

**T**he Chicago area's commitment to women's golf will be spectacularly affirmed as June turns into July, when the best female golfers in the world take on Olympia Fields Country Club at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. In fact, 2017 may one day be considered a watershed year for area women's golf, as the country's best college players took on Rich Harvest Farms at the NCAA Women's Championship and the best amateurs in the country, including many of those collegians, teed off in the 117th Women's Western Amateur at River Forest Country Club.

The stages for these three major events serve as a reminder that there is no one particular style or length of course suited to women. Rich Harvest Farms is a long, mostly wide-open layout that places a premium on accuracy to large, rolling and fast greens. River Forest serves

up tree-lined holes from No. 1 to 18 to mandate precision-placed tee shots. Olympia Fields Country Club is, interestingly enough, a hybrid of these other two courses as trees line many fairways yet fronting bunkers on most greens make the course play much longer as long, lofted approach shots are needed to reach flagsticks.

The Chicago area has made major strides in accommodating women golfers over the past decade for a variety of reasons. With trends showing less demand from older men and millennials, female participation in the sport has trended upwards based upon a number of factors, including more exposure to women's golf on cable TV, the popularity of golf at the 2016 Rio Olympics, and greater emphasis on individual sports at the high

school and college levels. It should be obvious to all by now that women's golf isn't about red tees placed 50 yards in front of the men's tees. Joanne Klatten leads the LPGA Tour with an average driving distance of 277 yards, followed closely by Lexi Thompson and Brittany Lincicome at 274 yards. Length, of course, doesn't always translate to wins, as Ariya Jutanugarn, fighting with Lydia Ko for the No. 1 ranking, is a mere 5-foot-7 and ranks only 36th in driving distance. But Jutanugarn ranks 1st in sub-par holes and birdies and 8<sup>th</sup> in scoring average.

While there might not be one type of golf hole in Chicagoland that serves as a prototype for women's golf, there are an array of courses across the area that focus on women by offer-

ing leagues, tournaments, and special programs. Here are the four leaders.

#### **Mistwood Golf Club, Romeoville**

Perennial home to the Phil Kosin Illinois Women's Open sponsored by BMO Harris Bank, Mistwood G.C. caters to virtually every type of player due to the property's multiple tee options, large greens, impeccable conditions, amazing practice facility, and wide fairways. This year's Open tees off July 17 for a three-day run with an expected field of over 50 of the best women players across the state and region.

The signature hole on the course is the 335-yard (from the blue tees) No. 12. Appropriately nicknamed "Deep Pot," the hole features an

# Women Have a Home in Area Golf

By Neal Kotalrek

imposing sod-stacked pot bunker that lurks in front of a large green. Hit your approach shot over or around that bunker or confront an intimidating sand shot that must be elevated over 10 feet over the bunker's lip.

For reservations and tee times, visit [www.mistwoodgolf.net](http://www.mistwoodgolf.net).

### **Pine Meadow Golf Club, Libertyville**

Host to the Illinois Women's Amateur Championship June 19–22, and the club's own Women's Shootout on September 18, this 5,484-yard layout (from the women's tournament tees) serves up a vast variety of hole types, including the always challenging 352-yard dogleg third hole. It starts with a tee shot along the ominous Lake Cooke on the left and then angles toward a narrow green protected on both sides by yawning sand bunkers.

Pine Meadows was named America's best new public golf course in 1986 by *Golf Digest*, and was designed by Joe Lee and Rocky Roque-more. Operated by the legendary Jemsek Golf group, the property is highlighted by an amazing Golf Learning Center that includes target greens, sand bunkers and multiple practice greens. The club is also home to the Executive Women's Golf Association – Chicago Chapter, a 9-hole league with Tuesday evening tee times beginning at 5 p.m. The first session of the league began in May. The second session begins in July. For more information, contact Judie at (847) 226-6520 or e-mail: [pinemeadows@ewgachicago.org](mailto:pinemeadows@ewgachicago.org). The Executive Women's Golf Association – Chicago website is: [www.ewgachicago.org](http://www.ewgachicago.org).

### **Ravisloe Golf Club, Homewood**

Formerly one of Chicagoland's elite South Side country clubs, this historic layout was designed by James Foulis in 1901 and received a renovation by none other than Donald Ross beginning in 1915. In 2009, renowned veterinary surgeon Claude Gendreau rescued the property from foreclosure and sunk millions of dollars to restore both the course and the clubhouse.

The course is characterized by gently rolling hills, tree-lined fairways and large sand bunkers around most greens. It plays to 5,243 yards from the women's tees. The 103-yard No. 15 is a classic par-3 that calls for a tee shot over a small creek directed toward a circular green virtually surrounded by sand with three small bunkers on the left side, one long bunker on the right side and two others short and to the right. Ladies Day Thursdays at Ravisloe include special rates of \$35 walking and \$41 riding. For more information, visit [www.ravisloe.com](http://www.ravisloe.com).

### **Harborside International, Chicago**

Perhaps the greatest golf engineering project in the history of Illinois golf, this 36-hole complex was a landfill of inorganic waste and construction materials in the early 1990s. The Illinois International Port District enlisted architects Dick and Tim Nugent to use their wizardly skills to design the Port and Starboard courses, both still considered among the top 20 layouts in the state. The necessarily treeless landscape creates a Scottish links feel to both courses with fescue-covered mounds protecting most fairways and adding to that seaside ambiance.

The Port Course plays to 5,977 from the regular tees and 5,164 yards from the forward tees. Its signature hole (and the entire complex's signature hole, for that matter) is the playful 134-yard No. 15. Wonder why it is called "Anchor Hole" on the scorecard? Look out from the tee of this par-3 and you'll be rewarded with the answer. A swirl of sand bunkers surround a grassy patch of land just short of the green that, indeed, is shaped precisely like a ship's anchor. The green itself is fascinating as its middle section curves around the tip of the anchor to create the shape of an arched eyebrow.

Harborside International features a 9-hole Ladies League played Tuesday evenings at 5:30 p.m. Play rotates between the Port and Starboard courses. Complimentary lesson clinics are provided weekly, with weekly and season prizes awarded. For more information and tee times, visit: [www.harborsidegolf.com](http://www.harborsidegolf.com).



The famed anchor in a bunker on Harborside International Port's 15th hole is a nifty sight from the air, but best avoided when playing. (Courtesy Harborside International)



Everywhere you turn at Pine Meadow, there's another scenic sight. (Courtesy Pine Meadow)