

A Course of “Persistence”

The Reserve Club at Woodside Opens Its Second 18

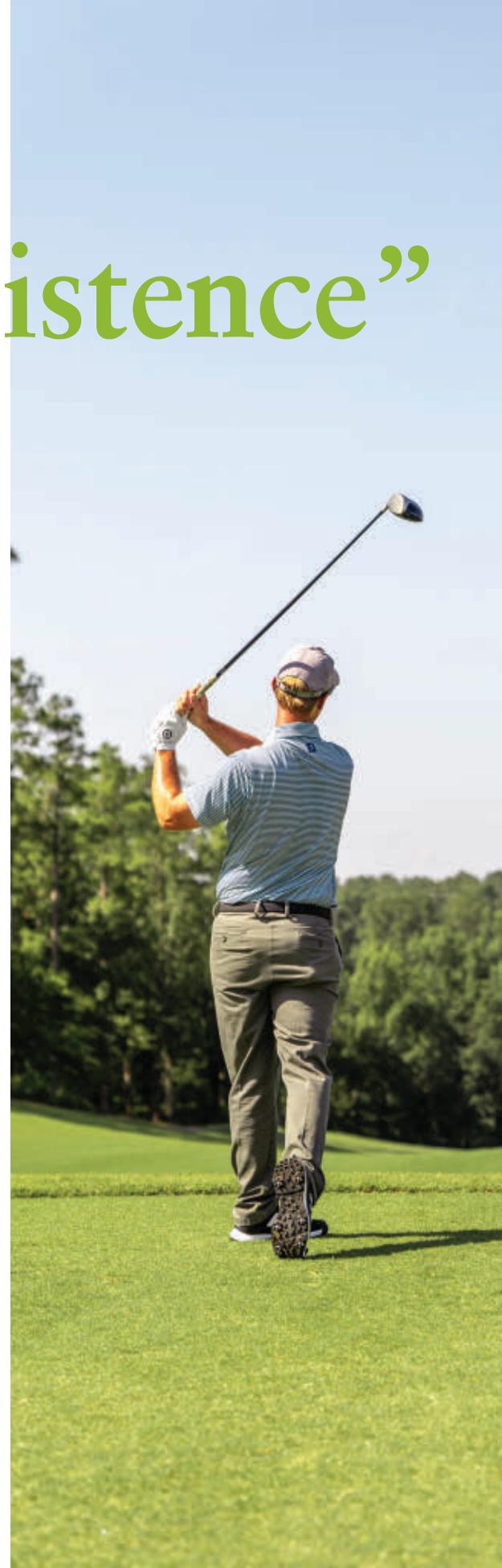
by JG Walker

Nearly 400 new golf courses opened in the United States in 2000, but by 2019, that number was down to about a dozen. The number may be even less in 2020, but there’s one that’s already on the shortlist: The Reserve Club at Woodside’s Hollow Creek Course in Aiken, SC. More than just a noteworthy accomplishment, it’s a story of successful perseverance in a time when we could all use one.

“It’s been one of my more challenging projects, that’s for sure,” says golf architect Clyde Johnston, who has designed more than 65 new courses and renovated at least twice that number during his career. He created the Hollow Creek layout with design consultant Fuzzy Zoeller, his seventh collaboration with the popular PGA TOUR pro and former Masters champion. “Fuzzy is one of the really good guys in the golf business and always great to work with,” Johnston says.

Construction of the Hollow Creek course began in the late summer of 2006. The two-phase plan was to build and open the first 10 holes for play by the fall of 2007, giving Reserve Club members 28 holes along with The Reserve Club’s existing Nicklaus Course. Johnston and Wadsworth Construction got the initial work done on schedule and were set to begin on the final eight holes in 2008.

While work on many golf courses around the country came to a halt during that recession year, some were never completed. Reserve Club Chairman and Woodside Communities Developer Rick Steele didn’t let





that happen to Hollow Creek. As the economy recovered and Woodside continued to attract new homeowners, club members and Steele both kept the completion of Hollow Creek Golf Course at the top of their community amenities priorities.

Two new holes were built in 2017, but not yet opened for play. By then, everyone involved in the project could see the light at the end of the tunnel, despite some additional regulatory challenges to ensure the utmost protection for the course's neighboring nature preserve.

"We had to do some significant rerouting for those last six holes and changed one planned par five to a par three," Johnston says. "We wanted to protect the adjacent wetlands and comply with some new stormwater runoff regulations that had come into effect in the meantime. But we got it done."

Well, almost. Those last half-dozen holes were finished in the fall of 2019 and prepared for a big grand opening ceremony the following spring, just before the 2020 Masters Tournament at near-by Augusta National Golf Club. But, because of COVID-19, both events were delayed.

Finally, on July 2, 2020, Johnston, Aiken Mayor Rick Osborne, and a small group of masked and distanced invitees were on-hand for the official ribbon cutting. Rick Steele summarized the experience: "As a nation, we've been through a housing bubble and a housing bust. We've been through a financial crisis and now a pandemic. But we're here, and that's a tribute to the persistence of everyone here today."



From left: Wesley Elijah, President of Community Operations
Rick Steele, Woodside Communities Developer and Reserve Club
Chairman, Clyde Johnston, Hollow Creek Golf Course Architect
Dereky Floyd, Director of Agronomy, Reserve Club at Woodside



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"We are sometimes challenged as developers to come up with names, and this golf course has a number of them," Steele says. "I've heard it called Fuzzy's Course, and it's been called Clyde's Course. But I think it should truly be called The Persistence Course."

Actually, the Hollow Creek course isn't named for a person or a commitment, but for the neighboring natural garden that's becoming famous in its own right. The Hollow Creek Nature Preserve sprawls over 110 acres of woodlands and wetlands set aside by Steele's development company in 2007. Nearly five miles of nature trails meander through the wildlife sanctuary, which last year was named South Carolina's first official Bluebird Habitat. Volunteers with the South Carolina Bluebird Society have installed more than 1,100 nesting boxes for their favorite colorful fliers, as well as native ducks, owls, and kestrels.

"After all the challenges we had with this project, I think it turned out very well."

Next door to the nature preserve is the new Anderson Farms residential community, which features expansive homesites, direct access to the Hollow Creek trails, equestrian facilities, fishing, kayaking, and paddleboarding on Anderson Pond. And, in conjunction with the opening of the Hollow Creek Course, single-family lots with sweeping golf views were recently made available in Woodside's new Longmeadow neighborhood.

The Reserve Club at Woodside offers its members a complete menu of top-tier amenities. In addition to the 36 holes of championship golf, the USTA-certified racquet club includes both tennis and pickleball courts. There's also a resort-style pool and cabana, as well as complete fitness facilities and spa services. The Reserve Clubhouse is the heart of community activities, with two elegant ballrooms and meeting space for more than 60 social and interest groups. Neighbors can also reserve plots to grow their vegetables, herbs, and flowers in the community gardens, or enjoy the fresh air in all four seasons on the community's 17+ miles of paths and nature trails for walking and biking.

Those residents can easily stroll or ride over to The Village at Woodside, a commercial hub that's less than a mile from The Reserve Club. The growing center currently includes three restaurants, a full-service salon and spa, boutique shops, and various medical and dental offices to serve Woodside residents. Family-friendly outdoor events are on the calendar every month at

The Village, which is also home to the Benton House assisted-living facility.

Just down the road, and recently named by *Southern Living* magazine as one of the “South’s Best Small Towns,” is the vibrant City of Aiken. While the surrounding region has long been famous for its horse-breeding farms and other equestrian centers, the revitalized Aiken downtown area offers more than 30 locally-owned restaurants, many featuring farm-to-table cuisine, plus antique stores, theaters, shops, and historical landmarks. The unique Hitchcock Woods urban forest offers 65 miles of nature paths, and many Woodside residents sign up every semester for classes at the Academy of Lifelong Learning on the campus of the University of South Carolina-Aiken.

Partially in response to COVID-19 restrictions, Woodside offers one-on-one FaceTime meetings that include virtual access to available residential properties and club amenities. The website at WoodsideCommunities.com also features a video library where folks can explore the Woodside neighborhoods and the Aiken area at their leisure. At the Woodside Sales & Discovery Office, The Reserve Club, Village Fitness, and Aiken Design Center, Steele has also

had all of the HVAC systems retrofitted with iWave air purification technology to help ensure the safety of future property owners who are visiting the community.

As the completed Hollow Creek Course begins its first full year of operation in 2021, its designer could finally allow himself a moment of satisfaction. “After all the challenges we had with this project, I think it turned out very well,” Johnston says. “Most importantly, the club members are very pleased with their new 18-hole course, and that’s what matters.”

Sometimes it’s incredible what can be accomplished with a little — or a lot of — persistence. 



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