

Lyman Orchards Golf Club

Renovations create a championship stage

When the state's top golf professionals look to stage their prestigious championship each summer, they want the best course, one that is fair, challenging and in pristine condition. They almost always choose a private course.

But this year, for only the second time in the 79-year history of the CT Section PGA Championship, the title will be decided on a public layout: the newly renovated Robert Trent Jones Course at Lyman Orchards Golf Club.

Over \$2 million was invested in new irrigation, improved drainage, renovation of existing bunkers and the addition of new ones. Dozens of trees were removed to make the course more aesthetically pleasing and to take advantage of the scenic Middlefield countryside.

The result is a course that rivals any in Connecticut, public or private. It was a fact

quickly realized by Tom Hantke, executive director of the CT Section PGA, when he played the course with longtime Lyman Orchards professional Dick Bierkan last summer.

"Overall, it just struck me that I was on a true championship course that had been brought back to its true intentions," Hantke said. "I was immediately struck with what had been done to improve not only the quality of the course, but also its playability."

Soon after, Hantke asked Bierkan if the course would host the 2010 championship for the Section membership. While Lyman Orchards is only the second public facility to host the event, it is the first privately owned public course to do so.

"We're proud the Connecticut Section PGA chose Lyman Orchards, said Steve Ciskowski, president and CEO of Lyman Farms, Inc., owner of the Jones Course and

the second championship layout at Lyman Orchards, the Gary Player Signature Course. "The investment of time and capital by the Lyman family to enhance the Jones course re-establishes it as a championship-caliber layout worthy of high-profile events."

Lyman Orchards opened amid rolling hills of apple trees in 1969, designed by the renowned architect Robert Trent Jones. The par-72 layout plays to just over 7,000 yards from the back tees and meanders through acres of woodlands, wetlands and grassy knolls.

In 1994, the second championship layout opened adjacent to the Jones Course, designed by another legendary golfer and course architect, Gary Player. The par-71 course is somewhat shorter at 6,700 yards and features many elevations changes and perhaps some of the most spectacular views around.

The front nine of the Jones Course is mostly tree-lined with little water to cause concern. But you'll get your fill on the back nine where water comes into play on seven of the nine holes.

Right out of the gate, you're faced with two of the three most difficult holes on the course. The 435-yard par-4 1st is the third highest-rated hole, requiring a slightly uphill drive with a little bend to the right. The landing area is blind and tight, and only a precise drive will set you up for a shot at the green. Your approach will require an equally accurate shot to avoid bunkering left and right.

Two holes later comes the most difficult hole. The 3rd is only 408 yards, but making a par 4 requires an especially exact approach shot to a tight, back-to-front sloping green. The hole slopes downward and to the right, and shots that are even slightly right can find extreme trouble.

The most challenging hole on the back nine is one of only two without a water hazard. The 16th is a sharp dogleg right and plays 428



Lyman Orchards Golf Club Middlefield, CT | www.lymangolf.com

2009 Club Champions:	Men: Frank Forgione Senior: Rick Willson
Course Records:	65 – Jones Course (1995) 65 – Player Course (2001)

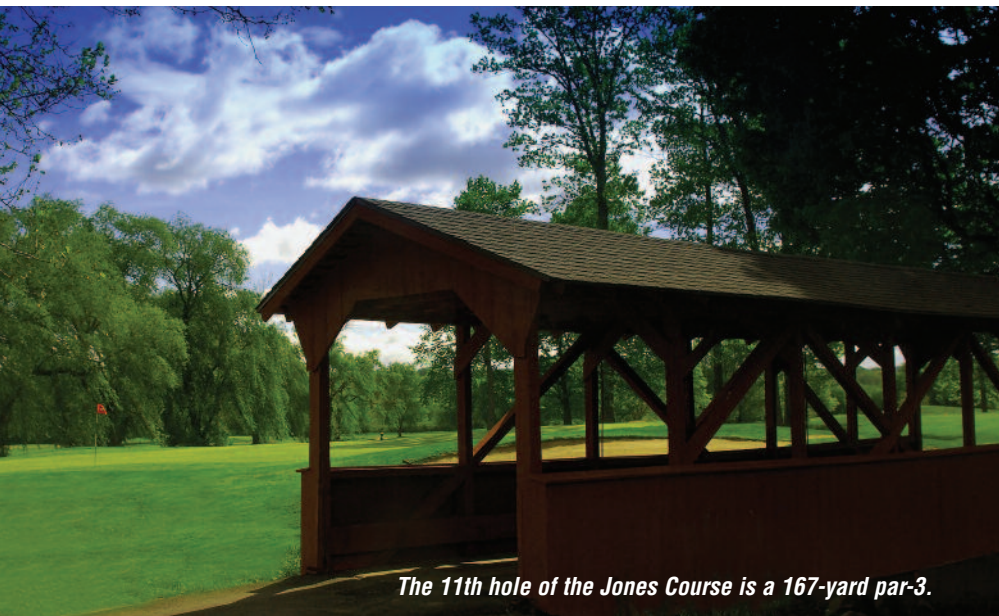
yards, which means two solid shots are needed to reach the green in regulation. But this is where many rounds have gone bad, done in by the temptation to cut the corner over a seemingly clearable stand of trees along the right fairway.

While the Player Course is nearly 300 yards shorter than the Jones, it plays equally tough at 6,725 yards with a slope of 135 and a rating of 72.3. And it features the longest hole at Lyman Orchards, the 592-yard 8th hole, a par-5 that is the highest rated of all 36 holes.

This hole will test your accuracy all the way to the green. A slightly uphill drive to the center of the fairway will put you in position for a fairway wood, but reaching in two is a likely stretch. Shots even a little left may trickle down a slope or end up surrounded by trees. Approaches to the green face a deep bunker left and a severe mound to the right.

Come August, many of the state's top professionals will be getting a first-hand look at just how difficult the Jones Course can play. That includes the defending champion, Fran Marrello, a member of the Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame who already knows the course well.

"I first played Lyman Orchards as a youngster," Marrello said, "and the facility left an indelible impression. The challenging layout of the Jones Course will test the skills of everyone in the field."



The 11th hole of the Jones Course is a 167-yard par-3.