



Outrageously Outdoors

Golf Through the Eyes of a Hunter

By Steve Gilliland

Recently I passed a golf course on a chilly Saturday, and was amazed at the number of golfers braving the crisp winter weather to chase that little white ball around on what amounts to be nothing more than a huge lawn. It's always puzzled me how that game can be considered a good workout when the most exercise most golfers get is dragging their overweight carcasses in and out of the golf cart. Anyway, it all reminded me of my first and only brush with the game of golf.

Back in 2006, as a valiant attempt to add a little culture to my otherwise mundane and culture-less existence, and to further stretch the boundaries of my comfort zone (also known as free tickets), I attended the 2006 Senior Open Golf Tournament at Prairie

Dunes Country Club just outside of Hutchinson, KS. Now understand, I don't know a fairway from a flam-bé, or a bogey from a booger. To me, a driver is the person at the wheel of a vehicle, and putter is something we men do in lieu of something constructive. Yet there I was, reduced to being part of a gaggle of onlookers sittin' in the hot sun called "the gallery." Even though I tried my best to fit in I'm pretty sure I looked at that entire experience slightly different than most other people there. Allow me to explain:

Every golf course is littered with various sized pits of sand known as sand traps. When I looked at the sand traps all around us, all I could think was what swell little ponds they could be. Large mouth bass and those big hybrid bluegills would love nice sandy bottom pools like those. Wild turkeys take regular dust baths to help keep bugs out of their feathers, and in do-





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ing so they carve out bowl-shaped spots in the dirt called “wallows.” I’ll bet those nice sandy “traps” could draw every turkey for miles around; sort of like a communal bath. I’d also bet every female turtle in the county comes there to lay her eggs in that nice deep sand. Wouldn’t it be a hoot to see a golfer swingin’ away at turtle eggs thinkin’ they were his golf ball!

Much of the hilly terrain between holes was thick with sand hill plum bushes. I imagine the refined eye of any golf connoisseur saw this as garnish; part of the overall presentation. I saw it as a never-ending supply of plum jelly. And just think how many gallons of plums those guys could put in all the pockets in those golf bags they cart around with them everywhere. And what about sand hill plum wine? You talk about an additional revenue stream! Lots of those guys are drinking anyway, so why not open a small micro brewery there in the pro shop, and they could be drinking home grown plum wine brewed right there at the golf course.

The miles of neatly groomed footpaths amidst the roughs looked to me like great spots for coyote traps. I know from talking with golf course employees that coyotes love to roam golf courses no matter where the course is. Heck I’ll bet most courses would even loan me one of their neat little golf carts to buzz around and check traps with, just to keep the occasional coyote from scaring the dickens out of patrons. The trees bordering the course screamed deer hunting to me, and I had a few good tree-stand locations picked out before we’d left. And I hadn’t even thought about the turkey hunting yet!

Anyway, as out-of-place as I felt, I began to see that this game called golf has a lot of similarities to deer and turkey hunting. For example, we’d been advised to find choice

seats and wait for the players to come to us. So there we sat awaiting our “quarry”, on hunter-green colored bleachers at the 17th hole, a spot where we could see action all around us. Not much different, I’d say, than puttin’ up our camouflage hunting blind near a “hot” deer trail or a known turkey roost and marking time in anticipation of a good shot. Speaking of shots, when one of us makes a nice shot and harvests a deer or turkey for the freezer, there are high-fives and handshakes all around. Those guys, too! When one of them made an exceptional “shot” he’d dance a jig, shake everyone’s hand and even tip his hat to the crowd. They even had guys who raised their hands to keep everyone quiet while they shoot. (Now there’s something my wife and I would both benefit from when we hunt together!) I must say though that their marksmanship left a lot to be desired. Those guys all shot 64 or 65 times each day, and I didn’t see one of them carrying any dead critters to show for it!

Yes, my playing golf at Prairie Dunes (now there’s a mental picture) would probably be worthy of a movie. We could call it something like “The Clampetts Join the Country Club.” I’d have to have a special custom-made golf bag with an extra pouch on each side; one to hold a deer rifle with a scope, and the other to hold a shotgun. I’m pretty sure I could get a fishing rod and traps in there somewhere amongst the clubs. I seriously doubt they would allow me into the clubhouse or pro shop though, dressed in full camo and smellin’ like coyote bait or deer pee. Although, now that I think about it, after playing 18 holes, some of the guys comin’ off the course might not smell much better.

Steve is the author of the weekly outdoor column Exploring Kansas Outdoors and can be contacted by email at stevegilliland@idkcom.net.





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