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# Robb Report

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## **These 5 Diverse Short Courses Prove Size Doesn't Matter**

These new and forthcoming golf courses inspire beginners but still challenge better players.

BY [SHAUN TOLSON](#) ON JANUARY 18, 2018

During the 10-plus years when Tiger Woods routinely dominated the field of players on the PGA Tour, golf reached its zenith of popularity in the United States. Over the subsequent decade, however, the sport's popularity with younger generations has receded. To compensate, a number of golf resorts recently have built (or are building) short courses of various size and length, believing that these less-imposing layouts will introduce the game to younger, prospective players and may help them to foster a love of the sport.

"Golf is at the crossroads," Gary Player said a few months before his Mountain Top Course at Big Cedar Lodge opened this past summer. "No longer can we rely on the standard 18-hole course to attract players. Let's build a course that is for families and those learning [golf](#), but also can be challenging for experienced players. Let's do something different."

In particular, Player emphasized that these short courses will make the game more affordable and more fun, especially for novice players. He also believes that these courses will make for faster play, another factor that may encourage younger generations to take up or stick with the sport. "They are not only critical to golf in the USA, but all over the world," Player says of these short layouts. "The future is now. Get people excited; give them something new to be enthusiastic about. Golf is thought of as a traditional sport, but times are changing. We must appeal to the younger generation, and this is the first step." The following short courses, which either recently opened or will open soon, represent the best of that new era of golf that Player passionately supports.

## Drivin' Round the Mountain



### **Gary Player Mountain Top Course at Big Cedar Lodge**

The [Mountain Top Course](#) moniker of Gary Player's new short course is justified, as the 13-hole layout plays over and around a bluff that provides dramatic views of the nearby Tom Fazio-designed Buffalo Ridge Springs course, as well as Ozark National and Payne's Valley, two 18-hole championship courses currently under construction and designed by Coore & Crenshaw and Tiger Woods, respectively. "The routing of this course is what makes it special," Player explains. "You can play all 13, but if you want a quick one-hour game with your children, it's simple to play a few holes and then go enjoy the rest of your day."

The 13 par-3 holes play as long as 221 yards (from the back tees) or as short as 66 yards (from the forward tees). Each hole features captivating scenery; however, four holes (8, 9, 10, and 13) stand out from the rest, as they play around and up to exposed rock faces and cave entrances that were unearthed from a small sinkhole.

## Fun and Games



**The Sandbox at Sand Valley**

If a prospective round at [Sand Valley's The Sandbox](#) conjures up thoughts of fun, then Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw—the short course's design team—and Michael Keiser, Jr., the resort's developer, have succeeded. "We wanted to build a short course that maximized fun," says Keiser, who explains that the original plan called for a 22-hole, par-2 putting course. As the project evolved, the holes grew a bit longer and their total number decreased by five; however, the Sandbox—which will open for play in the spring—features "putting tees" situated 20 to 60 yards from the green that allow players to only use their putters, should they want that challenge. "The end result is a short course that you can play with only a putter, if you choose," says Keiser, "or with a handful of wedges and bump-and-run irons."

The course's 17 holes begin in the sand dunes and meander into a forest and a heathland before returning to the dunes; and although the longest hole measures less than 150 yards, Keiser points to the course's severely undulating greens as an equalizer that will test low-handicap players. "A low handicapper will need to be creative and precise in order to score," he says. "The undulations can help you get the ball close, or they can punish you."



## Pitch Black



### The Gauntlet at Streamsong Resort

Central Florida's Streamsong Resort captured the golfing world's attention earlier this year when its third course, the Gil Hanse-designed [Streamsong Black](#), opened for play. Connected to that new layout ([we reviewed Streamsong Black](#) proper shortly after its launch) is the Gauntlet, a 2-acre putting course, and the Roundabout, a "free-flowing practice area," that features nine green complexes. According to Rick Mack—the executive vice president of the Mosaic Company, which sponsors the resort—the Roundabout "will be guided by players' creativity and imagination as they pick their own teeing grounds, distances, and routings." Think of it as cross-country golf on a small scale.

The Streamsong Black course also features an alternate ninth green, which allows players to connect to the Roundabout layout if they want to play a condensed or atypical round. "We offer our guests an opportunity to play the game in non-traditional ways," says Mack, "with shorter loops and modified layouts to match their skills and interest."

## Sage Advice



### McVeigh's Gauntlet Course at Silvie's Valley Ranch

Seemingly set in the middle of nowhere—in reality, the resort is based in east central Oregon—Silvie's Valley Ranch is putting the final touches on [McVeigh's Gauntlet Course](#), a 7-hole short course scheduled to open in 2018. Named after Myles McVeigh, an early pioneer and homesteader in the area, this future short course is unlike the others on this list in that it offers little forgiveness for errant shots. According to course architect Dan Hixson, the course is located on a plot of land that undulates too much to accommodate full-length golf holes. As a result, the layout's five par 3's all feature greens that are essentially islands in the surrounding sagebrush. "The course will challenge even the best golfers with its difficulty and visual intimidation," he says. "The price to pay for missing the green is a ball in the sage."

### **A Return to Golf's Roots**

When the first golf holes at Pinehurst Resort were built in 1898, they set the stage for the resort to one day be called “the cradle of American golf.” In September, the resort returned to those roots, building a 9-hole short course—appropriately called [the Cradle](#)—on the grounds where those original golf holes once stood. (We [reviewed the Cradle in-depth](#) shortly after its debut.) The course’s designer, Gil Hanse, spent several weeks in a bulldozer’s driver’s seat, shaping the course’s subtly contoured landscape. “The beauty of golf at Pinehurst is that it is very natural, traditional and classic, especially architecturally,” Hanse said in a press release announcing the course’s opening. “That Pinehurst character, we believe, permeates through the Cradle. These nine little golf holes are on a historic piece of land, and we feel like each hole has its own identity that fosters the creativity golfers have enjoyed here for more than a century.”

The layout, which is comprised of holes that range from 56 yards to 127 yards in length, will appeal to those with an affinity for the resort’s No. 2 course, as the Cradle features similar slopes and contours and encourages creativity. Best of all, the \$50 greens fees are good all day, and children 17-years-old and younger play for free with an accompanied adult.