



SEVEN MILE TIMES



Regrets, I've had a few; But then again, too few to mention. ~Frank Sinatra

miniature golf BIG FUN

By Garwood Bacon

Fun, excitement, laughter, and pleasant competition drive friends and families to miniature golf courses found, virtually, everywhere. It would be hard to imagine a vacation down the Jersey Shore without playing at least one game. Every summer, families and friends pack into cars in search of new and exciting courses to explore, while enjoying a sunny afternoon or balmy evening at the Shore.

What started the phenomenon of miniature golf and how long has it been around? There is an interesting website designed by Jonathan Hoerber which compiles an interesting look at the art and history behind miniature golf <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~hoerber/creations/minigolf.html>. When visiting the website you will learn that over 140 years have passed since the first miniature golf course was designed. Some might be surprised that the idea of a miniature golf course was created to allow women to participate in golf. The first miniature golf course was built in St. Andrews, Scotland in 1867. Back then, it was considered unacceptable for women to complete a full back swing with a golf club. Rather than leave women totally out of the sport, a miniature course was designed where women would not have to drive the ball. It was an 18 hole course made of various putting greens using the same features as traditional golf courses including: undulating greens, water hazards, rough and forest vegetation for obstacles. Eager to participate, women flocked to the idea and have long since broken the gender boundaries in golf.

Fast forward 140 years. In order to see the evolution of this sport, all one has to do is go and visit one of today's modern miniature golf courses. Today we see mini golf courses that feature theme generated obstacles that include anything from pirate ships to colorful ceramic statues of dinosaurs. Miniature golf is now a staple in our family entertainment diet. It is hard not to hear the sound of children laughing as they often times use hockey like tactics to guide their brightly colored golf ball into the hole. Because of the excitement it generates in the young and old alike, you can find mini-golf courses in malls, on the side of busy roads, at fairs, carnivals, boardwalks and on cruise ships. If you happen to live in Philadelphia or South Jersey, you are sure to find a wide variety of miniature golf courses waiting for your enjoyment along the Jersey coastline.

There are three notable miniature golf courses to visit if you are vacationing in Sea Isle City or in the Seven Mile Beach area this summer. All three have been played recently and the following reviews will tell you what makes them unique and exciting for you and your family this summer season.

Pirate Island Golf has two locations. One is located on the corner of 33rd Street and Land's Avenue in Sea Isle City, and the other is located on 27th Street and Dune Drive in Avalon, New Jersey. The Sea Isle City location was recently voted "Best of Press" by the Atlantic City Press. The Avalon location was voted, "Best of Shore" by the Philadelphia Magazine. Both courses were played during a holiday weekend and although the conditions were crowded, parking was not an issue and the play was completed in about an hour and 15 minutes per course. The Sea Isle City location has a private parking lot located directly across 33rd Street which is also right next to Scoop Daddy's Ice Cream Parlor. Ice cream is always a great way to finish your mini-golf experience. Avalon's location has free public parking available on Dune Drive or a private parking lot located right next to the facility on 27th Street. One can easily walk to Kohler's Bakery, P.K. McCool's Grill, Hoy's 5 and 10 and other shopping attractions from this location.

Both locations have similar layouts and design. While walking up the wooden plank steps and passing through a light mist, one can make out the wreck of a large masted pirate ship. A painted skull and crossbones greets you as you begin your play. The course offers two levels of play winding you through caves, wooden rope bridges, scenes of pirate skeletons, ponds, waterfalls and finally the remains of the pirate ship shrouded in mist



Julia Bolte of Moorestown smiles with approval after sinking a shot at Pirate Island.

before you finish your mini-golf experience.

Most holes offer an easy play conducive to children, but watch out for hole number ten in Sea Isle City! There is a water hazard in the middle of the green that has the ability to claim your ball if it should land directly next to the drain. If this should happen, the best course of action is to use a cell phone to call the office number found on the score card. Tell the golf manager what hole you are on and they will be sure to quickly send someone with a replacement ball.

If playing either location, one can look forward to playing hole number 17, especially if you have children. This hole plays down hill with a water fall located next to the green. You have a choice to play your ball on the green or drop it into the waterfall. Either way your ball will arrive safely to the bottom green. Children seem to like the water route best and are often tempted to run up to the top time and again. They enjoy watching the water fall effect of their golf ball being shot out of a small cave and onto the green below.

After finishing the course there is one final attraction that offers you an opportunity to win a free game of golf. You will hear the sound of an old pirate heckling you from a speaker in the wall. Simply drop your ball into a hole found in the wall and watch it drop down while bouncing off wooden bumpers as it approaches the bottom. If your golf ball finds the treasure chest in the middle, you will win a free game! If it falls to the left the old pirate will laugh and say better luck next time. If your ball should fall to the right and into the "Whale Hole," you are in for a surprise!

Both courses are highly recommended due to the ease of play, great atmosphere, hole design, free parking and proximity to other local attractions.



PA line-up shots at Club 18

