

# Gillette Ridge Golf Club

New chapter begins for a captivating course



The 13th hole is a 294-yard par-4.

You might say they saved the best for last with Gillette Ridge Golf Club. This nearly 7,200-yard championship layout created by Arnold Palmer's course design company was one of the last new courses built in Connecticut during the boom years. Since Gillette Ridge opened in 2004, new course construction has come to a complete halt and no new courses are on the drawing boards.

But Gillette Ridge hardly went unnoticed. It won numerous awards for its bold and daring design and spectacular backdrops of the surrounding Bloomfield countryside. Now, six years after CIGNA completed construction of the course on its 600-acre corporate campus, Gillette Ridge is poised for a rebirth.

Gillette Ridge is owned by the largest golf course operator in Connecticut, MDM Golf Enterprises of Hamden, which purchased the course from CIGNA two years ago. The company also operates or owns Laurel View

Country Club in Hamden, the Country Club of Woodbridge in Woodbridge, Goodwin and Keney golf courses in Hartford, Long Hill Country Club in East Hartford, Minnechaug Golf Course in Glastonbury and Twin Lakes Golf Course in North Branford.

The centerpiece of MDM Golf Enterprises is Gillette Ridge, named to honor Francis Gillette, a local 19th century reformer, politician and business leader whose house still stands on the site. And what a picturesque site it is, featuring a variety of terrain that includes tree-lined fairways, streams, lakes and numerous elevation changes.

"This is a golf course that you will never get bored with," said George Connor, the new head professional at Gillette Ridge. "Unlike many golf courses that have a few interesting holes spread amidst the course, Gillette Ridge provides 18 dramatic, interesting and scenic holes. Water, elevation changes, natural

wildlife and tall flowing fescue grasses make for a beautiful environment in which to play golf."

Gillette Ridge is a challenging but playable course that offers wide landing areas but requires accurate shots into well-protected greens. Calculating the correct distance is critical, especially for the advanced player. It seems the more you play Gillette Ridge, the more you understand the nuances for proper shot selection.

MDM Golf Enterprises also recognized that changes were in order to take Gillette Ridge to the next level, including a new 4th green. This 182-yard par-3 featured a green that was 50 yards long but so skinny that only the most precise shots would hold. Director of Golf Pat Aquaro said the expansion more than doubled the green's total area to over 5,600 square feet.

Connor says it's difficult to single out what might be the signature hole at Gillette Ridge because there are so many that are both aesthetically pleasing and highly challenging.

The 2nd hole, however, might best illustrate what Gillette Ridge is all about. With a view of the Heublein Tower in the distance, the par-5 begins as a short dogleg right but with a massive landing area for your tee shot. After that, this 505-yard test presents the big concern: a sweeping pond that abuts the front fringe of the green.

Connor suggests hitting a middle iron to just in front of the pond, leaving a third shot of 110-150 yards. If you're feeling lucky and your tee shot carries enough distance, you could have a go at the green for eagle. Even then, the sloped putting surface will make you think long and hard about how to finish things off.

"The green is interesting, as most are at Gillette Ridge, so just being on the green does not guarantee a two-putt," Connor said.

The 15th at Gillette Ridge is a classic Redan-style par-3. The hole plays 187 yards from the back tee and features a wide but shallow

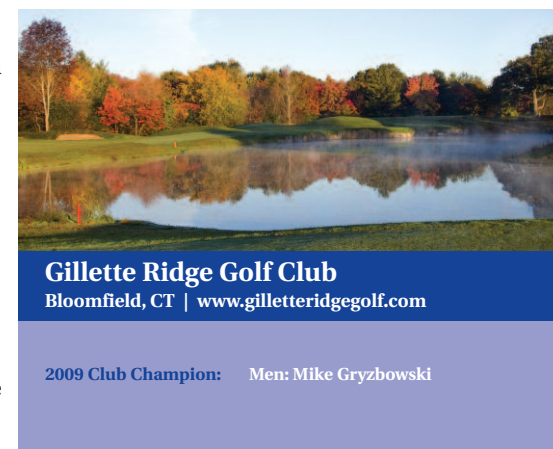
green that angles away from the tee. Here, Connor says, you need an accurate line at the precise distance. It's a mere 170 yards to the front right portion of the green, but a back tee location will require a carry of 200 yards.

"This is where the hole gets tricky," Connor says. "If you hit your shot off your intended line, it will most likely be the wrong distance as well."

The best play is a safe play, Connor recommends. Calculate your yardage to the middle of the green and play to that regardless of the pin placement. It may hurt chances of making a birdie, but it also decreases the odds of making a big number.

Gillette Ridge ends with an unforgettable hole. At 478 yards from the back tee to the peninsula green, it could pass for a challenging par-5. But this is a 4-par that will reward aggressiveness. A wide fairway allows you to swing freely for distance, although a lateral hazard extends all along the right fairway. If you go for the green, you're dealing with water on three sides, so take enough club. If safety is your guide, lay up to the front of the pond for a short wedge play to perhaps the flattest green on the course.

Gillette Ridge offers individual and family season passes with unlimited golf, carts and range balls. Gillette Ridge is included in the 2010 MDM Players Card with discounted golf at courses operated by MDM Golf Enterprises.



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Bloomfield, CT | [www.gilletteridgegolf.com](http://www.gilletteridgegolf.com)

2009 Club Champion: Men: Mike Gryzbowski