

A Well-Schooled Course

WHERE GREAT MINDS AND GOOD GOLFERS THRIVE
BY THOMAS BEDELL

When I attended **The Peddie School** in the mid 1960s, a sign by the entrance emblazoned the name of the venerable college preparatory school in large block letters. Unfortunately, there were always a few blocks mysteriously missing, and the uninformed might have thought the name of the institution was actually "he eddie choo." ■ Boys will be boys, and Peddie was then (unfortunately for me) an all-boys school, even though it began life in 1864 as the Hightstown Female Seminary with a Baptist orientation. Boys were admitted later in the first year, and the school remained coed until 1908. By then the name had been changed thanks to philanthropist Thomas B. Peddie, who had made his fortune in luggage, and later served in the U.S. House of Representatives. ■ Walter Annenberg made his fortune by founding *TV Guide*, and the class of 1927 student is perhaps the school's most famous alumni. The subsequent ambassador to Great Britain, Annenberg made history in 1993 by giving Peddie \$100 million, the largest sum ever donated to a secondary school, securing its place in the front ranks of college prep schools. Over 500 boarding and day students in grades 8 through 12 now attend. The school went full-circle and readmitted girls in the early 1970s (shortly after I graduated, naturally), although it wasn't until 1998 that there were enough female golfers to form the first girls' golf team. ■ Golf at Peddie stretches back to 1930 (when

THE PEDDIE
SCHOOL
PREPARES
STUDENTS
TO BE
WORLD
LEADERS—
AND GOOD
GOLFERS.

COURTESY OF THE PEDDIE SCHOOL



*When life was good:
The 1938 golf team at
the Peddie School,
with a war and a life-
time of responsibilities
around the corner.*

the first team was organized) and in a rather unique fashion. While it may not rank with the \$23 purchase of Manhattan, the school engineered a pretty good deal during the Depression of buying a golf course for \$1. It's still is one of the few secondary schools to own its own course.

Both course and school are in Hightstown, which I always situate as, "exit 8 on the Turnpike," or about 10 miles southeast of Princeton, barely an hour from New York City. The dollar purchase deal was actually greased by Walter C. Black, (class of 1886), the school's treasurer for over 30 years.

The Black family began Village Nurseries in 1876, a business still going strong in town, still family-run. But Black's son-in-law, C. Stanley Stults, set aside some nursery acreage in the early 1920s for a nine-hole golf course he laid out with

some local businessmen (including my grandfather, Clifford Shangle). Walter's grandson, Charles S. Stults, Jr. (class of 1942), and great grandson, "Cappy" Stults, still play on the course, which went to 18 on a piecemeal basis in the early 1950s.

The Peddie School Golf Course is an appealing old-style track, relatively flat, short at 6,278 yards from the tips, playing at par 72 with a 69.8 rat-

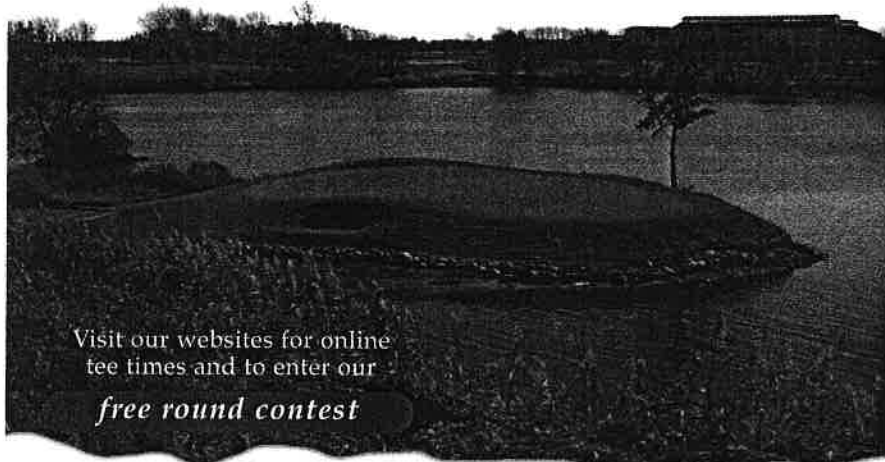
ing and a 116 slope. The layout has changed little in the last 50 years, and still has all sorts of the nursery's ornamental and fruit tree species to work around. "You have to hit it straight here," says pro Michael Bichsel. "We haven't lost many trees, though there are probably more pine here than anything." Shades of the old Christmas tree farm.

The challenge at Peddie can be largely self-imposed, but it's no easy task to target the small greens. And some devilishly-placed water hazards add complexity, particularly on the tough 4th hole; it's only 380 yards, but the second shot flirts with the water.

Another stream running across the par-5 7th adds some scalp-scratching complexity, and Bichsel calls 9 and 18 the best of the lot: "They have some length, and are good-looking as well as long." The

N
 Bally
 \$50
 Cryst
 resort
 Black
 Glen
 Now C
 NEW
 NEW
 NEW
 NEW
 Cryst
 Vac
 Conve
 M
 973

FINEST QUALITY, MOST AFFORDABLE GOLF IN THE DELAWARE VALLEY



Visit our websites for online
tee times and to enter our
free round contest



1251 Riverwinds Drive
Thorofare, NJ 08086
(856) 848-1033
riverwindsgolf.com



2951 Dutch Mill Road
Newfield, NJ 08344
(856) 697-8900
whiteoaksgolf.com

WANT TO
play golf?

JOIN THE WOMEN'S GOLF ASSOCIATION OF NJ

**LEARN TO PLAY
IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS
PLAY IN A LEAGUE
ATTEND GOLF OUTINGS
COMPETE IN GOLF EVENTS**



Women's Golf Association
of New Jersey

CALL 1-866-972-GOLF (4653)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

OR VISIT WWW.WGANJ.ORG

9th is a 413-yard two-shotter that asks one to navigate a mammoth pine, and the 18th a 550-yard par 5 that feels like a long march home.

The course is private, limited to about 300 members who Bichsel concisely characterized: "They love the course, and they play a lot of golf." He wishes the Peddie community used the course more than they do—it's a short walk from the school and free to Peddie students and faculty after 2pm. Alumni are welcome, too, for a greens fee.

The school teams use the course, naturally—a girls' team, and boys' varsity and J.V. teams—with varied success over 70 years of play. The school went through a particularly torrid stretch in the 1950s, winning the state championships six years under coach (and French instructor) Philip Hood.

Barbara Paul, the first girl to play at the school—on the boys' team—went on to play well with the Auburn Tigers in the Southeast Conference, and later tried to break into the pro ranks via the Futures Tour. But the school has had alumni more noted in other sports than golf, such as the swimming duo from the class of 1990, Nelson Diebel (double gold-medalist at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic games), and B.J. Bedford (gold-medalist at the 2000 Sydney games).

And then there was Erik Hanson, 1983, who pitched for four major league teams in the 1990s, making the 1995 All-Star team with the Red Sox. Hanson actually played on the Peddie golf team his sophomore year, taking a break from baseball. Now he's living in Scottsdale and Kirkland, Washington, racking up amateur golf titles and pondering whether there might be another professional sport ahead for him. Like Peddie, Hanson has come full-circle. ■

Thomas Bedell is in the Peddie School Sports Hall of Fame as a member of the 1966 baseball team. He lives in Vermont, where he plays softball and golf.