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EDGMONT Endures as Founders

By Rick Woelfel

In the 19th and early 20th centuries when golf was still gaining a foothold on American shores, the golf professional often designed the course where he worked.

Such layouts were usually quite rudimentary, and as golf courses became more elaborate and challenging, professional architects took over the design and construction.

In that respect, Tanino "Tiny" Pedone was something of a throwback. Pedone was the visionary and driving force behind Edgmont Country Club.

He not only headed the group of investors that purchased the property on which the club is situated; he also designed the golf course, took a direct hand in the construction process and served as the club's first professional.

Pedone started working in the golf industry as a caddie when he was in his teens. Later he became the professional at Overbrook and in that role was heavily involved in the Middle Atlantic Blind Golf Association, which had been organized in 1948.

In 1961, Pedone decided to build his own golf course and country club. Many people in the golf industry – players, caddies, golf professionals, even certain golf writers – have thought about designing a golf course at one time or another. Pedone, however, had the wherewithal to actually implement his idea.

First, he located property along West Chester Pike in Edgmont Township known as the Barrows Estate, which dated back to 1719.

After arranging to purchase the property from Mr. and Mrs. Donald Barrows, Pedone recruited financial backers, among them George Thomas,



A view of the fifth and ninth holes at Edgmont Country Club.

who had also worked with him at Overbrook, and, most importantly, Nazzareno "Nazz" Mariani, a contractor and former standout football player at Haverford High who was willing to take on the project in return for an ownership stake in the new club.

Pedone himself had left Overbrook by this time and was running the golf operation at Kimberton, a public facility that opened in 1961.

Construction at what would be known as Edgmont Country Club started in April of 1963. Mariani had no background in golf, but relying on Pedone's expertise and his own earthmoving knowledge, Mariani shaped the rolling terrain into 18 golf holes. In the process he moved some 500,000 cubic yards of soil, rerouted a stream and built a lake to serve as an irrigation pond.

The old manor house from the Barrows Estate became the clubhouse. It is still in use today; portions of the structure date back to 1791.

On August 21, 1964 Edgmont opened for limited play. The official opening took place the following spring, and the Mariani family has been involved in operating the club ever since.

From the start, Pedone and Mariani intended Edgmont to be a private club but one that was affordable and accessible. That philosophy has been maintained to this day. There are no assessments charged to the members and no food and beverage minimums.

The golf course itself has a traditional parkland-style ambiance, in part because it is adjacent to Ridley Creek State Park and in part because Route 3 is visible from only one hole, allowing golfers

separation from the world outside. The layout on rolling terrain features significant changes in elevation.

Lines of trees separate the fairways. As a result, each hole is well separated from the others. The trees also define strategy; to be successful here a golfer must put a high priority on accuracy. Although the layout plays to just 6,485 yards from the back tees with a par of 70, the player must be wary of ending up with an awkward sidehill or finishing on the wrong side of the hole on one of Edgmont's undulating greens.

One of the strongest holes here is the 16th, a par 4 that plays to about 400 yards from the member tees. A large bunker to the right protects the green, one of the most challenging on the course. A player landing in that bunker will find getting up and down a difficult task.

The 17th is a 165-yard par 3 that is fraught with peril. Bunkers guard the front of the green, and out of bounds looms behind it. There is also a waste

Envisioned: Private Yet Accessible



The challenging par-3 17th hole at Edgmont Country Club.

area to the left; a player who misses the green to that side may not wind up out of bounds but will face a very difficult recovery.

In recent years, the club has made a major effort to upgrade the condition of the golf course. Superintendent Glen Thomas, who has been at Edgmont for two decades, led that effort. The upgrade began in 2003 when the sand in the course's 48 bunkers was replaced. The next year the club added a modern irrigation system, and in 2005 it installed new cart paths.

Edgmont this summer hosted the Philadelphia Junior Girls Championship. Fittingly, the champion represented Tiny Pedone's old club. Emily Endress, playing out of Overbrook, defeated Kelli Pry of Coatesville in the championship match.

Today Harry Heagy, who has had a long career in the Philadelphia Section PGA, is in his third season as

Edgmont's head professional. PGA Life Member Al Balukas serves as director of golf. Balukas has been a fixture at Edgmont for 38 years. He first came to the club in 1969 to work as an assistant under Pedone and later served as the head professional for some 20 years. Throughout his career Balukas has worked to maintain the club's ties with the Middle Atlantic Blind Golf Association. The club was the site of an MABGA event in 1967, which featured an appearance by none other than Bob Hope; Edgmont has hosted MABGA events regularly ever since.

Following in the footsteps of Pedone, Balukas worked closely with the MABGA throughout his career and today serves as the organization's professional advisor. In 1993 he received the MABGA's first Person of the Year award for his efforts in support of blind golfers.

His sister, Jean Balukas, one of the finest pocket billiards competitors in history, is an Edgmont member who plays to a single-digit handicap. The late Jim Boyle, a legendary basketball player and later coach at St. Joseph's, was also an Edgmont member.

The club hosts about 30 outings each season, including the Edgmont Classic to benefit the Arthritis Foundation and an event that benefits Special Olympics.

The club also plays host to a number of high school and college teams. Drexel University, Philadelphia University, Penncrest High School and The Baldwin School have all practiced and competed at Edgmont at one time or another.

The club also has meeting and banquet facilities available.

Edgmont was always intended to be a club that was accessible to all. More than four decades after it was founded, it still operates with that philosophy in mind.