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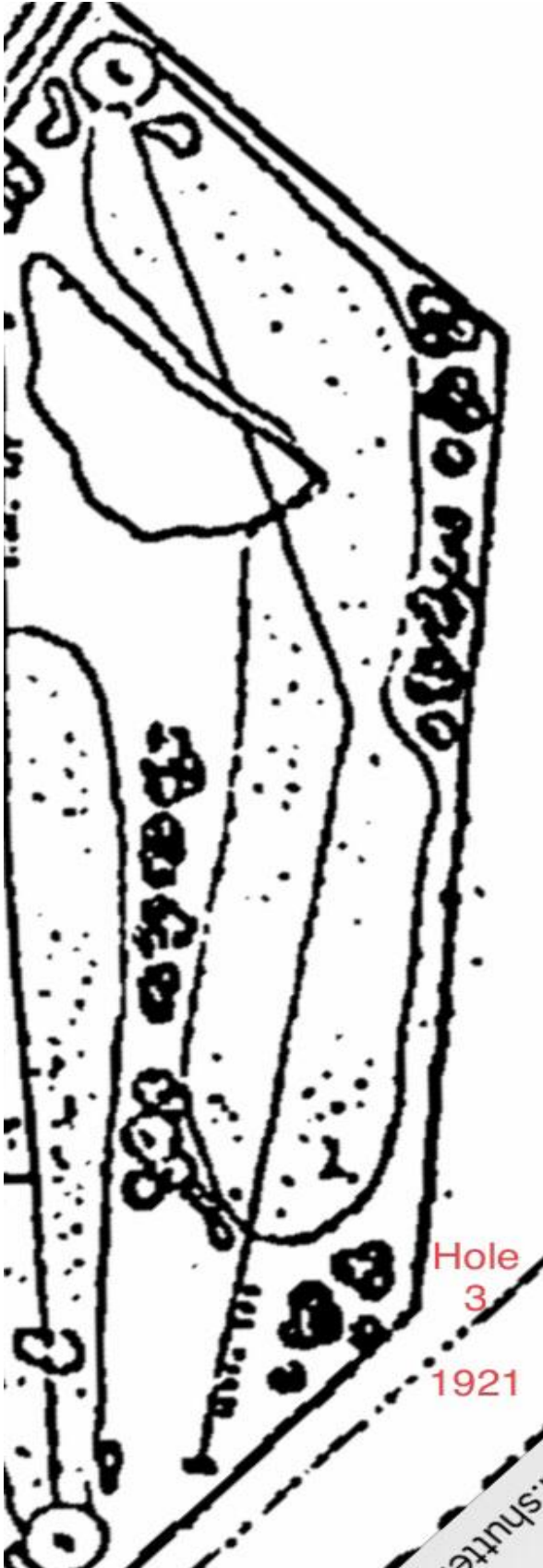
By Geoffrey L. Manton

"The 3<sup>rd</sup> hole will be the Sahara..." stated the Hartford Courant article describing Devereux Emmet's 1921 routing plan for the new 18-hole golf course at Farmington.

Referencing one of the lesser known template holes made famous by C.B. MacDonald, Sahara was the moniker for the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole (which no longer exists) at Royal St. George's Golf Club (Sandwich) in Kent, England. This now lost hole was the inspiration for the 2<sup>nd</sup> hole at the National Golf Links of America on Long Island.

The Sahara hole employs one of the bolder types of strategic design which pits the heroic play against the conservative approach.

On the tee box at The National's Sahara, the player has the option of taking a direct line to the green over a vast chasm of sand and native vegetation. The tee shot is blind, but if successfully played, the putting surface can be found with a single stroke. However, for those less daring, or less skilled, a conservative tee ball played to the right will find a supremely wide fairway, albeit canted away from the tee box with a hillock dividing the shorter and longer tee rightward shots.



All these landing areas are blind from the tee and are equally daunting to those unfamiliar with what lies beyond. While the aggressive drive may result in an eagle putt, a miss from the tee on this line will find compounding trouble. However, a successful conservative play leaves a second shot either blind to the green (if played short right) or may bound into a grassy hollow (if played longer and less right) with a difficult angle into the green.

The Sahara template is a simple golf hole which uses a solitary bold hazard to dictate the many options of play.

Tom Doak used the Sahara template for the signature hole at his C.B. MacDonald tribute course at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Oregon. The tee shot at the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole at Old MacDonald plays blind and uphill over a massive dune anchored by the iconic skeleton of a large dead tree. Closer to home, C.B. MacDonald's protégé, Seth Raynor, used the Sahara template on a much smaller and flatter scale for what's now the 7<sup>th</sup> hole, "Dunes", at The Country Club of Fairfield (Connecticut).



2<sup>nd</sup> Hole at The National Golf Links of America  
Southampton, Long Island, NY

4<sup>th</sup> Green at St. George's Golf and Country Club  
East Setauket, Long Island, NY



Since Devereux Emmet and C.B. MacDonald were friends and contemporaries, it was not uncommon for Emmet to incorporate templates in his designs. To distinguish himself, Emmet would often put his own unique twist on the template model. A terrific example of this is the 4<sup>th</sup> hole at St. George's Golf and Country Club on Long Island. Here, Emmet created an Alps type hole with the blind shot into the green accentuated by clusters of fescue coated large chocolate drop mounds located just short of the green. The putting surface itself is also an ode to MacDonald with its sharply defined rectangular shape encased entirely by long L-shaped trench-style bunkers.

At Farmington, Emmet took a different approach.

The typical Sahara hole is a short par 4. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole at CCF, Emmet added another element by incorporating Sahara ideals into a par 5 design. In this case, The Wolf Pit became the requisite large imposing hazard that must be contended with. As the image from the 1934 aerial of CCF shows, The Wolf Pit was once much more reminiscent of the hazard that inspired the template's name.



Hole 3  
1934

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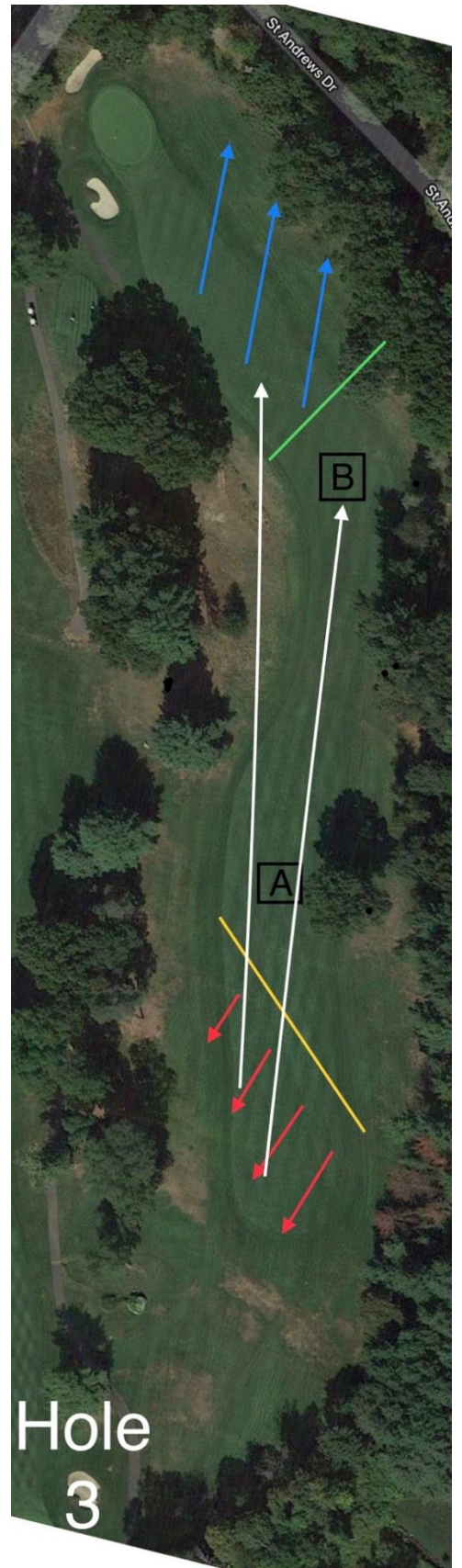
True to the ideals of classic strategic architecture, the angle chosen will dramatically dictate play at our 3<sup>rd</sup> hole.

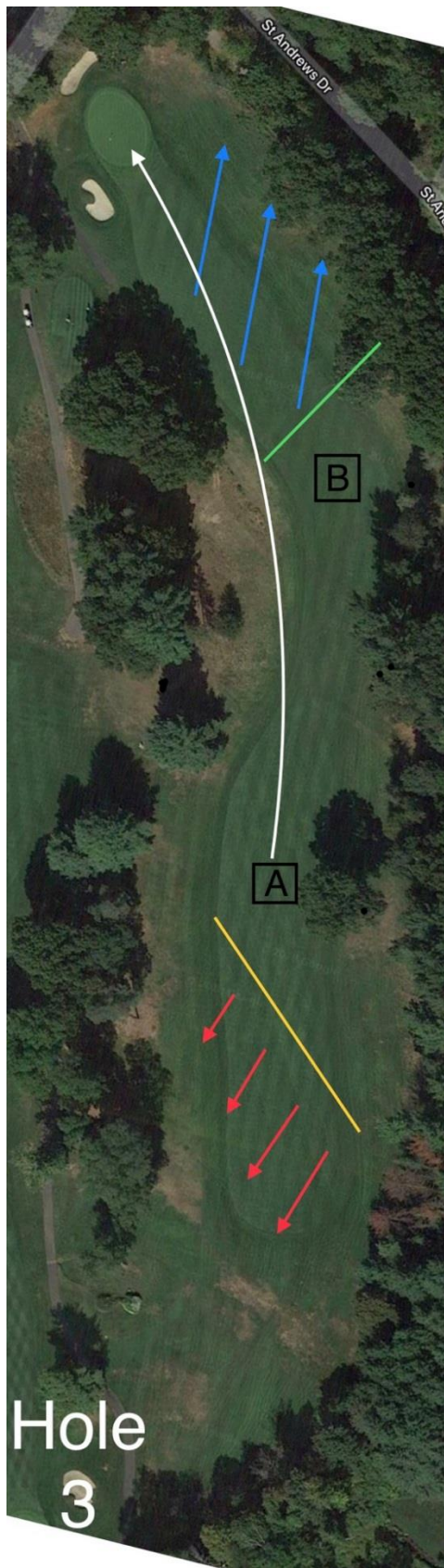
A long diagonal ridge bisects the landing area of the fairway [yellow line].

A tee shot which lands left of the ridge will kick left [red arrows] and leave a very difficult second shot, particularly if one chooses to attempt a carry over The Wolf Pit.

A conservative second shot from the left side that attempts to stay right of The Wolf Pit will find the narrowest section of fairway [B].

In contrast, a tee ball that is played right of the ridge will kick forward [A] and leave a second shot that stares in to the teeth of The Wolf Pit.





It's at this point [A] that the player has the same decision to make as if playing on the tee of a typical Sahara hole. Take the aggressive line towards the green by challenging the longest longest carry over The Wolf Pit? Or, play more conservatively towards the right?

If the first option is taken, a less than perfect strike of the club may result in a gnash from The Wolf Pit's fangs. However, a well played aggressive shot can find the green.

As with National's Sahara, the most conservative play short right around the hazard at CCF will result in a blind 3<sup>rd</sup> shot into the green [B].

Whereas a more aggressive, but still conservative play over The Wolf Pit will encounter a downslope [blue arrows] and can kick into a hollow away from the green - or out-of-bounds!

Even though the past 85 years at CCF have resulted in a narrower, greener, more tree-laden "Sahara" than in Emmet's day, the strategic ideals remain intact. The result is one of the more architecturally interesting and strategically sound golf holes at The Country Club, Farmington.

The next time you stand at the 3<sup>rd</sup> tee box, not only can you take pride in our long view of the Farmington Valley, but also our ties to the "template-style" of golf course design as interpreted by Devereux Emmet.

