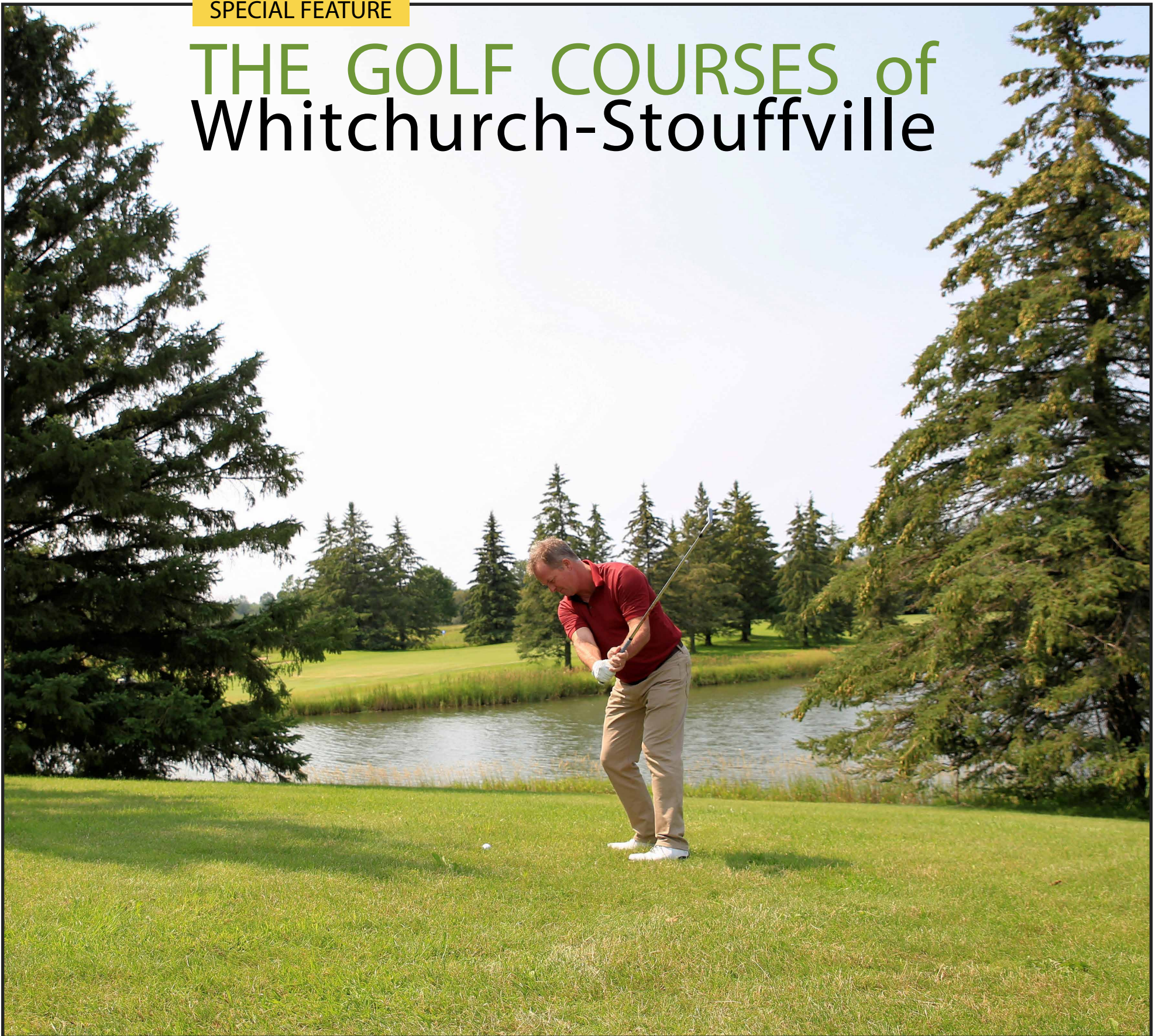


SPECIAL FEATURE

# THE GOLF COURSES of Whitchurch-Stouffville



**I**n midswing is Bob Lean, Director of Golf and CEO at Spring Lakes Golf Club. Spring Lakes is the largest private golf club in Canada, boasting 3 championship 18-hole courses - "and 47 lakes", says Bob, "but we don't have a mosquito problem, as the water is moving." Spring Lakes has 1350 members, including 400 new members since the recent change in ownership. "The ladies tend to like the South Course best, senior men enjoy the North Course, and my wife prefers the East Course", adds Bob. "I like the 8th hole on the North - it's the only green that slants towards you like a target. The North Course is quieter and more personal."



**51%** of Canada's golf facilities are in Ontario and Quebec. There are sixteen 18-hole courses in Whitchurch-Stouffville, plus two executive 9-holes courses, within 9 golf clubs. Our courses represent varying ages of development, from 1960 to 1999, with the majority being built in the 1970s. All of our courses are located on the Oak Ridges Moraine, with the exception of Meadowbrook Golf Club, which is just south of the moraine. This article is geared to help one avoid the bunkers with the many golf courses of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

## Private vs. Public

**Less than 10%** of golf courses in Canada are membership-based, private clubs; yet almost half of the courses in Whitchurch-Stouffville - or 8 of 18 - are classed as private.

For a sense of intimacy and prestige, consider joining **St. Andrew's East Golf & Country Club** – there are only 375 members. **Spring Lakes Golf Club**, with 54-holes, is the largest private club in Canada; they offer exclusivity at a value price. For those that favour “heritage courses” within mature landscape settings - **Meadowbrook Golf Club** and **Sleepy Hollow Country Club** were the first two courses built in Whitchurch-Stouffville (1960).

Admittance to five private courses is enabled with a ClubLink membership: two at **Station Creek Golf Club** and three at **Emerald Hills Golf Club**. Emerald Hills Golf Club is unique in that it consists of three 9-holes courses (Parkland, Valley and Forest), yet these are packaged in different combinations to provide three 18-hole experiences, as recognized by Golf Canada.

The public courses in Whitchurch-Stouffville include three at **Rolling Hills Golf Club** (also ClubLink) and the **Ballantrae Golf Club**. Rolling Hills boasts a convenient location to major highways. Ballantrae Golf Club has the best reviews regarding pace, which is important – no one desires a 5-hour round of golf or to receive return credits when things go wrong.

**Maples of Ballantrae** is the only hybrid course, offering public access and membership at the same time. Maples features some of the narrowest fairways.

## The Time Factor

**If one wants to** get a round in over the lunch hour, the executive 9-hole courses offered at Maples of Ballantrae and Meadowbrook Golf Club will suit the tight schedule. If the pace is right, all variety of golfers will find a fast game at the two Rolling Hills courses (Challenge and Classic), because these are less complex and are shorter (4884 and 4010 total yards total from White tee). However, poor course management, peak-time

play, bad course conditions and over-crowding can turn a short course into a 6-hour slog.

The Spring Lakes East Course is the longest course in Whitchurch-Stouffville at over 6500 yards from the White tee, yet the average pace is just over 4 hours due to good course management practices. St. Andrew's East - with a control on membership numbers - boasts that NO tee times are required.

Pace is a challenge for every course. Most online negative reviews revolve around the lack of pace policing and bad course conditions. When a course is not maintained very well, there are often obstacles that create slow play for players of all abilities. Take for example a tee box that hasn't been cut in weeks; or a green that has ball marks, dead areas or even long grass.

## Preference & Style

**Most W-S golf courses** are designed in the “Parkland” style. A parkland course is one that is lushly manicured with plenty of trees, verdant fairways and fast greens. Parkland courses are typically located inland.

Ballantrae Golf Club is the only Whitchurch-Stouffville course that claims to be a “Links” styled course. A links course is usually built on a sandy coastline that is open to the wind with few or no trees, surrounded by plenty of tall grasses. Links courses generally feature large, slow greens, firm and fast fairways, and deep bunkers. The links design is the oldest style of golf course, first developed in Scotland.

Non-pro golfers generally fall into two categories: scratch (or par) golfers, and bogey golfers (30+ over par). Typically, scratch golfers are straight hitters. Narrow and long fairways offer little resistance for those that have mastered accuracy and driving power. They prefer big greens – or big targets to hit from a distance. Whereas, bogey golfers do better on wider fairways – there's less chance of hitting into the trees.

**Bogey golfers** can't drive as far; therefore, short courses are easier. Finally, bogey golfers aren't impacted as much by green size, because they are attacking the green from close range (having taken more hits to get there).

The courses of Whitchurch-Stouffville offer enough variety to make both scratch and bogey golfers happy.

## Satisfaction

Golfers are known to assess home and away courses differently. Indeed, after a round at home, you've got errands to run, or an office to get back to, or a kid's sporting event to attend – pace is everything. At the home course, the regularity of financial cost follows in a close second place. But

if you're road-tripping with old pals, or a business traveler with time to burn - so what if a round lags a bit or costs more? For the traveler, course conditions, design, and score top the list.

Golf course reviews can be readily found online from a variety of sources, although a comprehensive golf course ranking system does not exist in the same way as for hotels or restaurants. Most negative reviews regarding Whitchurch-Stouffville golf courses would disappear if pace weren't a factor. Positive reviews focus on friendly staff, value, the ease of booking, good food, refreshment carts and great course conditions.

In general, St. Andrew's East is reviewed as one of the friendliest courses, while Spring Lakes delivers the best value, and Ballantrae Golf Club provides a well-managed pace.

*Golf Courses* continued [Pages 8-9](#)



[ABOVE] Referred to as the ‘Home of Golf’ and one of the oldest golf courses in the world, St. Andrews Links is located in Scotland. The word “links” comes via the Scots language from the Old English word hlinc, meaning “hill”.



# RATINGS EXPLAINED

## What's in a Rating?

All golf courses in Canada are rated on the level of difficulty. Ratings are available from Golf Canada, and are usually posted on scorecards as well. The course "Rating" is a number that indicates the probable score for a scratch golfer – one whose average game is close to the par for the course. Rating values increase with difficulty. Often, there are three or more values for the course rating; each value corresponds to a different tee, expressed in colours – white box, blue box, etc.

"Bogey golfers" are golfers that average more swings than a scratch golfer. A "Slope" rating is used to assess the average performance of bogey golfers. For instance, a given course may have a rating of 71.0 and a slope of 130 from the White tee box, which would mean that a bogey golfer would need 59 more strokes to play the same course as a scratch golfer. If the rating values were compared on a graph and a line is drawn between the two, a slant or 'slope' is revealed, which is where the notion of slope rating comes from; a steep slope means increased difficulty for the bogey golfer.

Therefore, ratings do not provide an exact apples-to-apples comparison between golf courses, whereas the focusing on the difference between the course rating (scratch) and slope rating (bogey) provides greater exactitude. For instance, examine the ratings for Bethesda Grange and Meadowbrook Golf Club for the women's White tee box:

**Bethesda Grange 74.5/124; (difference 49.5)**  
**Meadowbrook Golf 71.5/126; (difference 54.5)**

For the scratch golfer, Bethesda Grange is more difficult, by 3 strokes. For the bogey golfer, the opposite appears true – Meadowbrook *looks* more difficult by 2 strokes. However, when you examine the difference between the ratings, the bogey golfer is in for a surprise – Meadowbrook is a 5-stroke premium over Bethesda; Meadowbrook is clearly more difficult.

Furthermore, this comparison illustrates other points. At 6104 yards (White box), Bethesda Grange is 773 yards longer than Meadowbrook's 5331 yards, which probably accounts for the extra 3 strokes needed by the scratch golfer. Counter intuitively, something is clearly happening to make Meadowbrook's shorter course more difficult for the bogey golfer – are the fairways narrower at Meadowbrook? Do 'accuracy' hazards exist?

In examining the difference in slope ratings (or the 'slope' as intended) of Whitchurch-Stouffville golf courses, female bogey golfers should find the 35-stroke premium above par (33 for men) at Rolling Hills Classic Course to be far easier than the whopping 69 additional strokes required (61 for men) at Sleepy Hollow.

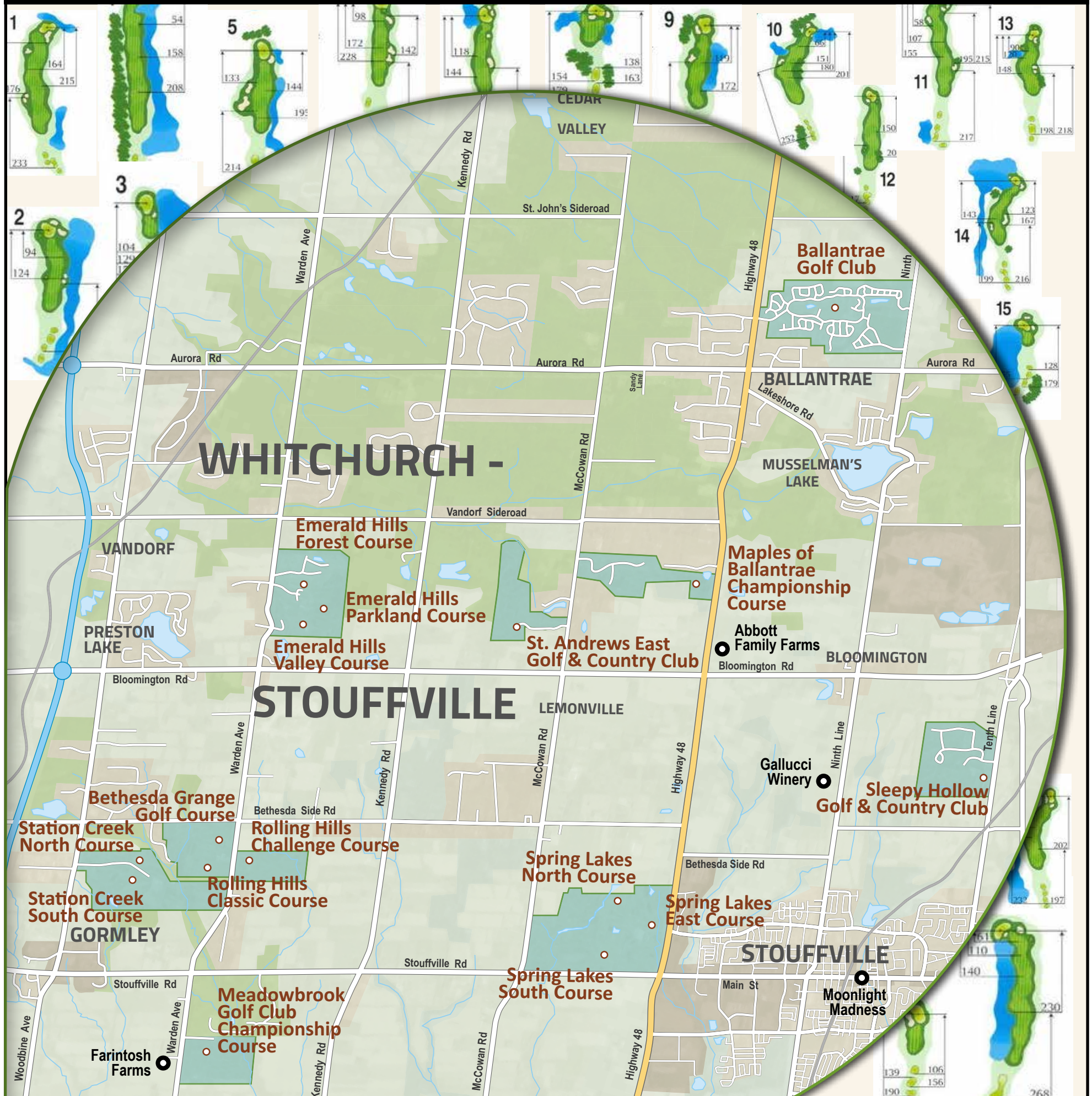
For men and women scratch golfers alike, Rolling Hills Classic requires the least strokes, while Spring Lakes East requires an additional 10-11 strokes. Perhaps the fact that Rolling Hills, as mentioned previously, is the shortest Whitchurch-Stouffville course at 4010 yards, while Spring Lakes East is the longest at 6528 yards. So, is one course more difficult than the other, or is it a matter of length? You be the judge.



18-Hole Golf Courses	Status	Year Built	Yards (White)	Men's White Rating	Men's White Slope	diffM	Women's White Rating	Women's White Slope	diffW
Ballantrae Golf Club	Public	1999	5982	69.2	129	59.8	75.4	139	63.6
Bethesda Grange Golf Course (Rolling Hills G.C.)	Public	1970	6104	67.8	116	48.2	74.5	124	49.5
Emerald Hills Golf Club Forest + Valley	Private	1982	5852	68.5	124	55.5	74.1	137	62.9
Emerald Hills Golf Club Parkland + Forest	Private	1982	6094	70.0	128	58.0	76.1	141	64.9
Emerald Hills Golf Club Valley + Parkland	Private	1982	6104	69.5	126	56.5	75.6	141	65.4
Maples of Ballantrae Golf Club	Semi-Private	1982	6073	69.5	126	56.5	75.0	139	64
Meadowbrook Golf Club Championship Course	Private	1960	5331	66.1	114	47.9	71.5	126	54.5
Rolling Hills Golf Club Challenge	Public	1970	4884	62.8	106	43.2	67.0	112	45
Rolling Hills Golf Club Classic	Public	1970	4010	59.5	93	33.5	61.3	97	35.7
Sleepy Hollow Country Club	Private	1960	5734	68.5	130	61.5	73.9	143	69.1
Spring Lakes Golf Club East	Private	1977	6528	71.0	124	53.0	77.0	135	58
Spring Lakes Golf Club North	Private	1977	5912	68.2	126	57.8	74.2	134	59.8
Spring Lakes Golf Club South	Private	1977	5992	69.0	124	55.0	74.1	129	54.9
St. Andrew's East Golf & Country Club	Private	1989	6198	70.1	130	59.9	76.7	135	58.3
Station Creek Golf Club North	Private	1972	6025	69.2	118	48.8	74.0	130	56
Station Creek Golf Club South	Private	1972	6156	70.1	128	57.9	75.7	132	56.3



## IN-DEPTH: GETTING TO KNOW THE COURSES OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



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