

NCAA Basketball Roundup



Duke University Golf Club 9th Hole

The NCAA basketball tournament is in full swing, which means just one sure thing: There are no sure things. Tiny colleges upend massive universities, top seeds topple, underdogs prevail, and the general unpredictability of the entire event make it ‘must see’ for untold millions nationwide.

However there are some ‘sure things’ when it comes to some of the finest collegiate golf courses around the country. [Duke](#), [Purdue](#) and [Yale](#) all took their rightful place in this year’s ‘March Madness’ jamboree. And despite their ultimate finish in the current three-week basketball extravaganza, they will remain on the list of the nation’s best college courses in perpetuity.

Duke’s fine course has been restored to its original grandeur, and this parkland beauty is once again one of the premiere golf venues in the

south. Originally designed by Robert Trent Jones, the redo was executed by his son Rees, who first visited the course as a member of the Yale golf team in the '60s. "When my dad built the course a few years prior, there wasn't money available for fairway bunkering or grading," recalls Jones. "When we came in to do the restoration work in the early '90s, we added fairway bunkers, graded the fairways, lengthened the course, re-contoured the greens and re-bunkered the entire facility."

It's tree-lined but not tree-choked, with elevated greens, yawning greenside bunkers and a palpable sense of remove. Several par-5s are bisected by streams, requiring careful decision making. Many of the par-4s feature both length and bend of fairway. It's not quite as prestigious as the nearby university, but it's close.



Image via [Duke University Golf Club](#)

Individual highlights are numerous on the course. But Duke's version of "Amen Corner," including the downhill, stream-crossing par-5 11th, daring a power player to reach in two blows, which is followed by the back-across-the-water-in-the-other-direction par-3 12th, and then the pond-on-the-periphery-of-the-landing-area par-4 13th, are likely the three best successive holes.



Image via [Washington Duke Inn](#)

To make matters even better, the course is just steps away from the [Washington Duke Inn](#), one of the area's premiere accommodations. The combination of course and lodging practically on site make it a one-of-a-kind university experience.

Purdue University's Kampen Course in Indiana was formerly little more than a 'farmer's course,' before acclaimed architect Pete Dye decided to lend his considerable skills to a comprehensive facelift. His architectural career took off after a series of agronomy courses he took at the school while learning the trade, so the longtime Indianapolis resident was happy to give back when the school was in need.



Image via [Purdue Golf](#)

Much of this heavily bunkered, fescue-laden course is routed around a natural marsh known as the celery bog, to the right of the brutally long par-5 sixth hole. The greenish bog is home to all sorts of birdlife, and

thanks to the sophisticated filtration and recycling system Dye devised, the course's water runoff goes through several stages of cleaning before entering the bog.

The place is a living, green grass laboratory. Just off the 8th tee, a tough par-4 with waste bunkering down the entire right-hand side, is a sign for the Turfgrass Research and Diagnostic Center, which is housed in a building just a long iron from the hole itself.

The course concludes in wicked fashion. The 17th is a daunting par-3 over water, 200 yards of terror, often into the wind. The last is an exhausting par-4, a driver and then a 3-wood, which most players just hope to reach in regulation.

Last but not least, Yale Golf Course offers those willing to meet its many challenges a rugged adventure, and is one of the nation's best examples of early American golf architecture.



Image via [The Course at Yale](#)

Now ninety years old (designed by Charles Blair Macdonald in 1926) this Grande Dame has lost none of its bite, nor allure. Large greens, most deeply bunkered, and constricted, heaving fairways reveal Yale's penalizing character. There are a spate of memorable holes, none more than the unforgettable ninth. This downhill par-3 Biarritz green is bisected by a head-high trench. Woe to the player who's tee shot lands on the wrong side of the green. The approach putt is nothing more than a guessing game; it will roll down and then back up a chasm that's as deep as nearly any feature on any putting surface

most players have ever encountered. Just one of the unique quirks that makes Yale such a standout in the collegiate golf world.