

Raspberry Falls Golf & Hunt Club ~ As Good as Ever

Nick Ciattei

Raspberry Falls
GOLF & HUNT CLUB



The year was 2000 and *The Golf Guide* was still in its early growth stages looking for that one course to solidify it as a player in the golf marketing business. My partner and I thought if there was one course that would help put us over the top and on the radar it was Raspberry Falls Golf & Hunt Club in Leesburg, Virginia. I remember

it like it was yesterday getting that excited feeling in my stomach as I drove up the long entrance to Raspberry. Sales had been a part of my life for quite awhile so it wasn't anything new for me to have to give a "dog and pony show" to some prospective clients. But, something was telling me that if I could secure this partnership, things would turn out pretty good for the magazine. Just from the meeting I could see how the facility operated. General Manager Bob Swiger and Head Professional Steve Clark sat to one side of the desk and listened and inspected closely. After a Q & A session, Swiger looked us in the eye and said, "Nick, Barry (my former partner), I really like what I see in the guide, but are you going to be around for awhile? We like doing business long term. If you guys are still at it in a year, we'll hop on board." True to his word, Raspberry Falls graced the cover in 2001, and it has been a wonderful association with Swiger and Clark since.

The Gary Player–designed course at Raspberry Falls was built in 1996 and is unique and special in so many ways. It is one of the predecessors of upscale daily–fee golf in Northern Virginia and continues today to deliver that "Member–for–a–Day" feeling. Having received prestigious honors upon its opening, the links style is reminiscent of Scotland, and Player used sod–stacked bunkers to really bring character to the layout. Those who have never played Raspberry should realize that sometimes when you are in one of these, you have to just try to negotiate your way out like the pros do in the British Open. These bunkers have their own historic names that blend in nicely with the farmland on which the course is spread out. Five serviceable sets of tees allow the course to play from 4854 from the forward to 7191 yards from the back tees.

The front nine at Raspberry Falls gets started with three really good par 4's, which are definitely not the easiest holes on the course, but are

amongst the most beautiful. The first is pretty wide open and draws slightly uphill. “Deep Cotton” is the first of the aforementioned bunkers that you’ll encounter and will gather up any approach shots short and to the left. The second has a hazard crossing the fairway while the third (*pictured on the cover*) has had a recent facelift. Thought by many to feature one of the most breathtaking tee shots you’ll find, the third hole now features a series of fairway bunkers up the left side with a smaller than original trap down the right. It gives the hole additional character and a more defined landing area from the tee box 100 feet above the fairway. Other holes that stand out on the



Hole 4 Par 5



Hole 6 Par 4

outward side are two par 5’s. The fourth is a dogleg right where big hitters will be tempted to carry a huge bunker down the right side to give you the chance to get home in two. The ninth is also a worthy par 5 with a stone wall fronting the putting surface and has risk–reward written all over it.

A capital challenge awaits you on the opening hole of the back nine. Ten is a long par 4 with water down the left side that pinches closer as you get to the green. The par 5 eleventh is the longest hole at Raspberry Falls, playing 590 yards from the back tees and uphill. As you enter the facility, the hole you see to your right is the masterpiece par 3 thirteenth. Player used lots of sand and even rock to sculpt out a real beauty. Eight of the golf courses famed bunkers can be found on the par 4 fourteenth, which is the last formidable conquest on the inward side. The remaining holes are by no means pushovers! I have found better scoring chances on the final 4 holes. The par 5 eighteenth is a first–rate closing hole. Playing from an



Hole 11 Par 5



Hole 13 Par 3

elevated tee, your drive must avoid a creek that runs down the left side and then in front of the green. It's the kind of hole that can either make you some green or lose some change in your match.

The Raspberry Golf Academy is the most successfully run local golf training facility in the mid-Atlantic. In just five years, the academy now has four locations and 9 instructors. Not only can you improve your game through lessons, but the staff is certified to custom fit you with



Hole 18 Par 5

any of the major golf manufacturer's equipment. The academy is located not only at Raspberry Falls but also at their sister courses, Old Hickory in Woodbridge, Bull Run in Haymarket, and Royal Manchester in York, Pennsylvania. The Academy already has an excellent resume of success stories with many young regional players elevating their games.

Bob Swiger and Steve Clark's plans when we first sat down in 2000 were not just about Raspberry Falls Golf & Hunt Club, but on a bigger picture. They and their associates formulated Raspberry Golf Management and also created the Raspberry Golf Trail. The management oversees the previously mentioned four courses as well as a 10-year partnership recently signed with Augustine Golf Club in Stafford. The trail now has nine courses involved and represents some of the best upscale courses from Pennsylvania to Virginia. Designed to give local golfers that don't belong to country clubs the chance to play top ranked courses, the trail now incorporates travel for out of the area players to come and experience the trail themselves.

Swiger and Clark have always remained true to themselves. The same beliefs and practices that the two introduced this young man to that day in their office are still preached today. It's no small wonder that their "little train," Raspberry Golf & Hunt Club, remains a model of excellence. 🏌️



For more information visit raspberryfalls.com