

BACK NINE

THE PLAYERS

10 Kings River Country Club, Kingsburg Hole No. 16, 532 yards, par 5

THE SKINNY:
Can you say "splash?" This is one of the Valley's most popular holes, the ultimate risk/reward tee shot over the Kings River. How much river you bite off determines how long your approach shot is, and there are thousands of balls in the river bottom.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "When you play this hole well, you think, 'What was so hard?'" – Erin Barger
■ "You can shoot eagle or quad-bogey."
– Christian Rose, who has done both at No. 16

14 Riverside Golf Course, Fresno Hole No. 11, 143 yards, par 3

THE SKINNY:
The difficulty of this uphill hole often depends on pin placements – top left or front right make it harder. Go short and you're probably in a bunker. Go long and you've got a nasty downhill chip.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "It's birdieable but there are a lot of places you can get into trouble."
– Bryson DeChambeau
■ "It rewards a good shot, but a mistake in distance or direction can penalize you." – Vicki Mathiesen



15 Visalia Country Club, Visalia Hole No. 7, 388 yards, par 4

THE SKINNY:
If you're allergic to water, skip this hole. You hit over water on both the tee shot and approach. How much lake you bite off from the tee determines how long your second shot is. The green slopes to the front and to the back, with a bit of inverted bowl affect.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "You really have to judge your second shot." – Christian Rose
■ "The length is deceiving and the green is tough." – Mark Weatherly



11 Sunnyside Country Club, Fresno Hole No. 6, 133 yards, par 3

THE SKINNY:
Talk about being well-bunkered. Standing on the tee box at this short par 3, all you see is sand, sand and more sand. There's little margin for error long and short, so distance control is the key element.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "There is no long or short to this green. You'd better hit the exact yardage." – Mike Firpo
■ "Make sure you have the right club, because if you hit the wrong spot you can't get up and down."
– Bryson DeChambeau



16 Belmont Country Club, Fresno Hole No. 3, 452 yards, par 4

THE SKINNY:
Nothing fancy here, just long, straight and narrow and into the prevailing wind. It's out of bounds left, with trees and a ditch to the right.

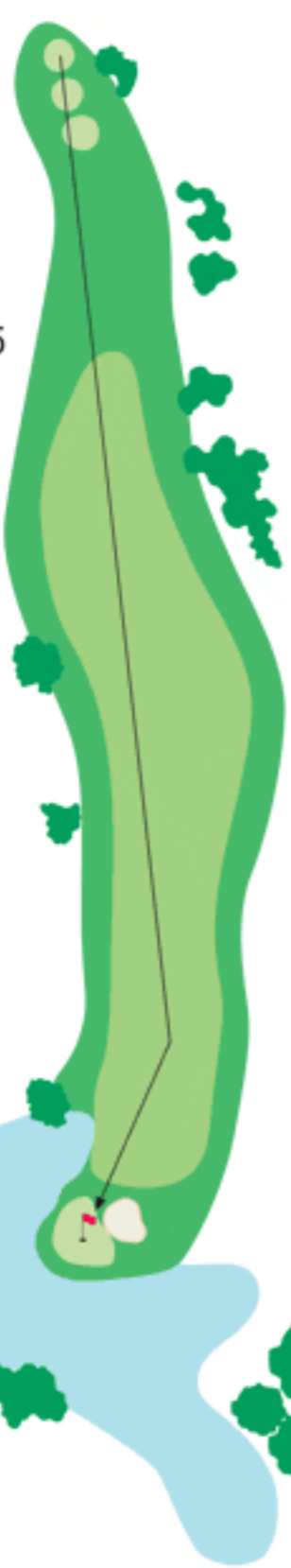
THEY SAID IT:
■ "Standing on the tee box you see nothing unusual – just long, with OB left and trees right. But it's not as narrow as it looks. It's just a long, straight hole that makes you hit two long, straight shots." – Mike Firpo, who birdied from 15 feet
■ "Length is the main thing on this hole, and hitting into the prevailing wind makes it longer. Left or right, you're not in good shape. You have to hit straight to reach the green and make par." – Bryson DeChambeau



12 San Joaquin Country Club, Fresno Hole No. 6, 464 yards, par 4/5

THE SKINNY:
This used to be a par 5, and still is for women. For guys it's a long par 4 to a small green surrounded by water and a bunker.

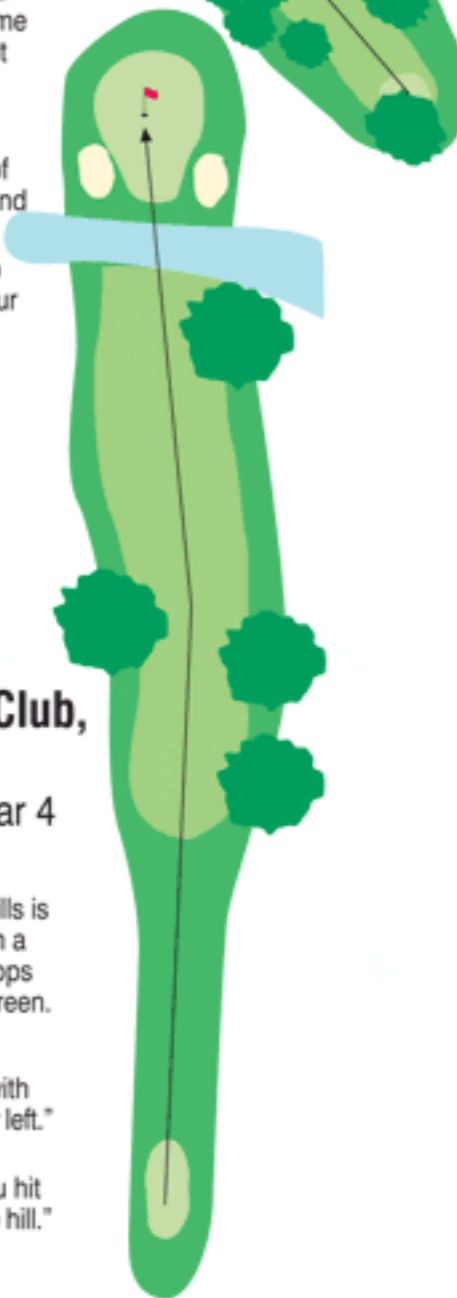
THEY SAID IT:
■ "The green was designed for a par 5, so you're hitting a long shot onto a green not designed to receive it. The penalty for missing the green is severe."
– Mike Firpo
■ "This is still a par 5 for me [from the back]." – 13-year-old Bryson DeChambeau, moving up to hit another drive from the white tees



17 Kings Country Club, Hanford Hole No. 15, 615 yards, par 5

THE SKINNY:
This hole is long, long and longer. Did we mention that it's long? There's some water right, but don't even think about that. Just bomb away.

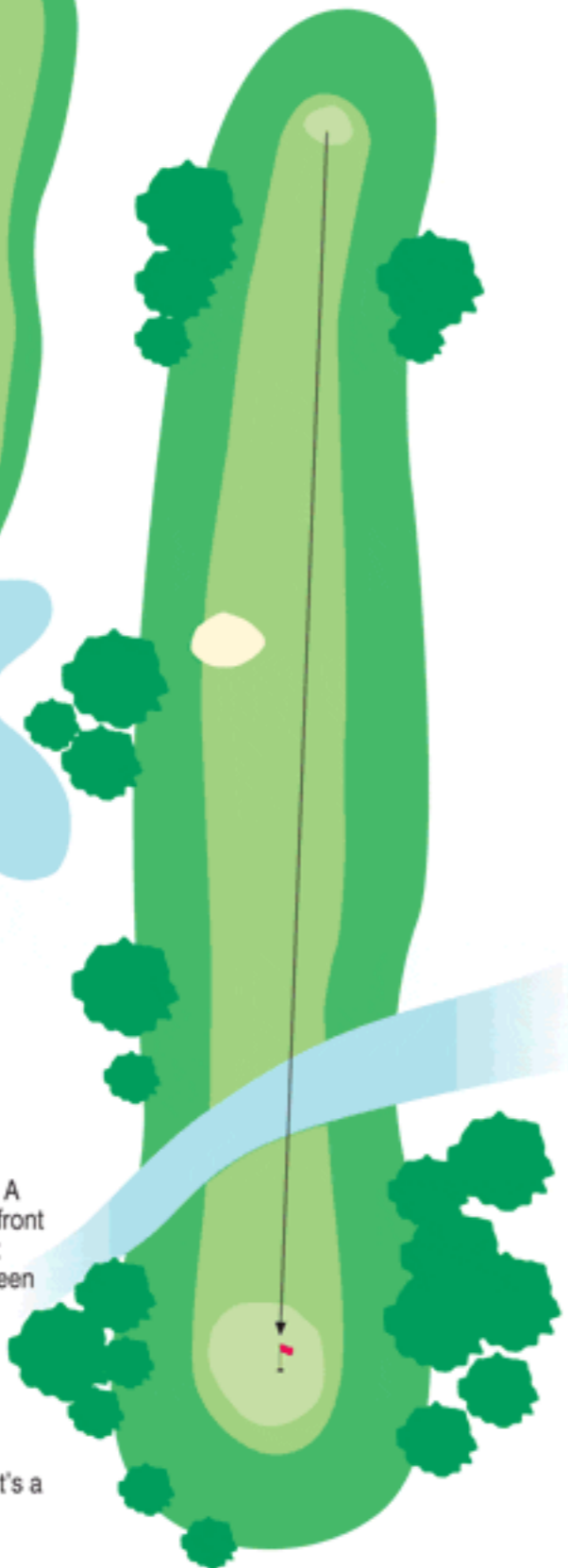
THEY SAID IT:
■ "This hole takes the least amount of strategy of any we played. Just grip and rip." – Mark Weatherly
■ "Accuracy is premium. You have to lay up, so you have to think about your second shot." – Christian Rose



13 Sherwood Forest Golf Course, Sanger Hole No. 14, 515 yards, par 5

THE SKINNY:
You have to think your way through this one. A creek bisects the fairway about 150 yards in front of the green – no problem for long hitters but decision time for short hitters. Entry to the green is a narrow passage through trees.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "Your drive determines what you do. I hit a short drive and had to lay up."
– Mark Weatherly
■ "Trees come into play on the [approach]. It's a narrow entry to a two-tiered green."
– Christian Rose



18 River Island Country Club, Porterville Hole No. 18, 405 yards, par 4

THE SKINNY:
From the back tees, the view of the hills is gorgeous, but you have to hit through a narrow-looking chute. The fairway drops down, then up over the creek to the green.

THEY SAID IT:
■ "I loved hitting from the blue tees with the guys. From the women's tees, stay left."
– Erin Barger
■ "This is a good finishing hole. If you hit a big enough drive, you'll be down the hill."
– Christian Rose

Three foursomes. Ten players. Three days of golf.

The Bee set out to find the proper demographics – age, gender and playing level, along with public-course players and country clubbers – as we set out to play our Dream 18 golf course.

Here are the players who helped us assess our Dream 18. At the same time, we made new friends and reinforced the notion that golf is a social as well as competitive endeavor.

All three days:



Ken Robison,
The Fresno Bee
California Golf Writers
Handicap: 20.0

Tuesday: North Valley



Nate Skibo,
real estate appraiser
Riverside Golf Course
Handicap: None currently (close to scratch)
Favorite hole we played: No. 18, Riverbend



Hilary Ross,
attorney
Riverbend Golf Club (club champion)
Handicap: 9.5
Favorite hole we played: No. 18, Riverbend



Seth DePiano,
mortgage broker
The Tour (local amateur group)
Handicap: None currently (shoots in the 90s)
Favorite hole we played: No. 13, Brighton Crest

Wednesday: South Valley



Mark Weatherly,
high school teacher
Kings River Country Club
Handicap: 5.6
Favorite hole we played: No. 16, Kings River



Erin Barger,
junior high teacher
Fort Washington Country Club
Handicap: 7.7
Favorite hole we played: No. 16, Kings River



Christian Rose,
Fresno City College
San Joaquin Country Club
Handicap: 1.5
Favorite hole we played: No. 16, Kings River

Thursday: Fresno



Mike Firpo,
golf teaching professional
Riverside Golf Course
Handicap: 0.8
Favorite hole we played: No. 6, Sunnyside



Vicki Mathiesen,
homemaker
San Joaquin Country Club (club champion)
Handicap: 6.6
Favorite hole we played: No. 14, Fort Washington



Bryson DeChambeau,
junior high student
Belmont Country Club
Handicap: +1.1
Favorite hole we played: No. 7, Fig Garden