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Lauderdale Lakes Country Club definitely worth a play

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Editor's note: This is the first in a series of features about local golf courses. See future Regional News editions and the Resorter for more information on golf in the area.

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The game of golf is about history, tradition, competition, relaxation and nature.

Not every golf course represents all five of those qualities.

Lauderdale Lakes Country Club, located just north of Elkhorn on Highway 12, combines mature trees that line fairways with small greens to create a traditional 1920s American style course. Throw in some beautiful views of Don Jean Bay and a couple of tough holes and you have a nine-hole course that has it all.

Nestled on 45 acres loaded with huge trees, the course was designed by Edward Hawk Ravenscroft and opened in 1921. The style is customary with the design of that time. The clubhouse's rustic look and feel adds to the tradition.

But it's the use of the terrain surrounding Mill Lake, of Lauderdale Lakes, that can't be overlooked. The trees on the course give it tradition and its difficulty for golfers.

The first obvious aspect of the course are its relatively wide and straight fairways that are lined by large old trees, which lead to small greens surrounded by bunkers on nearly every hole. This also is a relatively short par-35 course, the nine holes playing just 3,003 from the back tees, 2,780 from the middles and 2,457 from the reds. Sounds simple. But, the undulations of the terrain in both the fairways and on the greens challenge golfers at all levels.

While most holes on the golf course are pretty straight forward, the par-3 second is one of the toughest you'll ever see. Luckily this hole follows one of the easiest holes on the course, the par-4 first.

But, after a relaxing first, the second will grab you quickly. The long par-3, which measures 229 from the back tees to as close as 180 from the women's tee is dead straight. But, four trees, two on each side are on guard near the front of the green. The overhanging leaves and branches are what causes the problem for the golfer, who must keep a low ball flight

straight at the pin in order to get onto the green in one.

That makes club choice key and a few options available, but keeping it low and running it on may be the best choice. For those who can hit a 3- or a 4-iron, keep it low and very straight, and hit it about 200 to 225, you have a chance. Those who can chip and pitch it up close, can get a three, but this hole plays more like a par-4.

- Club choice was a problem for me. I can't hit my 4-iron that far consistently, but the ball flight on my 7-wood is much too high and would get caught up in the overhanging branches and leaves. But, that was my only play. I hit an OK 7-wood, which was straight, but short. I chunked my second from about 25 yards away, then hit one within 10 feet, but missed the bogey putt for a 5.

The par-4 seventh is the only hole that is not straight. The severe dogleg left measures 298 from the front tee and 401 from the back. The key is negotiating the group of trees on the left, while still keeping the ball in the fairway to set up a short iron to the green.

- Knowing that I would hit through the fairway with a driver if I aimed straight and still have a long iron to the hole, the only decision was an effort over the trees. Luckily, using my driver, I crushed the ball high over the trees and landed it in the middle of the fairway only about 60 yards from the green. Using a lob wedge, I knocked it within 15 feet for my birdie attempt. Once again, the greens were tough to read and inconsistent, both in speed and direction. I 3-putted for my five. Very disappointing after two solid shots.

Overall, this is definitely a course that deserves play. It is well maintained from tee to green and the price is definitely right. They have some deals there that you can't find anywhere else.

For those people whose game needs a little help, the front tees are perfect. The par-4s allow short irons to the green after a decent drive off the tee. For the better golfer, the back tees will provide quite a challenge with some varied par-4s and a nice 504-yard par-5.

- This was my first time out this summer and I can't think of a better place to go. Hitting the ball pretty well and shooting a 46 didn't hurt.

Log onto www.lauderdalelakescountryclub.com for more information and rates or check out the Resorter for summer specials.



SPORTS EDITOR MIKE Ramczyk tees off Friday on hole No. 2 at Lauderdale Lakes. The straight-on par 3 is a tough chance for a par with the overhanging trees protecting the green.