



TEE OFF IN THE CITY

Belle Isle Golf celebrates massive improvements and rising numbers

By Lauren McGregor



“When people ask if it’s a private club, that’s the biggest compliment. Belle Isle Golf is for the public. It’s for everybody.”

Brandon Chrzanowski is looking forward to his fourth season as general manager of Belle Isle Golf. “My brother and I grew up around the game, joining my dad and grandfather at the driving range,” he says.

Prior to winning the bid for a contract to manage the facility, Chrzanowski earned a bachelor’s degree in commercial recreation from Central Michigan University. He then worked in hotels and resorts in Florida and eventually as plant manager of Third Man Pressing.

“I couldn’t believe it when I got the call that we’d won the bid,” he says, adding that his twin brother, Christopher Chrzanowski, was instrumental in the process.

“Christopher is 100 percent responsible for winning the bid,” says Chrzanowski. “I was unaware that he bid for the range until we had won. My brother’s vision and leadership has gotten us to where we are today.”

Chrzanowski has made the most of his dream come true, most recently with the installation of Toptracer technology.

“The driving range has 29 bays, all of which are fully equipped with Toptracer

technology. There is a 25-inch monitor at each bay. After the strike, it gives you feedback,” he says. “It’s a really important element to learning the game.”

Toptracer also allows players to virtually play 18 holes at courses around the world.

“This is a premier practice facility,” says Chrzanowski. “We have a chip and putt course, six holes that are 40 to 60 yards per hole and walking only. It is great for all levels of the game.”

“You can finish a round in 30 to 45 minutes and it’s an excellent way to be in nature, outside, walking. It’s also a gentle way to get into golf and great for families.”

Three holes stretch out along the river, another has a direct view of the Renaissance Center. “It’s a scenic course.”

The practice area has 10 targets geared toward chipping and two large bunkers.

“It’s the right setting. No noise. No traffic. It gets you in the right frame of mind to practice. Eagles fly over. Freighters go by. You can see deer, swans, herons.”

The course hasn’t always been as idyllic as it is today. Since becoming general manager, Chrzanowski has overseen several phases of improvement.

“Year one was grounds work. It was



Opposite, an aerial view of Belle Isle Golf; below, an aerial view of the driving range, equipped with Toptracer technology

Right, youth camps regularly take place at Belle Isle Golf

Aerial photos by Making the Turn; right photos by Howrani Studios

overgrown. Most people didn't know it was here," says Chrzanowski. "There was very little signage. We added that and we cleaned up the perimeter landscaping." He says that from the beginning, the State of Michigan and Department of Natural Resources have been "outstanding partners."

"Year two, we worked on the course. New greens were installed. We made the course more easily accessible with proper passageways.

"Year three was the Toptracer installation. That brought in a new demographic of younger golfers."

The improvements have made such an impact, in fact, that "capacity has doubled."

Year four, this year, the focus is on the clubhouse. "We will have a pro shop with all the accessories a golfer could need," says Chrzanowski. "Merchandise, apparel, balls, tees, towels, head covers, divet repair tools."

Also on the horizon: selling used golf clubs and offering virtual lessons.

For now, the course is busy hosting clinics, camps, leagues and practices from entities like TGA Junior Golf, First Tee, Cass Tech High School, Wayne State University, Detroit Yacht Club, Detroit Athletic Club, Money Matters and more.

"The Special Olympics also visited," says Chrzanowski. "We showed 350 of their players all that Belle Isle Golf has to offer."

Still, the facility has open capacity in the morning and Chrzanowski is eager to fill those slots with groups.

"People from every walk of life come here. It's my favorite part," he says. "From executives to park goers to social groups to kids to college students."

Even celebrities, says Chrzanowski, detailing how Justin Bieber pulled up one day asking to hit a bucket of balls.

"Everyone feels welcome. It's not a stuffy place. But when people ask if it's a private club, that's the biggest compliment. Belle Isle Golf is for the public. It's for everybody."

Chrzanowski says a lot of the credit goes to the staff. "Our staff is incredibly important to our customer service, grounds and operations."

He adds, "I feel the community has truly embraced us, as evidenced by the turnout. It is fuel to keep doing more, making Belle Isle Golf as great as can be."

The 2024 season opens April 1. Learn more at belleislegolf.com and on Instagram and Facebook. 

