

The Dream 18

Here is a golf list with a difference: We're not going to justify why these 18 holes in the Met Area are great — believe us, they are — but rather try to explain just what greatness is

BY JAMES A. FRANK

HOLE	PAR	YARDS
1 PRIAR'S HEAD #13	4	492
2 METROPOLIS #6	4	423
3 STANWICH #17	5	616
4 WINGED FOOT WEST #10	3	190
5 BETHPAGE BLACK #4	5	517
6 SEBONACK #11	4	466
7 MIDSTONE #9	4	402
8 ROCKAWAY HUNTING #9	4	462
9 NATIONAL #4	3	195
OUT	36	3,763
10 QUAKER RIDGE #11	4	402
11 PLAINFIELD #12	5	588
12 TRUMP NAT'L-WEST. #3	4	485
13 WESTCHESTER CC #17	4	471
14 ESSEX COUNTY #11	3	198
15 RIDGEWOOD CENTER #6	4	291
16 BALTUSKOL LOWER #17	5	650
17 SHINNECOCK HILLS #11	4	458
18 BAYONNE #16	4	486
IN	36	3,709
TOTAL	72	7,472

Step onto the tee of the 16th hole at Bayonne Golf Club — a long par-four that juts into New York Harbor and offers incredible views of the Gotham skyline, cranes, boats, and all manner of activity on land, water, and in the air — and there's only one possible (printable) reaction: "Ohmigod! What a great hole!"

And, indeed, great it is. Or so says a panel of experts (players, administrators, media, and others) compiled by the MGA and given the job of creating a "Dream 18," a fantasy course made up of superb holes from around the Met Area. They had more than 7,000 holes to choose from, in a geographic area covering more than 300 square miles — from the far eastern tip of Long Island to the mountains

of western New Jersey, plus Westchester, southern Connecticut, and the lower Hudson Valley. That's a lot of ground to cover, a lot of holes to consider.

They did their job well, as I can attest having now looked closely and critically at all 18. Because more than simply choosing the region's best holes, the task was to create the ultimate test of golf, a "course" that would

This Dream 18 course doesn't actually exist, but we wish it did.

DAN WARDLOW



Friar's Head No. 13

be a shining example of greatness — quite simply, as good as it gets.

Which means that my job is to try to answer the inevitable question: What makes a golf hole great? It's hardly a new topic, likely one you've debated in your favorite 19th hole. The only difference here is that I'm taking as evidence only these 18, using them to point us toward some kind of definition of greatness. Putting the heart, if you will, before the course.

Having stuck our tee in the ground at Bayonne, let's use it as a jumping-off point. More than anything, this hole proves the old first rule of real estate, and now of greatness: location, location, location. It starts on high ground and tumbles down toward New York

Harbor, with cacophonous views of city, sail, and industry. Not everyone will think the scene beautiful, but it is an impressive setting no matter how the hole plays. The fact that it plays almost as good as it looks — asking the golfer to negotiate wind coming off the water, find the left side of the fairway to give a clean view of the green, and hit that green, which sits at water level with not much land around it — is more than just icing on the cake.

Other holes on the list also make the most of their location. The ninth at Rockaway Hunting Club — a classic "Cape" hole, wrapping around a body of water and challenging the golfer to play across it — tucks up against Reynolds Channel, a strait coming out of East Rockaway Inlet off the Atlantic. The sixth

COURTESY OF FRIAR'S HEAD

Hole by Hole

Par Threes

Shinnecock Hills #11

Southampton, New York
William Flynn, 1931

Back tees: 158 yards
Middle tees: 150 yards

Shortest hole on the course, but the player has to judge distance based on elevation, wind, and luck.

National Golf Links of America #4

Southampton, New York
C.B. Macdonald, 1911

Back tees: 195 yards
Middle tees: 181 yards

A classic "Redan" hole, with the long green angled away from the tee from front-right to back-left. Aiming a tee shot directly at the flag brings a left-side bunker, 20 feet below the green, into play.

Essex County #11

West Orange, New Jersey
A.W. Tillinghast/Seth Raynor/Charles Banks, 1918

Back tees: 198 yards
Middle tees: 185 yards

The green is deceptively higher than the tee, and has a ridge through its middle which funnels the ball toward the hole if used properly, or well away if not. There are bunkers on both sides and behind the green.

Winged Foot (West) #10

Mamaroneck, New York
A.W. Tillinghast, 1923

Back tees: 190 yards
Middle tees: 179 yards

Tillinghast called this hole, "the Pulpit," the best par three he ever built. Three bunkers are in plain sight: the one short and left can affect distance judgment, and all three are deep.

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LARRY LAMBRECHT

at Metropolis is just one of the Westchester holes that follows the natural roll of that county's many hills, slaloming down between tall mounds and taller trees. The ninth at Maidstone runs parallel to the Atlantic, miles of beach and ocean viewable from the tee with a long dune walling the right side of the fairway. The roar of the crashing waves is almost enough to drown out the pounding in your chest.

Beauty can be deceiving, seducing the golfer into underestimating the challenge while he's soaking up the atmosphere. That's no less true on inland holes such as the one at Metropolis, which can have their own fatal attractiveness. Like the line of trees that stands proud sentinel on the sixth on Ridgewood

Bayonne No. 16



Center, the 11th at Quaker Ridge, the 17th at Stanwich, and especially the very long 17th at Baltusrol's Lower Course, where a new back tee — 650 yards from the green! — brings yet another chute of trees into play when a major championship comes to town.

Length often figures into great holes. But that doesn't just mean long; it means making the most of the distance. While it's rare for the members to hit Baltusrol's penultimate

“The task was to create the ultimate test of golf, a ‘course’ that would be a shining example of greatness.”

hole in two even at a “mere” 543 yards from the middle tees, what they really have to think about is launching the drive far enough to set up a second shot that will clear the “Sahara Desert,” a line of cross-bunkers, and then judge the distance properly on the third to find a green that is well above the fairway, out of view, and protected by still more sand.

Both the 12th at Plainfield and the 17th at Stanwich are par fives that make you think before you hit, as simply trying to bust a long drive is neither good enough nor very smart: Both tee shots need to be properly placed to set up a precisely-struck second that will finish on the correct side of the fairway to approach the green. Before the hole at Stanwich was stretched to 586 yards from the gold tees and more than 600

yards from the tips, there was a chance to go for it in two. At Plainfield, that is still the case; however, if one gets to thinking about an overly aggressive play on either of the holes, it's wise to remember that the putting surfaces are small, sloped, and angled so as to accept nothing less than perfection.

Distance is perhaps most important on this course when facing the par threes. Or more accurately, distance *control*. At Shinnecock Hills, the dastardly, wonderful 11th

Hole by Hole

Par Fours

Sebonack #11
Southampton, New York
Jack Nicklaus/Tom Doak, 2006
Back tees: 466 yards
Middle tees: 430 yards
The fairway is pinched by dunes and the wind comes off the water from the right; going too far right could bring a dune, trees, even the beach into play.

Rockaway Hunting Club #9
Cedarhurst, New York
Devereux Emmet/A.W. Tillinghast, 1916
Back tees: 462 yards
Middle tees: 433 yards
One of the earliest examples of a “Cape” hole in the U.S., bending to the right around Reynolds Channel and tempting the golfer to hit over the water as a way of shortening the approach. The sloping green is protected by three mounds, and the water is just a few steps away.

Maidstone Club #9
East Hampton, New York
John Park/Willie Park Jr., 1891
Back tees: 402 yards
Middle tees: 370 yards
From the tee, which offers a breathtaking view of the ocean and beach, the tee shot should stay as far right as possible while avoiding the dunes. Wind off the ocean make shot placement difficult, especially to the green that sits atop a steep hill. Sand at the base of the hill and on the rise are menacing.

Friar's Head #13
Baiting Hollow, New York
Bill Coore/Ben Crenshaw, 2003
Back tees: 492 yards
Middle tees: 460 yards
The wide fairway has pot bunkers in the middle and more bunkers down the sides. The trouble is visible, but still effective, especially against those golfers fooled by the vast landing area. The hole plays north toward Peconic Bay.

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COURTESY OF BAYONNE GOLF CLUB



hole climbs uphill to a narrow green whose most menacing contours can't be seen from the tee. Add in the unpredictable wind, and the common results are either a miss that falls

short and rolls back into one of four perfectly placed bunkers, or a shot that flies long and left — a position from which it might be harder to keep the ball on the green than it was

Silver Anniversary of the MGA's Wild Ride

This is not the first time the MGA has named a “Dream 18.” However, when the idea first took flight — 25 years ago, in 1982 — flight actually was part of the program. Here, as recorded in the August 1982 edition of *MGA Golfing News*, a newsletter that was the precursor to *The Met Golfer*, is what happened:

“On June 2, 1982, a unique foursome composed of touring pro Ben Crenshaw; *Golf Magazine* Editor George Peper; MGA President Joe Donahue; and MGA Executive Director Jay Mottola played what has been called the craziest round of golf ever. The group, with the aid of a helicopter and some quick getaway cars, played 18

holes of golf at 18 different golf courses around the Met Area in one day. The group began at 6:00 a.m. from Shinnecock Hills and finished some 13 hours later on Baltusrol's fourth hole.”

Looking back, Peper, who retired from *Golf Magazine* in 2002, recalled the wild ride.

“We had it calibrated down to the minute and calculated that if all went well we could make it from the 14th at Shinnecock to the fourth at Baltusrol with at least an hour of daylight to spare. Then, on the appointed morning, a bank of fog rolled into eastern Long Island — meaning no helicopter — and it was half an hour away and couldn't take off.

“Finally, after more than an hour, everything cleared. Joe Donahue actually outplayed Ben on the Long Island holes, but then Ben one-putted seven straight holes in three different states.

“I remember feeling sick on the chopper, and hoping I wouldn't vomit on Crenshaw. But all went smoothly, and when we putted out at Baltusrol there was even time to do an interview for one of the local network TV stations.

“My proudest

moment was the next morning when I opened the *New York Times* and saw a five-column story on our adventure, including a cartoon of the four of us.”

There were four holes from the original list that made it again. Here is the original “Dream 18” in the order it was played. To all 32 clubs (and holes), our congratulations and thanks. —J.A.F.

The Dream 18 1982

Course	Hole	Par
Shinnecock Hills	14	4
National*	4	3
Inwood	18	4
Woodmere	16	3
Garden City GC	16	4
Meadow Brook	8	5
Stanwich*	17	5
Westchester	13	4
Knollwood	18	4
Metropolis*	6	4
Quaker Ridge	4	4
Winged Foot (West)	17	4
Ridgewood (West)	9	4
Upper Montclair (S)	3	4
Fiddlers Elbow (B)	9	5
Somerset Hills	12	3
Plainfield*	12	5
Baltusrol (Lower)	4	3

*Holes also on the Dream 18, 2007

The fabulous foursome just before they took flight in 1982.



TOP: FRED YUICH; BOTTOM: MGA ARCHIVES



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 and a TIMELESS GAME.



from the tee. Though it looks like a relatively benign par three on the scorecard, Lee Trevino once quipped, "It's the easiest par five you'll ever play." The tee shot at Essex County's 11th is struck with a long-iron (or, nowadays, a hybrid) and must carry a vast chasm to a green that is higher than it appears from the tee; again, many misses are short and trickle down the long, sloping false front into sand, water, or a position requiring a long chip back up the hill.

The other two par threes are among the world's finest largely because they demand mastery of distance. The 10th on Winged Foot's West Course hides nothing from the golfer, positioning its hazards — notably one bunker below the green

"Length doesn't just mean long; it means making the most of the distance."

and two on its flanks — in plain sight. But they also make the green seem closer than it is, and the front of the green slopes more than it looks, so many second shots are played from well short of the surface, and sometimes from sand.

As for number four at National, this "Redan" hole is a small piece of perfection. Based on the Redan 15th at North Berwick in Scotland, most consider the copy superior to the original because of how the green

Tillie the Terrific

Only one architect has more than one hole on our list, and that man was involved in *eight* of them. That says something about the Met Area, but a lot about Albert Warren Tillinghast (1874–1942). Born to wealth in Philadelphia and spoiled rotten (the nickname "Tillie the Terror" followed him from childhood), he tried a number of other professions — including artist, photographer, musician, writer, and antiques dealer — before finding his true calling as a golf course architect.

as well as Lower), Ridgewood, Bethpage (Blue, Red, and Black), and Winged Foot. Plus he was instrumental in redesigning Essex County, Metropolis, Quaker Ridge, and Rockaway Hunting Club.



Once he began succeeding as an architect, Tillinghast moved to the Met Area, living in Harrington Park, New Jersey, and maintaining an office in midtown Manhattan. That might have something to do with the preponderance of his holes on our list, but he worked around the country until the Depression hit. But even then, he tried to keep busy, designing the courses at Bethpage State Park as part of a Work Relief program.

Tillinghast took his first golf lesson as a teenager in St. Andrews, Scotland, and his teacher was none other than Old Tom Morris. A good player, he competed in three U.S. Amateurs and finished 25th in the 1910 U.S. Open, held at his hometown Philadelphia Cricket Club. He also is credited for coming up with the term "birdie."

A few qualities are evident in all the Tillinghast holes on our list. He was a believer in strategy, making the golfer think his way around. He used the natural flow of the land and put a premium on getting to the green. Holes such as the 10th at Winged Foot, the sixth on Ridgewood Center, and the 11th at Quaker Ridge are proof of his oft-quoted maxim that "a controlled shot to a closely guarded green is the surest test of a man's golf."

His first attempt at course design was for the resort at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware, Pennsylvania, which opened in 1907. From that beginning, his résumé includes San Francisco Golf Club, Baltimore (Five Farms), Brook Hollow and, in our area, Somerset Hills, Fenway, and the ones on this list — Baltusrol (Upper

Another Tillinghast quote could sum up this entire Dream 18 project: "A round of golf should provide 18 inspirations." —J.A.F



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angles sharply away from the tee, and the use of a mound short and right to shield the putting surface from view. How one plays the hole must be governed by how one plays the game, with only the best golfers firing at the flagstick; everyone else should aim to the right (the higher the handicap, the farther right the aim), using the big mound — which is much farther off the green than it appears — to direct the ball to the target. A bunker well below the left side of the green catches many a shot aimed too boldly.

So something else to remember about these great holes: What you see is not always what you get.

The best architects use changes in elevation to fool the player, making a hole look longer or shorter, hiding trouble, or just messing with our minds. The par-five fourth on Bethpage Black rises in three steps from tee to green, and with each rise comes another vastness of sand to cross. Ultimately, the shot to the green (probably the third) will be aimed at flag and sky, as the putting surface



Rockaway Hunting Club No. 9

Baltusrol Lower No. 17



RUSSELL KIRK/GOLFINKS

becomes harder to see as you get closer to it. Unless, of course, the hole is being played the way designer A.W. Tillinghast intended, hitting to the right and leaving a chip back from nearly level ground. So although modern equipment has made taking aim at the green a viable option for more players (even if you aren't Tiger Woods, who was on in two with driver/6-iron in the 2002 U.S. Open), it's a testament to this hole's enduring qualities that it puts up a good fight no matter how it is attacked.

In the days before designers had bulldozers and steam shovels to push earth around, they employed horse-drawn dirt scrapers to give holes shape and direction. Adding a little bend to a fairway can dramatically alter how a hole is played, and the capacity of the golfer to play it properly.

That usually means aiming to a particular side of the fairway if he hopes to get to the green, which is usually back across the fairway to the other side.

On the 17th hole at Westchester's West

“The best architects use changes in elevation to fool the player, making a hole look longer or shorter, hiding trouble, or just messing with our minds.”

course (played as the eighth hole during The Barclays), the drive should be close to the left side for the shortest approach to the green, but a large rock outcropping and

JIM KRAJICEK

Hole by Hole

Par Fours

Bayonne #16

Bayonne, New Jersey
Eric Bergstol, 2006

Back tees: 486 yards
Middle tees: 453 yards

The putting surface is big, undulating, sticks out into the water, and is flanked by the club's boat slip on one side and a helipad on the other.

Ridgewood (Center) #6

Ridgewood, New Jersey
A.W. Tillinghast, 1929

Back tees: 291 yards
Middle tees: 275 yards

The “five and dime” hole does not look strenuous on the scorecard, but it can pose considerable difficulty even when played conservatively. From the middle of the fairway, it is tough to see much of the elevated green, and a slew of bunkers gobble off-line approach shots.

Metropolis #6

White Plains, New York
Herbert Strong/A.W. Tillinghast/Joe Finger, 1904

Back tees: 423 yards
Middle tees: 406 yards

From the elevated tee, the view is down a narrow chute of trees toward a sliver-thin fairway that slopes severely right to left. The wide, two-tiered green slopes left to right as well as back to front, and is guarded by an expertly placed bunker short and center.

Quaker Ridge #11

Scarsdale, New York
A.W. Tillinghast, 1926

Back tees: 402 yards
Middle tees: 372 yards

A stream runs along the left side, then wanders across in front of the green, which is propped up by a stone wall. Driving down the left side leaves a shorter shot but a tougher angle, thanks to a towering oak tree that must be avoided at all costs. The small green is well-bunkered.

Bethpage Black No. 4



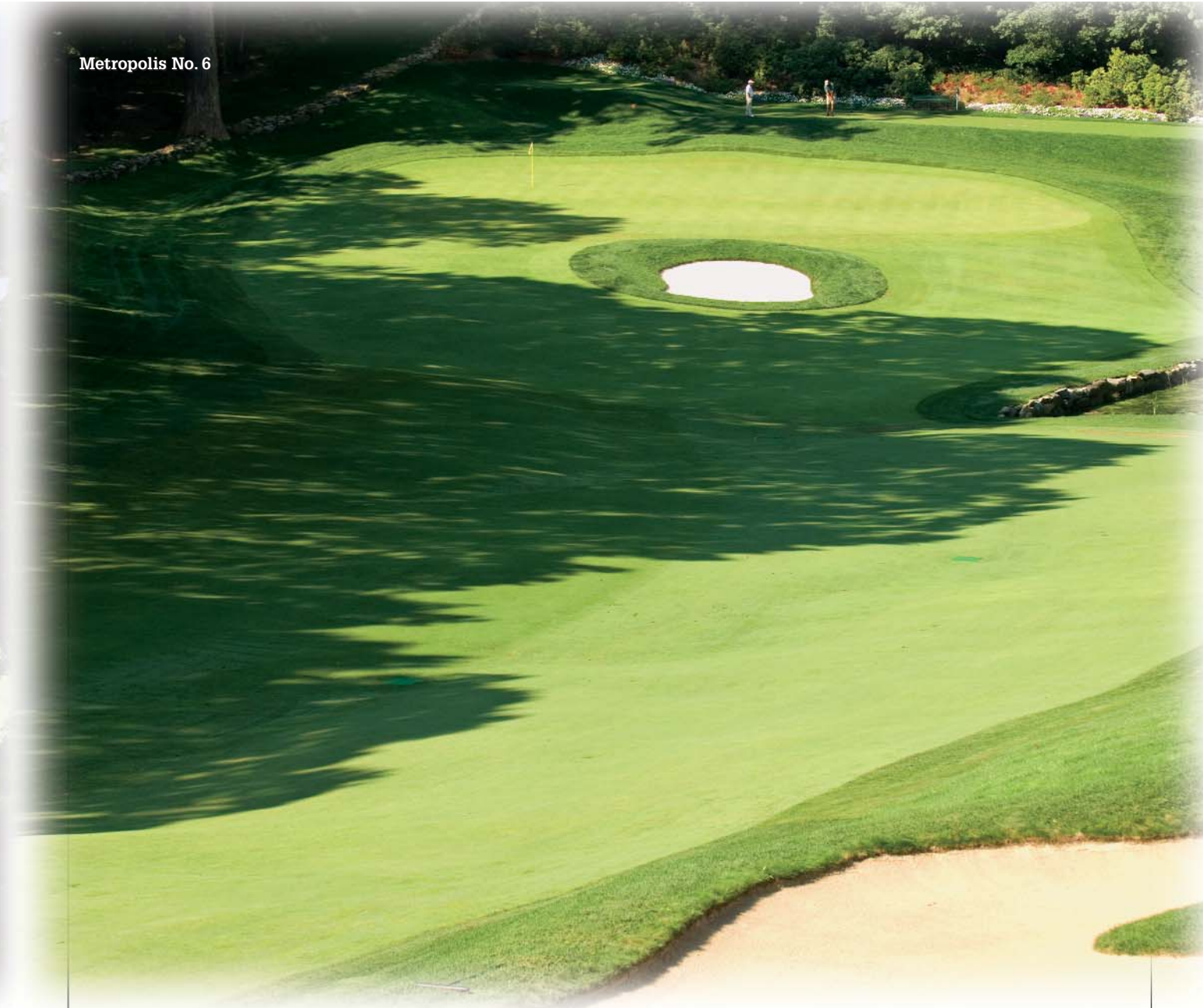
trees down the left coax tee shots to the right, leaving a longer shot home and over water. At Sebonack, the 11th is best challenged from the right side of the fairway, but the wind off Peconic Bay usually pushes shots left, while

going well right can bring dunes, trees, scrub, and even the beach into play.

The fairways on this Dream 18 almost all share another characteristic: slope. It's nearly impossible to find a level lie on the par fours,

JIM KRAJICEK

Metropolis No. 6



FRED VUICH

and tilting a landing area almost always means there's trouble to be found if the next shot follows the direction of the tilt. The fairway of the third at Trump National-Westchester falls from right to left, so it should be no sur-

prise that water lines the left side of the hole (but over-correct off the slope and there's a steep bunker as well as a patch of long grass short and right of the green). The sixth green at Metropolis might be big, but it's still a

tough task to hit from the sharp angles of the fairway. The fairway at Bayonne 16 slopes, as does that of Ridge-wood Center's short but very tricky par-four sixth, known as the "five and dime" because the saying goes that "if you don't make a 5, you'll make a 10."

Now try to find a flat green on this course. Most slope back to front (notable exception: National's Redan),

Hole by Hole

Par Fours

Trump National-Westchester #3

Briarcliff Manor, New York
Jim Fazio, 2002

Back tees: 485 yards
Member tees: 455 yards

The tilting fairway lies make it hard to hit the long, undulating green, which is guarded short right by a deep, humped bunker and a grassy bowl, and on the left by water.

Westchester #17

Harrison, New York
Walter Travis, 1922

Back tees: 471 yards
Member tees: 421 yards

This long par four points toward a large pond that guards the right side of the fairway, which then cuts on a 90-degree angle toward the green. An outcropping of rock and trees guards the preferred left side of the fairway. There's plenty of room to the right, but that leaves a longer shot over water to the severely back-to-front sloping green.

Par Fives

Bethpage (Black) #4

Farmingdale, New York

A.W. Tillinghast, 1935
Back tees: 517 yards
Member tees: 461 yards

Not terribly long, this beautiful inland hole plays longer as it rises in three steps from tee to green, with vast bunkers intervening at each level. The elevated green gets harder to see as the golfer gets nearer, with the final approach likely aimed at nothing but flag and sky.

Baltusrol (Lower) #17

Springfield, New Jersey
A.W. Tillinghast, 1922

Back tees: 630 yards
Member tees: 543 yards

A dauntingly long hole, it's easy to miss the strategic challenge, which increases closer to the hole. A good drive is necessary for any hope of clearing the "Sahara Desert" cross-bunker. After that, with the green rising out of view, distance control is necessary to have any hope of reaching the green with the approach shot.

Plainfield #12

Plainfield, New Jersey
Donald Ross, 1921

Back tees: 588 yards
Member tees: 555 yards

A stream crosses the fairway and extends up to the green, which is pure Donald Ross – small, elevated, sloping, and surrounded by long grass, sand, and a single pine. Long hitters sometimes go for it in two, but for most players the key is the lay-up, which comes off a sloping lie and must carry mounds to finish in the right half of the fairway.

Stanwich #17

Greenwich, Connecticut
William Gordon, 1964

Back tees: 616 yards
Member tees: 540 yards

A long yet subtle hole that doesn't look all that daunting until it's time to decide how to attack the green. The left-side stream widens into a pond, which dictates the position and distance of a lay-up. The small green puts up its own defense, with a severe back-to-front slope, bunkers, and a sharp drop-offs that leads to a shaved chipping in back.

Stanwich No. 17



many one side to the other, some are crowned so they run off on all sides, with all the movement dictated by the expected nature of the approaches. The 12th at Plainfield features a typical Donald Ross green, small and steeply banked, with a ridge dividing its rear portion; the 17th at Stanwich actually had some of its slope removed in a recent renovation, but it's still about as level as a skateboard track, with a ridge that separates back from front. Walter Travis fashioned a pitched green at Westchester, as did Tillinghast at Quaker's 11th and

the Parks at Maidstone's ninth. But it isn't only the old-timers tilting the tables: Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore put most of the trouble on and around their green on the 13th at Friar's Head (which, although it's a par four, is likely reached on the third shot by many players), and the same goes for Jack Nicklaus and Tom Doak at Sebonack's 11th and Jim Fazio on Trump-Westchester's third.

And when a green slopes, look for water, sand, and false fronts placed so as to turn a small mistake into a big headache.

Beauty, length, distance control, elevation, slope. With those covered, we now throw in history (four of these holes have hosted majors), reputation, timing (where in the round a hole falls), memorability, and, for good measure, good old-fashioned difficulty. Every hole described has used at least one of these features, and usually more than one.

So just about now it should be obvious what the true test of greatness is: It makes you think, and on every shot. That's called strategy, and if greatness has a common denominator, that's my nomination.

Or look at it this way: How hard is the hole fighting back, resisting our attacks? If it makes us hit a damned-near-perfect shot with every swing, that's great... and greatness. ■

James A. Frank, former editor of *GOLF Magazine* and *Golf Connoisseur*, is based in New York City.



Plainfield No. 12

TOP: FRED VUICH; BOTTOM: LARRY LAMBRECHT

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