

Big Little Courses

Be honest: You love par threes best of all. One good swing nets at least a par; one perfect swing and you can earn bragging rights to last a lifetime. Here are five great par-three tracks flush with the chance for aces (and sixes)

From November 2002 By Evan Rothman

1. THREETOPS PAR 3 COURSE, TREETOPS RESORT, GAYLORD, MI

Architect: Rick Smith, 1992. Yardage: 1,400. Par: 27. Greens Fee: \$44. Tee Times: 989-732-6711 ext. 4000, treetops.com.

SHORT STORY: You may want to warm up for this challenging layout by playing a round on one of the resort's four great full-size tracks. The thrill-ride greens run jackrabbit fast—twelve on the Stimpmeter during the annual Par-3 Shootout broadcast by ESPN. During the 2001 Shootout Lee Trevino (who else?) holed the most lucrative shot of all time, netting \$1,010,000 for his ace on the 138-yard seventh. One hint of just how seriously course designer and resort owner Smith takes the perfectly manicured Threetops: Dissatisfied with the sand in the fiendish bunkers, he replaced it all this year. **SMALL WONDER:** The 219-yard third, "Devil's Drop," sports a vertiginous 145-foot descent from tee to green.

2. BLUE ROCK GOLF COURSE, SOUTH YARMOUTH, MA

Architect: Geoffrey Cornish, 1962. Yardage: 2,890. Par: 54. Greens Fees: \$26-\$40. Tee Times: 508-398-9295, bluerockgolfcourse.com.

SHORT STORY: The granddaddy of top-notch par-three tracks, this Cape Cod classic has splendid bunkering and greens that run up to twelve on the Stimp. If you're lucky you'll be paired with local legend Chuck Tedeman, 89, who plays here daily and began a recent round par, birdie, birdie, birdie. **SMALL WONDER:** The 169-yard ninth, one of four holes that offers players a chance to wind up in the drink.

3. GREAT 28 COURSE, MARTY SANCHEZ LINKS DE SANTA FE, SANTA FE, NM

Architect: Baxter Spann, 1998. Yardage: 1,615. Par: 28. Greens Fees: \$17-\$22. Tee Times: 505-955-4400, golfnewmexico.com.

SHORT STORY: One visitor declared, "I've played Augusta National's par-three course, and this is the next best thing." Sagebrush, piñon and four arroyos define this rugged test, where subtle elevation changes keep club selection a teaser. A final 350-yard par four makes twenty-eight par for the course. **SMALL WONDER:** The 190-yard seventh menaces golfers with an arroyo to the right and deep bunkers horseshoeing the green.

4. THE SHORT COURSE, ROBERT TRENT JONES GOLF TRAIL AT MAGNOLIA GROVE, MOBILE, AL

Architect: Robert Trent Jones, 1992. Yardage: 3,140. Par: 54. Greens Fees: \$15-\$25. Tee Times: 251-645-0075, rtjgolf.com.

SHORT STORY: Members pay \$300 a year for greens fees and range balls; many play this minimonster three times a day. **SMALL WONDER:** The fourth features a wild four-tier green.

5. HANK'S SWANK PAR 3 GOLF COURSE, FRESNO, CA

Architect: Hank Bocchini Jr., 1984. Yardage: 1,330. Par: 27. Greens Fees: \$8-\$9. Tee Times: 559-252-7077.

SHORT STORY: A tight little track where on summer Saturday nights Hank, who used to make persimmon clubs for Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo and Mac Davis, hosts night golf played with glow-in-the-dark balls. **SMALL WONDER:** A mondo trap fronts the 145-yard fourth.