

TOP FIVE TOUGHEST GOLF HOLES

by Randy L. Gray



SAGAMORE HOLE 7, OUR #1 TOUGHEST HOLE IN THE CAPITAL REGION

While no one would ever compare golf in the Capital District to Pinehurst or Myrtle Beach, locals know that the variety of courses offered in the area is very solid. Top shelf private clubs and daily fee courses that run from the bargain basement to the penthouse occupy a great deal of real estate between Lake George and the Catskills. With that in mind, we have set out to determine the five toughest golf holes in the area. Keep in mind the following provisos when considering the list:

- 1) Length alone does not a tough hole make.
- 2) Scorecard handicap numbers are generally assigned by people who know less than the rest of us.
- 3) Sections are made from the club tees, because very few of us play from the tips.
- 4) Most of us don't belong to private clubs, so public courses received extra consideration.
- 5) For diversity's sake, 3, 4, and 5 pars are included.

#5 - Schuyler Meadows Club - Hole 4 - Par 3 - 190 Yards

Schuyler Meadows Rd ■ Loudonville, NY 12211
Phone: (518)-785-8191

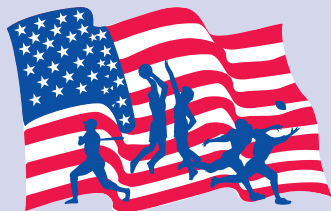
This 190 yard character builder plays straight up a steep hill. Surrounded by woods and fronted by bunkers, this test requires a long iron or fairway wood to a severely elevated green. Surrounded on three sides and sitting down behind the trees, wind direction and severity pose serious course management problems. A hard and fast green with subtle contours completes the equation. Make three here and you'll walk away with a smile.

#4 - Van Patten Golf Club - Hole 27 (Old #13) - Par 4 - 440 Yards

Main St ■ Jonesville, NY 12065
Phone: (518)-877-5400

On a notoriously easy track, this 440 yard monster of a par 4 can, and usually does, bite. It would be easy to write this one off as just a product of sheer length, but the truth lies in closer examination. The green is clearly not constructed to receive anything low and hard, and unless you're Tiger or Daly, that's exactly what you'll need to get there in regulation. The inverted bowl shape will allow a run up shot from the front, but accuracy is key. If you can make your three iron stick on this green, you're either very good, or it rained hard last night. Most will take five or worse and slink away.

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88 Madison Avenue, Ste. One, Albany, NY 12202

#3 - Saratoga National Golf Club - Hole 13 - Par 5 - 560 Yards

458 Union Avenue ■ Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
Phone: (518)-583-GOLF

From the second set of tees, this wicked test of nerve and course management still plays out at 560 yards. Every shot must contend with the water that runs the length of the entire left side. It also crosses into the fairway three times from tee to green. Separate landing areas delineated by these incursions await your first two strokes and only then can you think about your approach to the water and rock wall surrounded green. On your second shot you can always bail out to the right, but that will usually land you in one of the two fairway bunkers placed solely for that purpose. Successful navigation to this point however, will leave you with a short iron approach to the peninsula green. Once the putter finally comes out of the bag, the relatively uneventful green should yield two putts. From there, you just pick the ball out of the cup and mark down your seven.

#2 - Shaker Ridge Country Club - Hole 3 - Par 4 - 405 Yards

802 Albany-Shaker Rd ■ Loudonville, NY 12211
Phone: (518)-869-5101

405 yards, pine trees to the right, woods and water to the left, and a nice bottle neck in the tee ball landing area that narrows to around fifteen yards wide. Did I mention the two tiered green? Sounds like fun! This is one serious golf hole. Unless you are laser accurate with the big stick, hit the three wood. It will leave you back in the wider part of the fairway with a fighting chance to hit that devious green. The area short of the green sits low and the steep rise to the putting surface does

not allow any type of running shot to get home. Bunkers front right and left provide further protection and the two tiers slope from back to front. The putting logistics are simple. Flag on the top, two putts from the bottom level will be difficult. Flag on the bottom, two putts from above will be next to impossible. If you can make five, take it and go quietly.

#1 - Sagamore Resort Golf Club - Hole 7 - Par 4 - 405 Yards

Federal Hill Rd ■ Bolton Landing, NY 12814
Phone: (518)-644-9400



Another 405 yard par four, there is no other like it in the area. A severe challenge to course management as well as nerve and skill, the seventh at the Sagamore presents most of the things that average golfers dread. From the tee box coming out of a chute, this pain in the pencil doglegs fairly hard to the left while the fairway slopes hard from left to right. This slicer's nightmare tops it all off by working itself severely uphill from start to finish. Subtle contours on this plateau surface can be confounding. This hole is built into the side of a mountain and it is narrow. Elevated, dense woods guard the entire left side. The right side falls down through the trees in a cliff-like setting, which usually eliminates any chance of wayward ball retrieval. For pure misery, this is the hole most likely to put a high score on your card, and as such, is our choice for the area's toughest.

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