

Holston Hills CC jumps three spots to No. 4 in Tennessee in Golf Digest's 2017 "Best in State" rankings; 3 more McConnell Golf courses crack Carolinas lists

KNOXVILLE, TENN. (June 2017) — Venerable Holston Hills Country Club in Knoxville, Tenn., has jumped three spots to No. 4 in Tennessee in Golf Digest's 2017 "Best in State" rankings.

Located in East Knoxville near the foothills of the Smoky Mountains on 180 open acres of rolling old farmland tucked into a bend in the Holston River, Holston Hills features a 1927 Donald Ross-designed golf course that has remained nearly untouched through the years. Holston Hills immediately became recognized as the finest course in the state when it opened and started hosting every important regional tournament including a PGA Tour event.

Raleigh-based McConnell Golf purchased Holston Hills in December 2015 and has invested \$1.4 million in capital improvements including a new fitness center, locker room upgrades, and a banquet and dining room renovation. McConnell Golf owns a dozen 18-hole, private golf courses plus one nine-hole course throughout the Carolinas and Tennessee.

McConnell Golf is a privately held company offering unlimited access to world-class facilities and golf courses designed by legends such as Ross, Pete Dye, Tom Fazio, Arnold Palmer, Greg Norman, and Hale Irwin. McConnell Golf's attention to quality is a primary reason the golf courses and clubs that bear the company's name consistently rank among the best of state. In addition to Holston Hills, McConnell Golf courses again dominated 2017 Golf Digest state rankings in both North and South Carolina, including Old North State Club, Sedgefield Country Club and Musgrove Mill Golf Club.

Ross was the most prolific great golf course architect in history, with more than 400 designs bearing his signature. Yet today, very few Ross golf courses exist as they were originally designed. Most have been altered through the years and have lost much of the genius that Ross imparted on a course. In fact, the majority of Ross's designs such as Pinehurst No. 2, Seminole, Oakland Hills, Aronimink, Inverness and others have been renovated and restored through the years by committees and other architects.

"The golf course is an old, classic design that has remained virtually the same through the years," said Holston Hills Director of Golf Chris Dibble. "Holston Hills is neat because every hole is right in front of you. It's very fair. There are no tricks or hidden hazards. (Noted golf course architect) Tom Doak says Holston Hills is the closest golf course around to what Ross originally designed."

Founded by members of Knoxville's prestigious Cherokee Country Club — a 1907 Ross design — where overcrowding had become a problem, Holston Hills further bolsters McConnell Golf's reputation for having the names of the game's greatest architects attached to its courses. Holston Hills is the fourth McConnell Golf course designed by Ross.

Though relatively low-key and unknown, Holston Hills is so well respected that it has been ranked among the country's greatest classical (pre-1960) golf designs in the United States. The co-founder of the Donald Ross Society and noted golf architecture critic Michael J. Fay has said that he would rather play Holston Hills over any other golf course in the South on a consistent basis.

Since its inception in 2003, McConnell Golf has bolstered its burgeoning reputation in the golf industry by investing significantly in improvements and upgrades at its clubs. McConnell Golf is currently overseeing renovation and restoration work totaling approximately \$7.3 million at four of its clubs around the Carolinas and Tennessee.

Holston Hills illustrious history of championship golf includes playing host to numerous national, regional and state tournaments including the 2004 U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur, the NCAA Championship in 1955 and 1965, three Tennessee State Opens and nine Tennessee State Amateur Championships. Holston Hills has also played host to numerous U.S. Open qualifiers.

Byron Nelson won the Knoxville Open at Holston Hills during his magical run in 1945 — his 15th of 18 PGA Tour victories that season. The previous week Nelson had lost to Fred Haas in Memphis, ending his streak of 11 consecutive wins. Cary Middlecoff was only 19 years old in 1940 when he won his first Tennessee Amateur at Holston Hills — the first of Middlecoff's four consecutive Tennessee Amateurs. Among his 40 professional victories, Middlecoff won the U.S. Open in 1949 and again in 1956, as well as the Masters in 1955.

The Worlds Fair was hosted by Knoxville in 1982. As part of the fair's sporting activities, the PGA Cup Matches were played at Holston Hills. This international event matches the nine best PGA club professionals against their counterparts from Great Britain and Ireland. The winning PGA team handily won the match 13.5 points to 7.5 points for the Great Britain and Ireland team.

Through the years, Holston Hills has been visited by numerous entertainers including the late Archie Campbell, who was a longtime member, along with rock star Alice Cooper and professional athletes Peyton Manning and Michael Jordan, among others.

Ross's layout remains arrayed in a broad, fan-shaped formation, with both nines returning to the clubhouse that sits on an upslope along the north side of the property. Holston Hills features more than 100 bunkers scattered across the

property, with very few houses or other visual distractions taking away from the links-style playing experience.

Perched on a hill with breathtaking views of the Great Smoky Mountains, the Holston Hills clubhouse overlooks the golf course and showcases bay windows, elegant arched doors, and a central ballroom with large cathedral ceilings and exposed wood trusses. An outdoor terrace on the south side of the ballroom offers members a space to relax and take in the view, while a magnificent centerpiece terrace surrounds the clubhouse, with its comfortable Tudor architecture.

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ABOUT MCCONNELL GOLF

McConnell Golf (McConnellGolf.com) memberships include privileges at a dozen 18-hole, private golf courses plus one nine-hole course throughout the Carolinas and Tennessee. McConnell Golf's stable of prestigious clubs includes Raleigh Country Club and TPC Wakefield Plantation in Raleigh, NC, Sedgefield Country Club Ross Course and Dye Course in Greensboro, NC, Providence Country Club in Charlotte, NC, Old North State Club in New London, NC, Treyburn Country Club in Durham, NC, Brook Valley Country Club in Greenville, NC, Country Club of Asheville (NC), The Reserve Golf Club in Pawleys Island, SC, Musgrove Mill Golf Club in Clinton, SC and Holston Hills Country Club in Knoxville, TN. McConnell Golf also operates the 27-hole public Raleigh Golf Association and manages the Grande Dunes Members Club and Ocean Club in Myrtle Beach for LStar Development.

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