

# Wintonbury Hills Golf Course

## Rave reviews for a Pete Dye masterpiece

The first time that Ciaran Carr toured Wintonbury Hills Golf Course as the new general manager, he thought the layout was a links-style design. But as he went from hole to hole, Carr quickly discovered there was much more to the Pete Dye creation.

“After walking the course, the views and character changed on the back nine holes,” said Carr, a PGA Professional who is studying to become a master instructor. “It’s truly a course that can be played by any level golfer, and especially pleasing for golf outings where many participants are infrequent players.”

This is something that scores of golfers have also discovered since Wintonbury Hills opened seven years ago in rural Bloomfield just north of the town center. The variety of terrain and challenges has produced numerous honors and awards for this municipal gem.

Last year, Golfweek magazine rated Wintonbury Hills the 8th Best Municipal Golf

Course in the country, just behind Torrey Pines, the TPC Scottsdale, Indian Wells – all hosts to PGA Tour events – and the top-ranked Bethpage Black, site of the 2009 and 2002 U.S. Opens. This year, the publication ranked Wintonbury second among Connecticut’s “Best Courses You Can Play.”

And Golf Digest ranked Wintonbury Hills as 11th best course in Connecticut overall, public or private, and selected it as the best municipal course in the state.

As further testament to both its difficulty and conditioning, Wintonbury Hills will again host the future stars of women’s golf July 16-18. That’s when the Duramed Futures Tour, the official developmental tour of the LPGA, will stage the ING New England Golf Classic for the second straight year at Wintonbury.

All these accolades for a course that cost the town of Bloomfield just a single dollar to design.

Dye, of course, is a legend in course design and construction. He had built courses on five continents, but one part of the country was missing his signature. “I always had the idea to build a golf course in the Northeast,” he said.

Dye was looking to give back to the game of golf when he offered to design five accessible courses nationwide for one dollar each, and Wintonbury Hills was one of the courses he selected for the program.

Keys to his design are the 125 bunkers that dot the layout. Each bunker is strategically placed to pose an obstacle, and not just to punish the middle or high-handicapper. “The bunkering is set up so that it can catch the better players,” Dye explained. “We tried our best to make a course for all players.”

The course plays 6,711 yards and par-70 from the Black tees, with a rating of 78.4 and slope of 141. It starts out flat and straight, but quickly turns into rolling terrain with many turns and bends. And after just three holes, you are faced with the biggest challenge of all.

The 526-yard 4th hole is the shortest of the three par-5s at Wintonbury Hills, but this difficult test requires two well-placed shots while contending with a sloping fairway that tends to force shots left.

Another tough test, though not nearly as long, comes three holes later on the par-3 7th. This time the play is downhill to a large green, one that is a whopping 255 yards from the back tees. Fortunately, all holes at Wintonbury Hills feature four sets of tees, so keep this in mind when you start out.

Making the turn to the back nine, you’ll find somewhat tighter fairways with more trees lining both sides. And you’ll encounter what could be the toughest two holes in succession, the 13th and 14th.

The 551-yard 13th hole is an uphill challenge demanding two big hits for a



**Wintonbury Hills Golf Course**  
Bloomfield, CT | [www.wintonburyhills.com](http://www.wintonburyhills.com)

**2009 Club Champions:** Men: Jack Anderson  
Women: Renee Anthony  
**Course Record:** 62 – Andrew Svoboda (2006)

reasonable approach. The fairway is somewhat generous, but shots left and right could leave you surrounded by trees and having to punch out. Complicating matters is an elevated green with plenty of undulation.

Right after that comes the second highest-rated hole, an imposing 455-yard par-4. It’s also the most picturesque, with the serene Tunxis Reservoir situated immediately to the right of the tee box. Once again, the hole requires an accurate drive and a well-placed approach to a demanding green.

Throughout the course you’ll discover many species of birds such as blue herons and even the occasional eagle. Wintonbury Hills is certified as a Cooperative Sanctuary by Audubon International and features many native fescue areas across the course and surrounding landscape. It’s also a wildlife habitat, with bobcats, coyotes and bears known to have occupied the land.

Wintonbury Hills offers several annual pass programs for residents and non-residents, including the popular twilight membership. Another discount program available for 2010 is the \$99 Wintonbury Hills Advantage Card, which offers one free round of golf valid anytime, a 15 percent discount on greens fees and carts seven days a week, one-hour early access to twilight and super twilight rates, complimentary yardage book and one free range token.



*The 9th hole is a 190-yard par-3.*