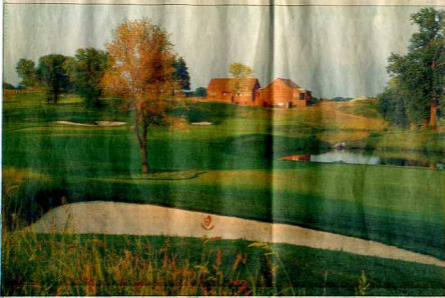




<http://www.golfdirectexchange.com>
The eBay — literally — of used golf clubs. This site allows golfers to sell their old clubs at internet auction and search for a deal on a "new" set. You can enter a request for specific clubs desired at a specific price or get a "buy back" approval for the worth of your current clubs.

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 22 • 2003



Photos by Amy Zepeda/Star Tribune

Native grasses frame Winding Song Farm's fairways. Ohio white sand fills the classic-style bunkers and the new pro shop beyond the 18th green is an homage to the land's horse-farm past.

About Winding Song Farm

- **What:** New private golf club on a former horse farm in Independence, approximately 10 miles northwest of Wauzata.
- **Course designers:** Arizona-based on-site architect John Fought and PGA Tour player and native Minnesotan Tom Lehman.
- **Defining features:** A compact layout meant to encourage walking and playments borrowed from golf's classic design: age, large, flat greens with subtle bunkers, collection areas (inspired by Donald Ross) courses and square tree areas.
- **Coming attractions:** PGA Tour officials are expected to return this fall for a second visit. The course is being considered for a World Golf Championship event — such as the one that took place last fall at the Country Club in Akron, Ohio — or a President's Cup as early as 2006.
- **Mission statement:** Founded originally as an invitation-only, golf-only club intent on holding a select number of national and regional tournaments with a focus on developing junior, amateur and collegiate golf. The 50-member board includes USGA president Fred Mackenzie of Duluth, Champagne-Tour player, 1986, Harris of Minneapolis and SPH Golf Management senior vice president Jim Lehman.

An instant classic

By Jeff Sheehan
Star Tribune Staff Writer

"This sounds egotistical, but this golf course is as good or better than any course used for a major championship. It's not Winding Song Farm as a whole, but any of them."

— Golf course designer John Fought

That would be high praise for any golf course. Put out a ranking of the top courses in this country, pick any club and the members would be flattered to hear those words.

But what to know the most amazing thing about Fought's statement? Winding Song Farm hasn't opened. That's how much buzz surrounds the Twin Cities' newest private golf club.

When much of the course opens next month, golfers will find that creation of Fought and Minnesota native Tom Lehman, a PGA Tour veteran, is a combination of both old and new.

Subtle putting surfaces and collection areas around the greens give Winding Song the feel of a modern-day classic. While it is certainly a

Winding Song Farm, the Twin Cities' newest private club, will open soon with hopes of becoming one of the nation's best courses.

21st century course, it also has a taste of old-school courses. Doglegs going in both directions, a risk-reward par 4 and sloped fairways require players to think their way around the golf course. At the same time, the par-71 layout can be stretched to more than 7,300 yards from the back tees, allowing the course to avoid being overwhelmed by technology.

There are open holes with fescue growing on all sides, and there are more wooded areas on other parts of the 246-acre tract of land. There is water, change of elevation and 18 distinctive golf holes.

"By anyone's standard, the guess is that this is

going to stand up," said Irv Fish, one of the club's 10 founding members. "It's going to be a terrific golf course."

The layout at Winding Song Farm has been compared to that of Pumpkin Ridge, the course outside Portland, Ore., where Hilary Lunke won July's U.S. Women's Open. Fought, who played a large role in the design of each, says it's a fair comparison.

"I think Winding Song is a step beyond — this golf course is a lot bigger," Fought said. "I've never had a golf course turn out any better than this. No way. It fits the property and it fits the type of people they want to be members there."

Winding Song is a golf club. This is not a country club with an amphitheater, pool, tennis courts and a formal dining room. The membership will be limited to 200. There will be a massive practice facility, but there won't be tee times. And there won't be rooms of suites. Winding Song's founding principles state "that courtesy and respect for others will handle virtually any situation."



An old farm silo behind the fourth hole — a par 3 that plays over a ravine — will be refurbished with red paint, a new top and crawling vines.

GOLF



Amy Zgodaj/Star Tribune

Windsong Farm's compact design allows golfers approaching the downhill par-3 green at No. 7 to see three other nearby greens.

TEE TIME from C16

Private club ready to open

The goal is for the club to be friendly and relaxed.

"We want it to have a neighborhood feel, a very personal feel," Fish said. "We want it to speak for itself. It's going to be casual. I'm not sure T-shirts and jeans are going to be acceptable, but there's nothing to say, 'Here we are, look at us.'"

The club wants to have a great junior program, encourage fast play, and it wants to hold championships ranging from the U.S. Girls Junior to the Walker Cup to the U.S. Open.

"The model to me is creating something that's the best of a lot of clubs," said Jim Lehman, one of the founding members. "It's all about golf and it's all about creating a great community of people."

And while Windsong Farm already has several of the state's top amateurs and many single-digit handicap players as members, there isn't a playing test to get in.

The goals of Windsong Farm are similar to those of Hazletline National in Chaska, a place where major championships are held.

The clubs are also similar in the way they came to fruition.

While Hazletline spun off from the Minnetonka Club when the membership there opted against building a second course, Windsong Farm was originally pegged to be a second course for the Minneapolis Golf Club.

The Minneapolis membership approved a proposal to develop the second course in 1999, but a new board of directors opted against pursuing it. That's when Jim Lehman, who is also a MGC member, started working

with Rehbein Enterprises. It was a natural partnership as Tom Lehman, Jim's brother, helped design the Rehbein-owned-and-developed Tony Burne Golf Club in Hudson, Wis.

Rehbein Enterprises purchased the land—a former horse breeding farm in Independence—and dirt began to be moved in 2001.

When MGC was considering building a second course, golf was booming both in the Twin Cities and nationally. Clubs throughout the Twin Cities had waiting lists. Initiation fees were soaring. And it seemed everyone was getting rich off of the stock market.

When construction at

Windsong Farm began in the spring and summer of 2001, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was well over 10,000

points. But when Tom Lehman shaped bunkers on Windsong Farm's ninth hole, everything changed. It was Sept. 11, 2001.

The nearly two years that have passed have been difficult on many businesses, but the golf business has been hit extremely hard. Suddenly clubs had to start offering deals in order to lure new members.

And suddenly the \$70,000 downstroke to join Windsong Farm, even though 80 percent is equity, was well above the average Twin Cities initiation fee.

The club is allowing poten-

tial members to pay the initiation fee over time. Windsong Farm has about 100 members.

"We're going to have a year or two years to show people around," Jim Lehman said.

"We're signing people up one by one, and we're going to continue to do it."

And with the golf course getting closer to opening, the excitement and buzz is growing.

"The thing that's so exciting to me is being part of a project that's going to be around for a long time," Jim Lehman said. "It's something that we all can be proud of."

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