

# GREAT HOLES

## No.13 *THE CLUB AT IRONWOOD* STAUNTON, VA.

by Bruce H. Matson

### Par 4

#### YARDAGES:

BLACK	425
BLUE	406
WHITE	387
GOLD	305
SILVER	274

DESPITE SOME INITIAL REACTIONS, it is likely that you have both seen and heard of The Club at Ironwood – or are at least familiar with its prior incarnations.

Travelers through the Shenandoah Valley on Interstate 81 have probably caught glimpses of the golf course located just west of the turnpike. Those individuals familiar with the territory may recall that the course was owned by the Country Club of Staunton. That said, the club has been known by some other names, has some interesting history, and is now called The Club at Ironwood.

Tracing its history, the beginnings of the country club date back more than 100 years. It appears that the first golf tournament at the club was held on a nine-hole course at the Staunton Country Club in 1910. A century later, the Country Club of Staunton's members voted to change the name to The Club at Ironwood.

During those intervening years, the original club moved out of the city to a site in the county, renaming itself, appropriately enough, Augusta Country Club in 1922. Later, that same country club changed its name to Ingleside Resort in 1928 as the property evolved into a hospitality destination as well as a country club. When outside play and other resort activities detracted from the enjoyment of the club for some, a

group of members established a new club less than a mile east to a hilly property, adopting the name "Country Club of Staunton."

The golf course at the Country Club of Staunton was designed by David Gordon in 1968 when the club moved from the Ingleside property. Since early 2010, the club has been known as The Club at Ironwood, taking its name from the adjoining residential neighborhood. The site features rolling hills throughout, which offer beautiful vistas of the valley and the surrounding mountains, but leave golfers with few level stances. Players who develop their games here have been challenged less by length and more by sidehill, downhill and uphill lies. Acute judgment is required in selecting the correct club and the ideal line of play.

The par-4 13th hole serves as a perfect example of the challenges and beauty of negotiating the intricacies and playing a round of golf at The Club at Ironwood. The hole plays downhill and doglegs gently left near the landing area, making both club and shot selection critical to set up the approach shot. In addition to moving left, the fairway drops off more steeply as the hole turns before rising abruptly over the last 100 yards to the green.

While a long draw from the tee will leave players with only a short pitch up to the hill-

top putting surface, keeping the drive in play between the trees on either side of the fairway may take priority. Guarded by a lone bunker at the right front, the primary challenge at the green is reading both the speed and the line of the putts on a terrain that runs severely from back to front. In order to make par or better at this great hole, the golfer is required to play four precise shots while enjoying some captivating scenery.

The golf course at Ironwood has served as a site for many VSGA championships since the club relocated to its present location. In 1971, a young Curtis Strange was runner-up to Danville's Mike Pratt at the VSGA Junior Amateur Championship. More recently, the club hosted this summer's VSGA Junior Girls' Championship. A VSGA VIP participating course, The Club at Ironwood offers five plays on Mondays and Tuesdays. Additionally, as a special offer, the club extends to golfers five additional plays from Wednesday-Friday at \$30, plus 10 percent off merchandise with the club logo.

*Author Bruce H. Matson is a writer and golf historian from Richmond and serves on the VSGA's board of directors. He is a member of Golfweek's national rating panel for its "America's Best 100 Courses."*