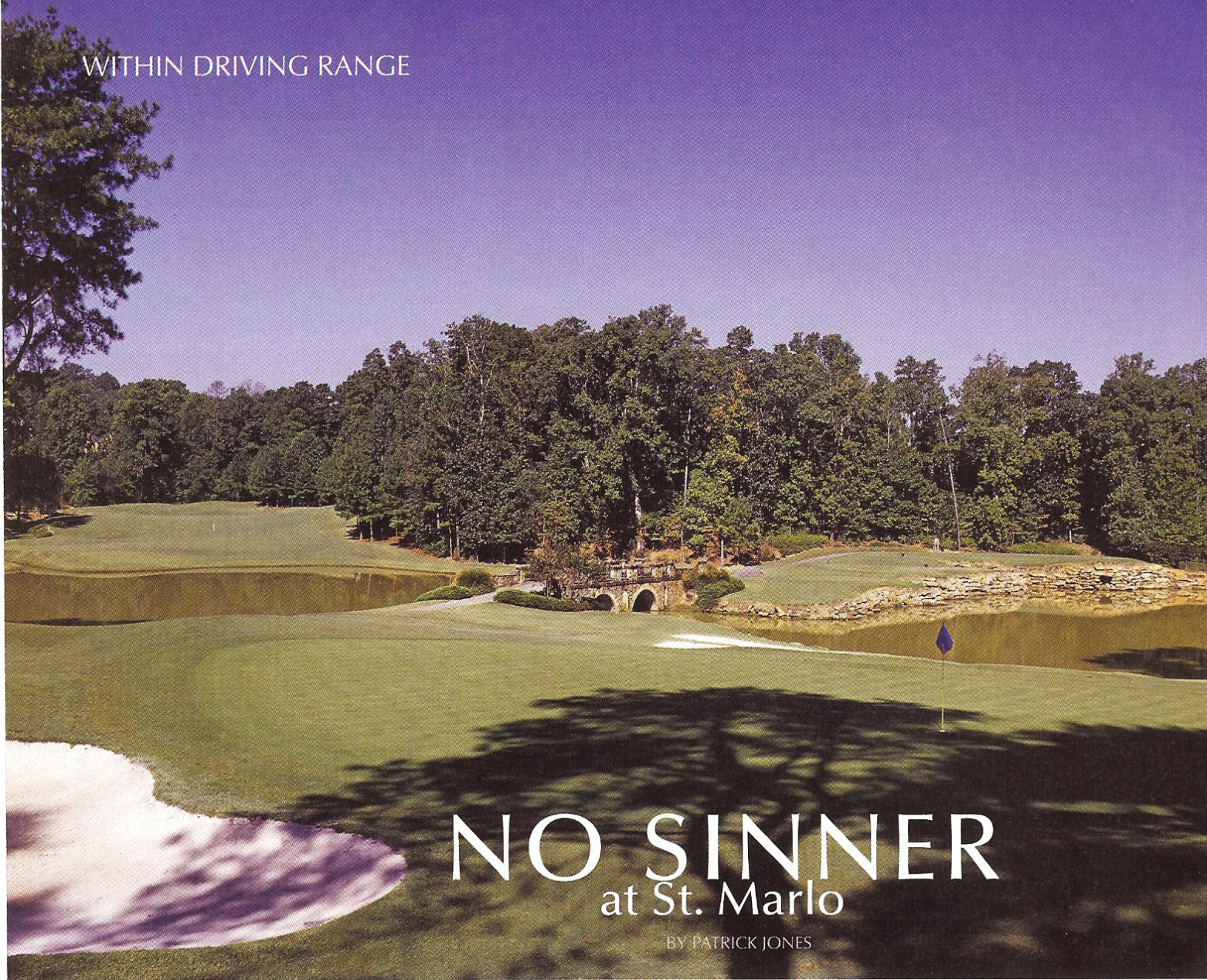


WITHIN DRIVING RANGE



NO SINNER at St. Marlo

BY PATRICK JONES

The unusually named Shakerag community in northeast Fulton County has a history dating back nearly 200 years. Located around the current intersection of McGinnis Ferry Road and Bell Road near Duluth and Johns Creek, the tiny town's existence was based on farming and mining.

Today, Shakerag's surroundings consist of a string of corporate headquarters' buildings, home improvement stores, chain restaurants and one of the Atlanta area's top daily-fee courses.

St. Marlo Country Club, a design by Braselton-based architect Denis Griffiths, was one of the pioneering golf ventures at this convergence of the Fulton, Forsyth and Gwinnett county lines. The area has seen the likes of nearby golf clubs

such as Olde Atlanta, Laurel Springs and Windermere also enticing golfers to these far reaches of the Atlanta exurbs.

St. Marlo has won its share of awards and attention since its inception in 1995. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* has consistently anointed it among the top five public courses in the metro area. The course hosted the NGA/Hooters Tour season-ending Tour Championship in 2006. A Georgia local, Cartersville's Travis Nance, took the title and the \$42,000 winner's check with a blistering 22-under-par 266.

"You get elite golfers playing here and, yes, they are going to shoot some low scores," says Tim Weinhart, director of instruction at St. Marlo. "There are only a couple of holes with forced carries, and only one hole on the course requires

you to hit the ball over a creek – which is nice for the average golfer. The course is all the challenge that 95 percent of all golfers would ever want. But it is a fair challenge.”

Griffiths did not place a penal premium on tee shots at St. Marlo. Instead, according to Weinhart, it is a “second-shot oriented golf course” on most holes. “Most of the challenges are around the green,” he says. “Your short game skills will be tested.”

St. Marlo’s playability, ambience and facilities have established it as a prime location for hosting corporate and charity events in the north Atlanta area, be it outings by the Kiwanis Club of Duluth, Atlanta Telecom Professionals, or the Cystic Fibrosis Celebrity Golf Tournament.

“We can host any event of any size,” says Weinhart. “Anything that 18 holes can withstand, we can put out there.”

The surrounding St. Marlo residential community is comprised of 920 homes with prices ranging from \$550,000 up to \$3 million. Along with the course, other amenities include a 24-hour staffed security gatehouse, a junior Olympic-sized swimming pool and nine lighted tennis courts.

St. Marlo Country Club features a photogenic collection of par 3s. “They are the strongest part of the course,” says Weinhart.

No. 3 is a 179-yard tester for openers; a waterfall on the right guards its green. Adequate club selection is also critical on this hole, particularly when the pin is on the front of the green. A false front will reject balls that do not carry to the heart of the green.

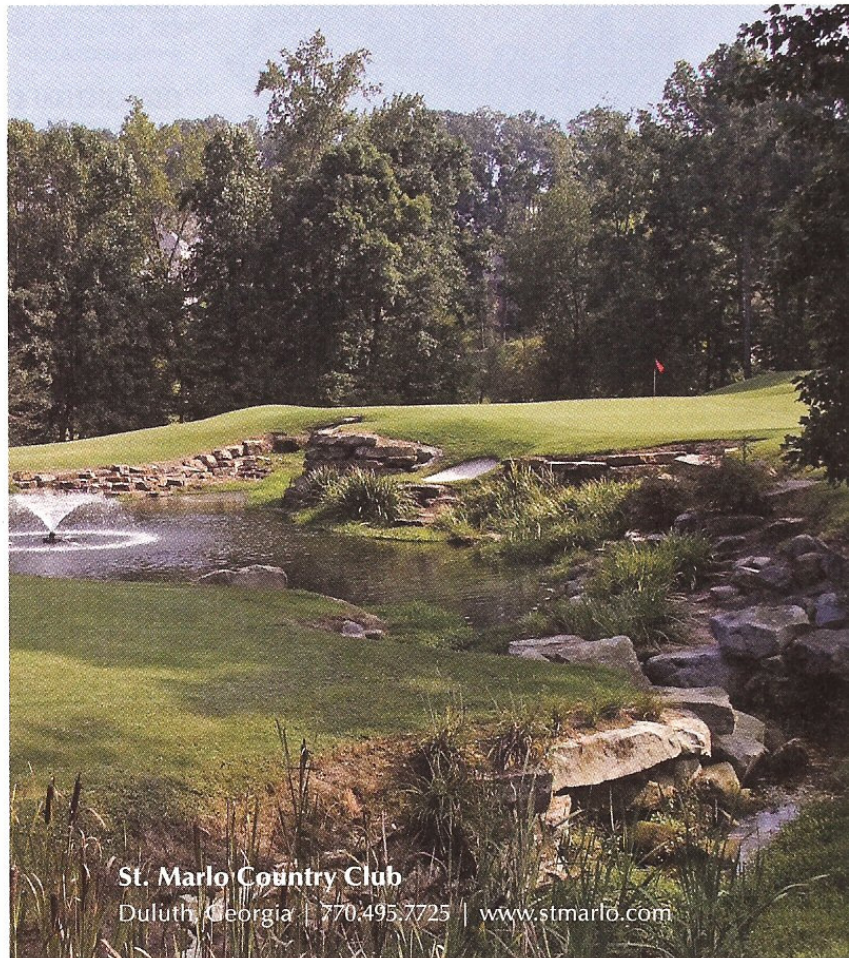
No. 7 plays 176 yards with a much more receptive green.

No. 16, playing to 216 yards from the back tees, requires either a well struck long-iron or properly shaped fairway wood. Hazards protect the green short left and long left. It features a narrow green, but one that runs almost 40 yards deep.

The course features a traditional pair of par 3s and par 5s on both the front and back nine, along with a wide range of par 4s that require formulating an array of course management strategies.

“The nicest thing about playing St. Marlo is that you get to hit a whole variety of golf shots,” says Weinhart.

The club’s practice facilities include a putting green, an additional putting green that also allows chipping practice, a separate pitching green with bunker areas, and a fairway-type bunker that allows golfers to



St. Marlo Country Club
Duluth, Georgia | 770.495.7725 | www.stmarlo.com

practice an assortment of shots back into the driving range. The driving range has stations for up to 40 golfers.

“There was not a lot that was spared when (St. Marlo) was built,” says Weinhart. “It is very aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Everything around here is built of stacked stone, including on the course itself.”

Weinhart and fellow teaching professional Craig Forney run what is called the Nuclear Golf Swing Academy at St. Marlo Country Club. Weinhart and Forney have 40 years of teaching experience between them. They teach the “modern golf swing,” which Weinhart defines as creating the most power with the most consistent ball flight while minimizing stresses on the body.