



## Work begins on new nine-hole ‘throwback’ course in Virginia

BY SEAN DUDLEY | 28 JULY 2014

### Schoolhouse Nine Conceptual Plan • Sperryville, VA

McCartin Golf Design  
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### Work has started on the construction of a new nine-hole course in Sperryville, Virginia.

Located just outside the Shenandoah National Park approximately an hour and a half from Washington D.C, the course has been described as a ‘big throwback’ by Brett Hochstein, who is working in a shaping and finishing capacity on the project.

In an interview with *GCA*, Hochstein explained the thinking and approach behind the Schoolhouse 9, as the course will be named, and his collaboration with principal architect Michael McCartin of McCartin Golf Design on the project.

“The course is a nine-hole, par-three course set on a gently sweeping old grazing field right in town, and it will be a part of the adjacent Sperryville Schoolhouse and Headmaster’s Pub, which is also owned by our client Cliff Miller,” explained Hochstein. “We are taking a throwback approach to both the construction and the future operation of the course. We are keeping areas of disturbance to only greens and tees, with some areas, including many of the tees, not even requiring stripping of the topsoil layer. Areas not disturbed will simply be seeded into and maintained. The shaping will aim not to disrupt the relatively simple lay of the land and also provide a great variety of golfing challenges.”



Both Hochstein and McCartin have previously worked with Tom Doak's Renaissance team, and Hochstein believes that experience will help further their joint ability to make forms and features work well out on site.

"Variety will be a key component to the design," said Hochstein. "Par-three courses inherently present a challenge of stagnation through repeated play due to the nature of every approach shot being almost the same, but we will combat that through having a variety of green types and providing different types of hole locations within the greens. Every hole will be unique, but some concepts we already like and are working off of include at the third, sixth and ninth holes.

"The third plays directly toward an old stone barn ruin just off property," elaborated Hochstein. "The green sits on what appears to be a flat field and an easy straightaway shot, but in reality it crowns and falls away with plenty of small contours providing short game interest. It may not be the most difficult, but it should easily be the most maddening hole on the course.



"The sixth hugs a small creek to the left of the green, which may get players to hit cautiously and favour the right away from the danger. Those who do bail safely right though will be treated to a touchy fallaway up and down to a narrow green.

"The ninth is the longest hole playing back toward the pub. There is a gentle right to left fall that with the addition of some bunkers left and short will call for a swinging shot out to the right tumbling into the home green. These are just some of the early concepts we like, and who knows, maybe the others, which there are already some good ideas for, will turn into new favourites as we work it out in the dirt."

Hochstein explained that part of the project's 'throwback' element means there will only be irrigation on the greens. One seed provider also told Hochstein that he hadn't seen a seed mix of

turf-type tall fescues and bluegrasses ‘since the 50s’.



The new course’s maintenance will be carried out by ‘one or two local guys’, and green fees will be paid using an honour box system when the nearby pub isn’t open.

“Both Michael and I have both spent time studying in Scotland, and we are both big fans of just how simple and enjoyable golf can really be,” said Hochstein. “Our home country here has really gotten away from those ideals, but we are hoping that the Schoolhouse 9 shows that golf in America still can be simple and enjoyable. Even more importantly, it can also still be newly developed in 2014.”