

Back for seconds - with relish

By [Michael Whitmer](#)

Globe Staff / June 11, 2009

George Wright was the first course I played in Boston, less than a week after we moved to the area in October 2001. It took me forever to find and I don't recall much of my experience that day. I must not have liked what I saw, because until last week I had never been back.

I arrived as a single that day, and was paired with a Boston College student and an older gentleman, who was a George Wright regular. Their names escape me, and I can't remember which came first: the older man introducing himself or apologizing for the condition of the course. Not what I wanted to hear.

Imagine my surprise, then, when I stood on that same first tee last Friday. I quickly noticed that five sprinklers were soaking the first green, and also could see a clear distinction between fairway and rough. This was good. Turning around and looking toward the ninth and 18th greens, I could see tightly-mowed chipping areas, a healthy shade of green on the putting surfaces, and no bare spots. This was very good.

I love playing Donald Ross courses, with their small, challenging putting surfaces, some crowned, many running off into collection areas that put a premium on a creative short game. George Wright has that; sadly, I don't have the creative short game.

Like many Ross tracks, George Wright is simply fun to play, and easy to walk. At 6,440 yards, there's not burdensome length, although greens superintendent Len Curtin said that part of his 10-year plan (he's roughly five years in) is lengthening the course by about 400 yards with the creation of some new tee boxes, which will provide new sight lines and toughen up some of the shorter par-4 holes.

Curtin won't have to touch the ninth or 10th holes; at 453 and 462 yards, those par-4 beasts already are hard enough, although both play a touch shorter because they're downhill. One hole they do have plans to tweak later this year is the 390-yard 13th. It sits on a low spot on the property, and water tends to collect in the fairway. Plans call for the fairway to be raised slightly and smoothed, and a ditch to run down the left side.

Some might call a few of the holes quirky, with the occasional blind tee shot, elevation changes, and forced carries, but the four par 3s are stout, especially the

17th. It's a fair test, with difficult rough if you miss the fairway and consistent greens you can be aggressive on. It's not too tight, and will test all facets of your game.

Plus, it's no pushover; there's a reason only one player broke par at the State Amateur qualifier last week. The toughness of the layout combined with the conditions Curtin and his staff have created at George Wright makes for an enjoyable day, at least until you add up your scorecard.

I know this: It won't take me eight more years to get back.■

© Copyright 2009 Globe Newspaper Company.