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PGA.com readers like what they see at North Kingstown Golf Course - by Steven King

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If you are a golfer who has had the pleasure of playing courses throughout the Ocean State, then the following statement is not a well kept secret: the North Kingstown Golf Club at Quonset is a jewel of a course. In addition to finely manicured greens and well kept fairways, the 18-hole public course offers breathtaking views of Narragansett Bay and a rarity, to be sure, close up views of an array of military planes.

That secret is now even less well kept, as thousands of readers of PGA.com have been let in on it. The online publication of the Professional Golfer's Association has a regular feature entitled, "A Quick Nine," in which it reaches out to readers to rank courses throughout the country.

"We've tried to make it a point to highlight beautiful areas of the country, or fantastic courses that you might not have otherwise known about," said PGA.com's T.J. Auclair.

Its latest survey asked readers: What is the best course on a military base?

Coming in at number two, just after Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, and in front of Eisenhower Golf Club at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, is North Kingstown Golf Club. PGA.com describes the course this way: "Located beside the former naval Air Station Quonset Point right on Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island, North Kingstown Golf Club provides some breathtaking views of the ocean, as well as military planes sitting in hangars at the adjacent base."

John Rainone, golf professional at NKGC, was not surprised that the course was singled out by PGA.com. It has the three qualities, he said, critical to success. "We're in good condition, have a great layout and are in a beautiful location," he said.

The course was designed by Walter Johnson and opened in 1944. It runs 6,161 yards and is a par 70. It has a 69.3 rating with a slope of 123. The course is owned by the Town of North Kingstown, which just two years ago installed a new, \$2 million irrigation system. Rhode Islanders have long known of this beauty along the bay. For several consecutive years, Providence Business News ranked NKGC as the busiest public course in the state.

Busy, yet accessible. Rainone said that while that coveted 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. tee-off window on weekends can be difficult to secure, tee-times are available to be reserved seven days in advance. The course typically attracts a wide range of golfers.

"We're a good test for the talented golfer, but also playable for the average golfer," said Rainone.

TownePlace Suites

off to a terrific start

The recognition of the quality of life --both recreational and professional - found at and immediately adjacent to the Quonset Business Park is also evident through the successful launch of TownePlace Suites by Marriott, the "green certified" hotel project that opened this spring in the Gateway. On her way into the office each day, Katherine Trapani, our planning manager here at the Quonset

Development Corp., sees a telling sign - that is, a hotel parking lot filled with cars.

"TownePlace has been everything we could have hoped it would be," said Trapani.

The hotel features an energy efficient geothermal system for cooling and heating. It used recycled and local materials during construction and was designed and built with the goal of becoming the first LEED certified facility in the Greater Providence region. Its environmental design calls for it to reduce water usage by up to 30%, to utilize optimized energy management systems, provide enhanced indoor air quality and ventilation, and utilize "green cleaning" practices.

Trapani said the hotel has been a boon for the expanding Electric Boat, which directs business there, as well as countless other Quonset businesses. It has also become a popular destination for South County wedding reception business.

The Quonset Business Park is home to some 168 companies, employing approximately 8,800 workers. Over the past five years, 2,700 new jobs have been created there.

Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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