

Gearhart Golf Links, McMenamins expand options in Gearhart

Vacation in South County

By R.J. MARX
COAST WEEKEND

General manager and director of golf at Gearhart Golf Links Jason Bangild met me at the entrance in a golf cart — what else? — to provide a tour of the new facilities.

McMenamins and Gearhart Golf Links recently completed extensive updates to the property, adding 16 rooms, a “Swingers Lounge” and the Clam Bed, which is a 20,000-square-foot putting green adjacent to the new Sand Bar — serving pizza, sandwiches, salads and burgers along with handcrafted ales, wine and cocktails.

Additional golf expansions include the Golf and Fitness Center created by Foresight Golf, complete with a launch monitor and golf-specific workout area for year-round use.

The Gearhart Golf Course is the oldest course west of the Mississippi, Bangild said, built as a four-hole course in 1892.

The course was established by Robert Livingston, one of the founding members of the Waverly Country Club and several designers have touched the property over the years, including Chandler Egan — the last American to win a medal in the Olympic for golf in 1904.

Egan went on to settle in the Pacific Northwest, where he designed golf courses from Pebble Beach to Seattle, including the original Seaside Golf Course in 1923.

Owned by Tim Boyle, Joe Boyle and Molly Boyle, independent of the family’s interest in Columbia Sportswear, the Boyles lease the hotel to McMenamins and office space to Gearhart



R.J. MARX PHOTO

Sara Wilder welcomes guests at the Sand Bar.

by the Sea.

The club has about 400 golf members, and hotel visitors receive discounts for play. Eighteen holes run \$75 in-season and \$50 in the off-season. Juniors 13 and under accompanied by an adult are free, with discounts for teens and students.

Down the road — accessible only by cart or on foot — is the new Sand Bar, a cozy 450-foot space selling hot dogs, turkey sandwiches, elk sausage, two wine taps and six beer taps.

“Brian and Mike McMenamini love their small bars,” Bangild said. “For years they’ve talked about having a small bar on the property and for years we never found the right place until this.”

The signature cocktail is called the “Time-Out,” Beefeater Gin and soda on the rocks, twist of lime.

Adorned by a bar top from a tree struck



COURTESY MCMENAMINS

The Fore Deck is an expansive new patio with comfortable outdoor seating and is located just outside the property’s Pro Shop.

by lightning at McMenamini Cornelius Pass Roadhouse, the Sand Bar is the third bar on-site, joining the Sand Trap Pub and Pot Bunker Bar. “Officially it’s our half-way house for golfers,” Bangild said.

It looks like the perfect place to get into trouble, though don’t expect to make a quick getaway on a golf cart.

The neighboring putting green known as the Clam Bed, was designed by John Strawn of Global Golf Advisors and built by James Milroy of Milroy Golf Systems. The green is billed as the perfect spot for a kid’s first putt or an hour for the advanced golfer, replete with “a lot of swales and dips,” according to Bangild.

When the rainy weather turns south, expect golfers to check out the golf and fitness center, fondly referred to as “the Swingers Lounge.”

Half the room is a fitness center with workouts, cardio, strength and golf-specific training. The south half divided by barn doors is the virtual golf area with the launch monitor and instructional area.

Computers and their cameras provide data for instructional use — club head speed, ball speed, spin rate, trajectory and

more. The Foresight system delivers any one of 14 virtual golf course experiences, from Oak Lawn to Pebble Beach, complete with real-time weather.

When you’ve had enough, you can go upstairs to your room in the Annex, each room with one-of-a-kind headboards and en suite bathrooms.

Following the expansion, McMenamini Gearhart Hotel now has a total of 34 guest rooms, including a bunk room, private rooms with king- or queen-sized beds, private bathrooms and televisions. Each room is fashioned in Pacific Northwest style, weaving McMenamini’s signature artwork throughout.

Not bad at an off-season price from about \$150 to \$250 per night, especially if you take advantage of the golf vacation. **CW**

COURTESY MCMENAMINS

BELOW: McMenamini and Gearhart Golf Links recently completed extensive updates to the property, adding 16 rooms, a “Swingers Lounge” and the Clam Bed which is a 20,000-square foot putting green conveniently located adjacent to the new Sand Bar.

