

Wolf Run

Indianapolis, Indiana

Architect: Steve Smyers



“Wolf Run is a golf course of bold contrasts, all of them designed to heighten the experience of the land while challenging the golfer to think his way around.”

—Bradley Klein, *Golfweek*
Architectural Editor

Steve Smyers Golf Course Architects was presented a unique opportunity in designing Wolf Run Golf Club. Owner Jack Leer’s objective was to create a golf course for purists—a course so challenging and dramatic that it would attract a membership of top players from around the United States.

While Wolf Run was to be intentionally difficult, it also had to be a thinking man’s course, where a player at the top of his game would be offered strategic—and at times heroic—options on every hole.

The heavily wooded 310-acre site featured meadowlands, a large bluff cutting across the entire tract, and a stream winding through the property.

Leer demanded an exacting course, but one as beautiful and fair as it was difficult. The final requirement was that the course had to be completed for a total cost no greater than \$4 million, roughly half of the average cost to create most premium American golf courses at the time.

Ground was broken in May of 1987 and two years later, on schedule and under budget, the 6,735-yard, par-71 course was unveiled—a course of contrasts and variety, emphasizing the simple and natural.

Within months, 22 professional golfers joined the club. Its member-

ship roll also includes prominent golf course architect Pete Dye. After touring the course for the first time, Gary Player said, “Wolf Run is the best new course I’ve seen in twenty years.” Nick Faldo played the course and told Smyers that Wolf Run had more variety than any course he’d ever seen.

As diverse as its scenery, so are Wolf Run’s demands on shotmaking. Draws, fades, high shots, knock-downs, bump-and-runs, delicate pitches and chips—all are required here. The fairways are narrow. The bunkering, dramatic and strategic. Most of the greens are small, several surrounded by tightly mowed, contoured areas encouraging the art of chipping. The fescue roughs are tall and troublesome.

Many of its par-4 holes demand long drives and rifled approaches to small targets. But Wolf Run is as finely-balanced and strategically sound as it is challenging.

The 298-yard seventh is a case in point. On the tee, the player is presented three strategic options—each offering a reward proportionate to its risk, demonstrating the art of strategic design and proving that a golfer’s courage and skill can be thoroughly and enjoyably tested on a hole of most any length. 🍷