard 18th hole runs slightly downhill as you approach the green, which is somewhat elevated and protected by bunkers and retention ponds to the right and on the nearby 10th hole to the left. The green can be quick, with a severe back-to-front slope, so stay below the hole with your approach.

One of Rockledge's goals is to introduce junior golfers to the game of golf and to provide



Rockledge Golf Club
www.golfrockledge.com

2008 Club Champions:

Men: Billy McDonald
Senior: Bill Grogan
Women: Bobbi Torrison
Senior: Jenny Burrill

Course Record: 64 – Pete Davison (2003)

them with programs and playing opportunities to help them improve. Before turning professional, Janangelo won five straight CT Women's Amateur championships, the first coming when she was just 13 years old. Another Rockledge prodigy, Natalie Sheary, won three straight Amateurs and is now a standout at Wake Forest University.

Rockledge offers 80 percent of the starting times for advance reservations, with the remaining slots available for walk-on play on a first-come, first-serve basis, except during special tournaments. Tee times are taken seven days in advance for weekdays and three days in advance for weekends. You can make a reservation in person, by phone or online.

Crowe and his golf staff of PGA Professionals offer private and group lessons on Rockledge's expansive driving range. The practice area includes 28 hitting stations, two putting greens and a practice bunker. The Golf Shop is stocked with a large selection of new and used equipment, sportswear and accessories.

One of the best features at Rockledge is Angelo's on Main, a full-service restaurant open for lunch and dinner and available for private groups and special gatherings. The outside deck, offering panoramic views of the Farmington Valley, is a relaxing spot for food and drink after your round and for watching golfers as they play the 9th and 18th holes.



The 7th hole is a 327-yard par-4.