

Pencil of the Week Chronicles 11

3/22/22 Seneca Hickory Stick



#82 is Kensington another black pencil with silver letters.

Kensington is located in Canfield Ohio about an hour northeast of here, pretty close to the Interstate. Another very nice course so it is a must play it if you are in the area. Reasonably priced as well.

It was one of the two courses we played in the family tournament last year. George, brother Jim, Jim Jr and I played. We played the regular tees and i scored a 88, a good round from the longer tees. We were behind a rude outing that made lots of noise so that took some of the enjoyment away. On 18 we had to yell for them to get off the green as they all had gathered around it and we were tired of waiting. Morons.

The Friday group played it 15 years ago at the suggestion of Bagger Mel who had heard it was a very nice one. We loved it and it has a first class clubhouse. Played it for a couple of years and for some reason it was beat to hell. We dropped it because of the poor conditions. This time it was in stellar shape so we plan to go back and i hope i can get the Friday group back there.

A new addition to the course was a nice hotel just off the course. There is also home sites linked to the place as well. Most of that is new since we played it years ago. The starter said the local rich baron owned both as well as some additional properties nearby. He also picked us out a local eating establishment that had good food for our dinner.

<https://www.kenningtongolf.com/>

and <https://www.kenningtongolf.com/flyover/>

provide a great look at the course.

The first hole had a pond along the left of the tee box. My first tee shot was hacked and found trouble right away. Guess i was rusty after the long drive. Think i found the pot bunker in front as well where i blasted it over the green for a triple bogey start. Take a look through the other holes and I am sure you will want to give it a go.

3/29/22 Firestone

#83, 84, and 85 is Firestone



The most famous golf course around here without doubt is the private Firestone South 93 years young. I am sure we all have watched no less than 10 tournaments played there.

It sure is a beast and was the longest course the pro's played for many years till they started designing new monsters all around the country. Now it is too boring for the pros and they have moved to the newer tricked up courses. I would guess we all watched countless tournaments held there on TV or in person. If you have a good story let us all in on it.

I remember a made for TV Tournament played here and could only find this quote: "Firestone became the home to the CBS Classic from 1967 thru 1974, which may be close to when this tournament ended." I moved to Akron in 1970 and remember going to a match with my dad and watching Gene Littler smack it true with what looked to a practice swing to me. Slow and easy and pow, that thing took off.

I did get to play the South once, way back in the 70s. I am sure i was over 100 but i did par the monster! Of course the regular tees are no where near the 600+ the pros played from.

I also got to play Firestone North when NEC was sponsoring the tournament. The NEC rep got me in when i was working with Cisco as they wanted some of our ASIC work. I played well and likely shot into the 90s. There is a lot of water there and i believe it only bit me a couple of times.

I hear there is a West course but i know nothing about it.

Finally, they do have Firestone Public, a nine hole course which is well maintained. First played there with old buddy Gerry Betts RIP who ran the first league i joined at Edgewood. Rudy joined us too. We played every fall till time change. Rudy and I walked while Gerry rode. Somehow i made it up over heart attack hill on that one hole. Towards the end, Gerry just met us in the clubhouse after the 9 holes for a pitcher of beer. Good times.

4/6/22 Rawiga



#86 is Rawiga Golf and Swim club, dark green with white letters

This is an ex-private club that had to open up to the public. It is way out in the middle of nowhere in Seville. It is right next to the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery. Why that is right out in the middle of nowhere is also beyond me.

I think the Monday group began playing there 10? years ago. It is a weird course. Pretty much straight until you get into a couple hills. It has one par 3 where you hit off the high hill down to a green 50 or so yds below. Don't duff one here or you won't find your ball in the brush that covers the downhill. #10 tee is near the swim club and straight up a monstrous hill. Never know what iron to use and mostly don't make the top. The rest of the holes are pretty decent.

Only bad stories here. The two worst are 1) just getting off the first green as Houle's second shot behind us hits, rolls up and drops in the cup. OMG that is not right. 2) Playing behind girls trying out for the high school golf team, That was a disaster. Another aside is that it is a lightly played course with a lot of singles out there. They just kind of wander around to play any open hole. All of a sudden there is someone in front of you, then they vanish like a ghost and go elsewhere. Do not be alarmed.

To summarize, do not go out of your way to play there. And if you do, chill out cause you might be faced with slow or random play.

BTW, tomorrow is my #74 BDay, I am little surprised i am still on this side of the grass, as is Keith Richards. I do like it that way and hope to stick around for awhile.

4/13/22 Sunny Hill

#86 is Sunny Hill



First played there in the fall with old buddy Gerry Betts RIP as part of our after league fall season. Not sure why; he probably suggested it. Rudt might have joined us there.

Not sure. It has some screwy holes on it. Most likely part of the 3d nine, which i haven't payed since. The Friday group also played there a couple of times after Maplecrest RIP closed one winter. We showed up to play at Maplecrest and they had closed up. Sunny Hills is just down the street so we went over there and played for a few weeks till they closed. I think it was Mel, Bill, maybe Dick and I.

Kind of lost track of the course till i played there a year ago with the Lockheed guys. Has some weird holes but it seemed playable. After all, were are running out of courses with so many closing. So i took the Friday guys there and most of them approved so it is back on the schedule. Denny, who is much older than dirt now, said it is the first course he ever played when he was a kid back in the 50s. He says it has changed a lot since then.

I am amazed at the money that has been put into the course since. First off, you pass over creek on the course at least 10 times. The bridges are solid steel with a nice stone surface. No cheap wood here. Got to be 200K in bridges. Next, they have at least 3 weather shelters. Solid brick for those and pretty spacious. They also put in a banquet center behind the clubhouse. It looks huge as well. Cart paths are immaculate concrete. There is also a new building along the road that looks like a warehouse. why it is so big is beyond me.

Played there last week. There is one monster par 5 that is giving us all fits. You drive down the hill and have to let up some or its in the creek (was in it last year). Then once you cross ita all uphill. A decent iron puts you at 140 out. Lat time i hit a 6 iron into the wet hill and it stops dead 40 yards out. I shook my head wondering if i will ever get there in 3. Threw it up from there with my lob wedge and when i got up the hill it was an inch or two from the cup. Likely the only time i will ever par this one. I shot an 86 in cold wet conditions.

4/20/22 Whispering Woods



#87 is Whispering Woods.

Believe it or not, this is the last pencil I have not talked about so far. I do recall a couple of courses that i found no pencil for so this will extend this series perhaps one more month?

Only played here once and played it as a direct result of the pandemic. Brother Jim and Jim jr. were allowed to visit PA without being tested per NY mandates. George and I

could not enter NY without testing, so we found middle ground in PA. We played 2 rounds, drove in and played one, then found a hotel for the night and played in the morning. I scored 90 for both rounds from the regular tee boxes, a brutal 6000 yards for us old guys, and was very happy with that score.

The place is somewhere near the lake in a heavily wooded area and is a first class course. It is relatively new and it had a very small clubhouse like most new courses have till they build an appropriate one. It was a lot of fun to play and is well worth stopping for.

https://whisperingwoodsgc.com/golf/course/hole_1/

The first hole sets the stage. An impossible for us old guys long uphill par 4. I could play this one 100 times and never get there in 2 at 376 uphill. At 500+, the par 5 7th is also impossible to reach. #8 has a real nasty carry to the green if you can place your drive close enough to the abyss to be able to go for it. #10 at 427 is not reachable in 2 either.

16 was a hoot. A short par 4 to an uphill green, my second from 100yds out just stopped at the front edge of the green for 5 seconds then rolled back down the hill for 40 yards. What did i do to deserve that? 17 is very interesting. The approach to a very narrow green is has to be very precise to hold.

All in all a great play. I would highly recommend the senior tees for the short hitters.

4/27/22 Eagle Creek

#88 is Eagle Creek

.

No pencils. All out. Done and finished. Ca-put.

This is a great course a little south of Norwalk Ohio a far trek from here. We always car pooled there. Not sure who found this one. Perhaps TK? We played it at least once a year for several years. I recall playing there with Kirk George MikeB and TK and later with the Friday guys. JohnT, Mel, Neil, Rudy and so on. Rudy was born and raised in Norwalk.

The oddest round we played there was a time we finished and did the skins only to find tie after tie across the card. Do not remember if it was a full wash out or someone grabbed a ton of carry overs toward the end of the round.

Do recall scheduling play with George and brother Jim, but after a long trek, the course was closed due to a rain deluge that night. That was a bummer.

The features that stand out are the stone lined creeks. the plush fairways, and the white sand in their countless bunkers. Checking back for scores, i see a 97 and 94 in 2004 and an 87 in 2005, likely the last time i played there.

Challenging? You Bet! #18 was a beast of a par 5, a great finishing hole.

Take a look at the hole layouts here:

<https://www.eaglecreekgolf.com/golf/course-layout>

5/4/22 Delaware Park



#90 is the historic Delaware Park golf course. #91 is the 9 hole South Park golf course, and #92 is the 18 hole Grover Cleveland golf course, all located in the city of Buffalo. They were owned by the city back then and may still be. These are courses never ever be played.

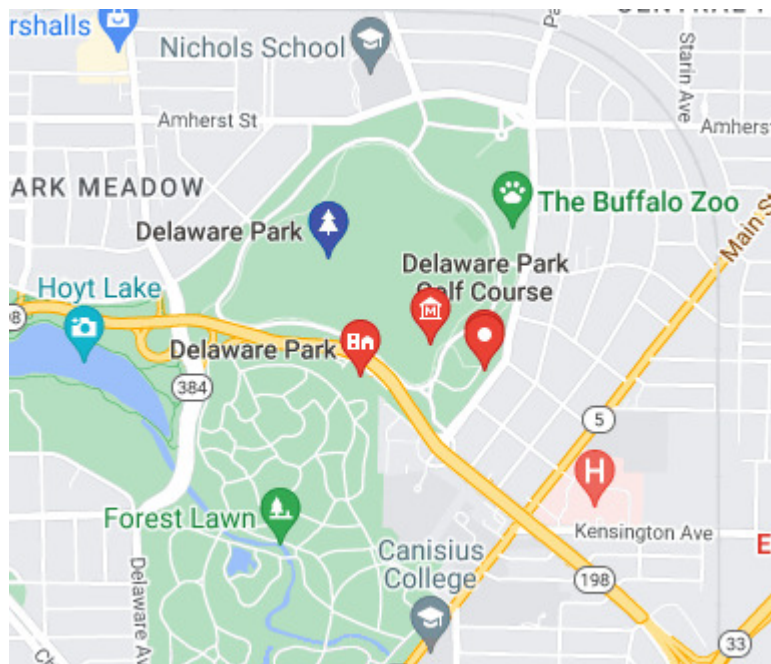
These were the courses we played as kids back in the day. Dad took me to South Park when i was 13 and learning the game 60+ years ago. Brother Jim also learned there. I recall getting knocked in the head by a golf ball dropping from the trees there. It hurt a bit and I was never the same since. Just kidding. Also remember Jim and I badgering dad till he took us one particular time. He was laid up for a week with a bad leg after. There was one hole over a lake. We both skipped that one. Grover we rarely played but did now and then.

Delaware was our home. Early on we would play there with dad. They had one of those ball troughs. Drop your ball in behind several others and when your ball came to the end it was your turn to tee off. I believe the cost for an adult round when we started was \$1.25. At first the starter would run over take your ticket and shout "That boy don't pay. That boy don't pay". Later on i believe kids were \$0.50 and then more when the prices went up. Dad would drop Jim and I off, and later George on the way to work and we would play all day till he picked us up after work. Good times.

If you look at the map, you play out toward the middle then eventually around the perimeter. On a couple of holes the zoo is to your right and you can hear (and smell) the animals. They you get out around where the baseball fields are on the right. Scary for us slicers when we unleashed one into the outfield. Most of the holes are simple. There were a couple of ridiculous par 3s where you had to hit over monster trees. Never could clear any of them. The scorecard is attached. We broke 80 there every now and then in our teens. My Gawd, i bet even Houle could shoot in the 80s there today.

Learned a few years ago as i got into the War of 1812 that the troops had camped there and many had died of sickness and were buried nearby. Don't know if the bodies were ever moved. That is not clear, but there is a marker out in the middle of the course to commemorate the place. Back in 2018, Mary and I wandered out onto the course to look for it in early September. It was a cold day so not too many on the course thank goodness. History is my 2nd hobby now. We have visited numerous 1812 war sites now and read over 20 books tied to it.

Catch you next time if i can scrape up some more memories.



5/11/22 North Shore

#93 Is North Shore on the waterway near Topsail Island. No pencil.

Long time back, Bagger Mel got the use of one of his buddy's condo's there. We stayed there maybe 2? years. Mel, JohnT, Smitty, and I with the wives. Since this was very close we played there a couple of times. If you vacationed in the area like TK i am sure you have played it.

<http://northshoregolfcoursenc.com/testsite/gallery/>

I only can recall 2 holes there. One was a par 5 with a lake to clear on your second shot. It was a tough hole. The reason i will never forget it is that Smitty borrowed my 2 iron and broke the damn thing. Last 2 iron i ever had.

The other was a par 3 over a lake with a gator in it. We did not see it and thus it left us wondering where it was lurking. Smitty just cleared the lake and his ball rested only a couple of feet from where a gator could spring out of the water and git him. By the time we got over there we had him scared good. Smitty was known to be extremely frugal perhaps only outdone by Big Dick Lott. He wasn't going to abandon that golf ball. They cost money you know. I believe when Smitty had his back to the water, Mel shouted "Lookout John". He eventually chunked it a few feet and then felt better to get further from the lake.

MikeB, being a Floridian for a long time now, probably doesn't bat an eye when he sees one anymore, but us northerners are pretty skittish when it comes to gators.

My remaining recollection was not to go into the trees. The course has wetlands around. We were safe in the baking sun but if you ventured into the shade, a gazillion skeeters would home in on you. I have a few more stories on the courses played during the Topsail days for the coming weeks.

5/18/22 Oyster Bay

#94 Is Oyster Bay Legends Golf on the waterway, also near Topsail Island. No pencil.

One year Bagger Mel, I, and the wives were at Topsail by ourselves. We found Oyster Bay, just a little north east of Calabash. It was not part of the Legends Golf Group at that time, but was a bit pricey. We figured we don't play expensive courses very often so we shelled out all of \$65, big money at the time, for this prestigious course. We called and got a tee time, had the wives drop us off and we told them we would call when we were done.

Alas, they came back early and were waiting in the clubhouse. Joanne had asked earlier about the price and we had told her the price was same as usual. She was shocked when

she read the fees off the wall board. Oh well. She was thrilled because now she knew she had \$65 to spend on clothes before heading back to Akron. Fair is fair, eh? I am sure when the Legends took over the fees went up higher.

<https://legendsgolf.com/oyster-bay>

shows the course pictures but not much other info. I only can recall 2 holes there. Both were island greens that scared the bejebbers out of us. Much to my chagrin I hit the water on both while Mel somehow hit to a safe spot.

I did not see those holes on the website, I suspect they have modified the course a bit. I recall that one of the par 3 island greens was surrounded by oyster shells. Did not see this on the website?

I would suspect others like TK and MikeB might have played there. It is a Don Maples design and must have been on their bucket list. i do remember driving by the course for a look a few years back on one of our Myrtle Beach February stays. It was one of those very wet Februarys and all the roadsides nearby were swamped with water.

I have a few more stories on the courses played during the Topsail days for the coming weeks.