

# 99 *a golfer's dream* holes in

By  
Sandy  
Compton

**When we were young and foolish**, a couple of years ago, Aaron Knight, Jeff Nizzoli and I dreamt up a 99-hole marathon golf match. Everyone who plays long enough to get addicted has this dream – to play an eternal game in which time doesn't matter, and the 19th hole is just a stop between rounds. Sanity, reality and plain old frugality prevailed; we never pulled it off, but the dream lives on.

One problem was the logistics of distance. We began or ended within the confines of local legend Hidden Lakes, but courses considered for intermediate rounds were in Kalispell, Mont., British Columbia, Oregon ... Scotland. Without a single executive jet between us, we may have been looking too far from home. We could do 99 holes and not leave Bonner County.

Consider this: Thursday morning, 6:30 a.m. at Hidden Lakes. We are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, ready for 18 unforgiving holes in the beautiful, water-infested environs of the Pack River Delta. With the help of the course, and no warmup whatsoever, we humiliate ourselves. Consolation is gourmet lunch in the new clubhouse.

At 1 p.m., we're on the bus for a power nap, application of liniment and a little yoga. At 2:30, we tee off at Priest Lake Golf Course in the green hills west of Priest Lake, newly expanded to 18 holes. A mere six hours later, we straggle ... er ... stroll into nearby Hill's Resort, where we have a very tasty dinner that is just under 12 percent Scotch, while our caddies clean our clubs and move our bags into our rooms. (Hey, this is our dream, and if we want caddies who clean clubs and handle bags, we will have them.) At 11 o'clock, we congratulate ourselves on surviving the day, find our way to our rooms and collapse.

We have 36 holes.

We wake to sunrise over Priest Lake. Some of us clear our heads enough to appreciate it. After a light breakfast (two cups of coffee, four ibuprofen and a banana) we make the scenic drive to the Ranch Club Golf Course just west of Priest River for a 9-hole warmup at 7 a.m. By

10, we're at Stoneridge and raring for 18 holes on their newly reopened course. They took last year off to rework the layout, and not to make it easier. We grab a quick lunch at the turn and straggle in at 4:30, having been played through five times, twice by the same foursome. It's a beautiful course, but a

medium-bad slice can land in Washington.

By this time, we have slowed considerably. We snore our way back to Sandpoint for a 6 p.m. tee time at the Elks. We are grateful when someone plays through, so we can rest. We play No. 9 in the dark.

We have 72 holes.

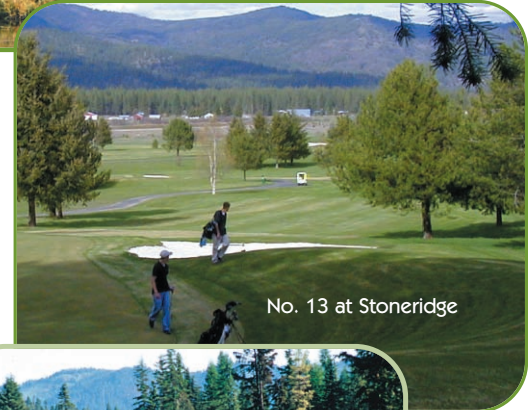
Now, it's Saturday morning. Last night, we stayed in one of the new President's Homes on Hidden Lakes. We don't really remember a lot about getting here, but our caddies made sure we arrived intact. The accommodations are stellar; the surroundings magnificent. For a short, sweet hour, we enjoy coffee and the view from the deck while our caddies whip up eggs benedict and mimosas. (Again, this is our dream. Don't be introducing unnecessary bits of reality.)

Now, it is time to face Hidden Lakes again. With 27 holes to go, we have a leisurely tee-time of 9 a.m. We fare better than we did the first round 48 hours ago, finding far more balls than we lose. No one is even tempted to throw a club into a lake. We are all concerned about saving our energy.

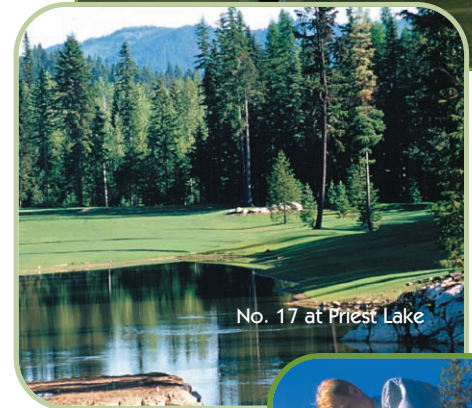
Saturday afternoon, 5 p.m.: We have played 90 holes of golf. Scores have been added, handicaps adjusted. This is for all the marbles, and Midas Golf Course at Garfield Bay stretches before us



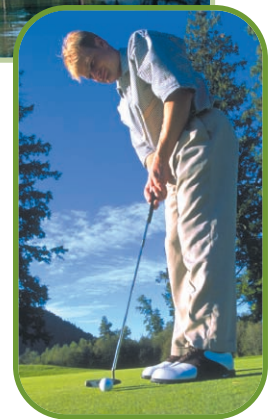
No. 18 at Hidden Lakes



No. 13 at Stoneridge



No. 17 at Priest Lake



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE RESORTS


www.sandpointpubs.com

# | Golf |

like the links at St. Andrews. We imagine crowds lining the fairways, though they are likely a small herd of white-tails that will bound off when we hit into them.

No matter. This is golf as it was played in the beginning; laid out in someone's leftover hayfield on a hillside above a windswept, blue-gray inlet. We are nine holes from Nirvana.

It's probably best to leave us on the first tee, staring down that narrowing fairway between a gully full of trees and Garfield Bay Road. I can only imagine all of us snoring soundly on green No. 9, waiting for dawn on Sunday so we can make the last putts of the Marathon Match in daylight.

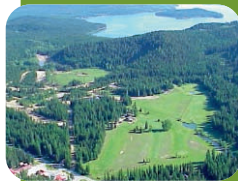
Don't wake us up. Maybe we'll go 199 holes, next time ... as soon as one of us gets the jet. 

*Evidently, author Sandy Compton has a love-hate relationship with golf.*

## Plan your own 99 holes



**Hidden Lakes Golf Resort**, 8 miles east of Sandpoint on Highway 200, was realigned in 2001 and recently named the No. 1 golf challenge in Idaho. It has water on 17 holes, a beautiful natural setting and a sometimes devious layout. Phone (208) 263-1642 or look up [www.hiddenlakesgolf.com](http://www.hiddenlakesgolf.com).



**Priest Lake Golf Course** is an 18-hole layout in the hills just west of Priest Lake. The brand-new back nine is opening in late June. From Sandpoint, go west on Highway 2 to Priest River, then north on State Highway 57 to Lamb Creek. Watch for signs on right. Phone (208) 443-2525 or look up [www.priestlakegolfcourse.com](http://www.priestlakegolfcourse.com).



### Stoneridge Golf Course:

Here you'll find 18 holes with a split personality. A wide-open front nine sets you up for a trip into the timber on the back. From Sandpoint, go west on Highway 2 to Newport, Wash.; then drive south 12 miles on Highway 41 to Blanchard. Phone (208) 437-4653 or look up [www.stoneridgeidaho.com](http://www.stoneridgeidaho.com).

The **Ranch Club Golf Course** lies just west of the city of Priest River on Highway 2 with 9 holes. (208) 448-1731.



**Elks Golf Club** is a user-friendly, 9-hole course on the outskirts of Sandpoint that is reasonably priced and nicely groomed. (208) 263-4321.

**Midas Golf Course** is a semi-primitive course just up the hill from Garfield Bay on Garfield Bay Road. It's rough, but fun and challenging. Six miles south of Sandpoint on Highway 95, turn left on Sagle Road. Follow the signs to Garfield Bay.

## Schweitzer Mountain



**Acreage:** 2,500, 62 named trails plus open bowl skiing and riding

**Terrain:** 20% Beginner, 40% Intermediate, 35% Advanced, 5% Expert

**Longest Run:** The Great Divide, 2.7 miles

**Vertical Drop:** 2,400 feet

**Top Elevation:** 6,400 feet

**Average Annual Snowfall:** 300 inches

**Cross Country Trails:** 30 kilometers groomed daily

**Lifts:** "Stella" high-speed six-pack; "Great

Escape" high-speed quad; plus four double chairlifts and two handle tows

**Total Uphill Capacity:** 8,092 per hour

**Hours of Operation:** 9 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. until Jan. 31; open until 4 p.m. after Feb. 1

**Night Skiing:** 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays from Jan. 7 to March 20; and daily from Dec. 24-Jan. 1

**Season:** Late November through April 10

**Lift tickets:** Off-peak rates, adult \$44, junior \$35, youth \$30, seniors \$40. Peak\*/holiday

rates, adult \$48, junior \$37, youth \$32, seniors \$42. Night, adult \$12, junior and youth, \$10.

**Website:** [www.schweitzer.com](http://www.schweitzer.com)

**Phone:** (208) 263-9555, (800) 831-8810

\*Peak season Dec. 25 to Jan. 1 and weekends from Jan. 8 to Feb. 27