

The BUSINESS

GOALF

2018



Jesse Hughes is director of instruction at Topgolf.

(Photo by Kimberly Carrillo)

Which Scottsdale Airpark courses have the best-kept grounds, instructors and pro shops? We got expert rankings.

By Jimmy Magahern

The Scottsdale Airpark area is home to some of the best golf courses in Arizona, full of lush fairways and dramatic holes. But what about the other factors that make for a great golfing experience? Which courses offer the best services for the avid golfer?

For that, we turned to a panel of local experts and asked them to rank the Airpark golf destinations based on a variety of criteria, including which courses are the best maintained, which offer the best instructors and who has the best pro shops.

The panel:

Linda Dillenbeck, partner, The Image Group AZ, a marketing and communications company specializing in the golf industry.

David Bataller, director of communications, OB Sports Golf Management, a management group that currently manages 60 premier golf courses and country clubs throughout the U.S. and the Bahamas.

Kimberli Nelson-Diebold, corporate director of retail, OB Sports Golf Management. Previously handled retail affairs for The Boulders Resort and Spa, Troon Golf Management, Troon North Golf Club, Kierland Golf Club, Whirlwind Golf Club, La Paloma Golf Club, Ventana Canyon, Legend Trail Golf Club and Talking Stick Golf Club.

Luke Beardmore, senior vice president, agronomy and construction, OB Sports Golf Management. Previously landscape maintenance developer for BlueStar Resort & Golf.

Jerry Rose, vice president of Communication Links, a 25-year-old Scottsdale-based marketing communication services firm catering to the local golf industry.

We also asked **Morgan Wallace**, senior communications specialist for Topgolf, the company considered the “disrupter” in the golf industry, for some tips on how the combination sports bar and driving range with an added dose of high tech has been successful in luring a new generation to at least a variation of the sport.

Pro shops offering the most cutting-edge gear:

Linda Dillenbeck: “Grayhawk Golf Club and Troon North both go beyond just typical golf clothing and feature golf lifestyle elements.”

Kimberli Nelson-Diebold: “I would say the shops that carry the most cutting-edge gear in the area would be PGA Superstore, Grayhawk and McDowell Mountain Golf Club.” Nelson-Diebold adds that the most innovative equipment to look for today includes PXX Clubs, the Callaway Epic Driver, Travis Mathew apparel, Chase54 apparel, Hydroflask waterbottles and any of a variety of available audio equipment that can marry your smartphone to speakers using Bluetooth.

Jerry Rose: “Depends upon your geographical boundaries [for the Airpark], but Grayhawk Golf Club has been on the leading edge of this for quite some time. They have an outstanding selection for a standalone golf facility, always with the best styles and variety for both men and women. Past Grayhawk, TPC is pretty strong, as is Troon North and Kierland. A little farther out, the new Verde River Golf & Social Club has a super cool concept for its shop. The shop is called the ‘Outfitter,’ and it carries both golf apparel and equipment, as well as outdoor items for hiking, biking, kayaking, etc. Kinda like a mini REI inside a golf shop.”

Most lauded golf instructors in the Airpark:

Linda Dillenbeck: “Sandy LaBauve, at Westin Kierland, is always rated as one of the best. Two other instructors that are very good are Blake Smith and Blake Isakson, both of whom work at Boccieri Golf. Blake Smith is a PGA member and skilled in golf instruction, kinesiology and biomechanics, as well as robotic golf instruction. Blake Isakson is absolutely terrific with junior golfers.”

David Bataller: “Boyd Summerhays out at McDowell Mountain Golf Club. He has a strong client-base of PGA Tour pros – including his brother, Daniel Summerhays, as well as Tony



(Photo courtesy theimagegroupaz.com)
Linda Dillenbeck, partner,
The Image Group AZ



(Photo courtesy obsports.com)
David Bataller, director of
communications, OB Sports
Golf Management



(Photo courtesy obsports.com)
Kimberli Nelson-Diebold,
corporate director of retail,
OB Sports Golf Management



(Photo courtesy obsports.com)
Luke Beardmore, senior vice
president, agronomy and
construction, OB Sports Golf
Management

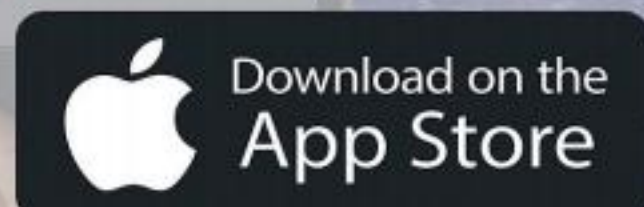
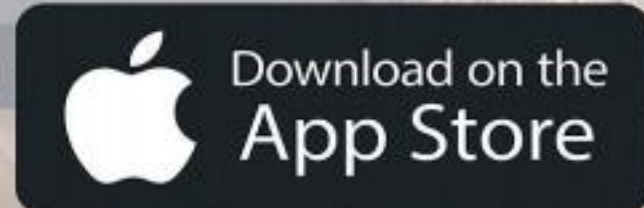
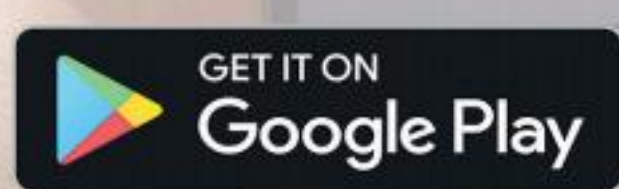


(Photo courtesy commlinks.com)
Jerry Rose, vice president of
Communication Links



(Photo courtesy topgolf.com)
Morgan Wallace, senior
communications specialist
for Topgolf

LISTEN ON THE GO



Finau, who won the 2016 Puerto Rico Open. Summerhays was recently named to the *Golf Digest* 'Best Young Teachers in America,' and his reputation continues to grow, both nationally and locally."

Jerry Rose: "Mike and Sandy LaBauve at Kierland are extremely well-respected and have been among the top golf instructors in the nation for 20 years or more. Grayhawk also has a great stable of instructors including Andrew Getson, who has worked with Phil Mickelson and Stan Utley, and is considered one of the top short-game instructors in the world. Also in the Airpark is Bocchieri Golf. Bocchieri is known for its innovative products, but it also is one of the only places in the country with a Robo-Swing Trainer. It is a piece of robotic equipment that helps players 'groove' their swings."

Morgan Wallace: "We have a Topgolf U program, and Jesse Hughes is our director of instruction in Scottsdale."

Courses with best management/maintenance:

Luke Beardmore: "Eagle Mountain, Longbow, and McDowell Mountain have all had great overseeds this year. The stand of winter grass is exceptional. Additionally, all three of these courses have all recently undergone some significant course improvements, including bunker renovations, waste area improvements and drainage enhancements. Very good courses for the price."

Jerry Rose: "Boy, that's a tough question. Kierland, TPC, Troon North, Grayhawk and Talking Stick all are known for their consistently outstanding conditions and guest service. I'm not sure how far your coverage area extends, but Camelback's Ambiente is another great golf course that doesn't get the love it deserves. And I've heard McDowell Mountain Golf Club is in fantastic shape right now."

Linda Dillenbeck: "We-Ko-Pa Golf Club, Grayhawk Golf Club, Troon North Golf Club."

Morgan Wallace: "Our maintenance team isn't just in charge of the field – they are key in helping maintain the building overall. One of the main things that our guests see during their visits is the picker cleaning balls off the field. The team is constantly making sure the field is picked and the targets are in excellent condition."

Do any courses offer physical therapy for golf injuries, etc.?

Linda Dillenbeck: "Not to my knowledge. Although I know that Westin Kierland has several unique fitness programs that are focused on golfers. But I do not believe they have a physical therapist on staff."

Jerry Rose: "Kierland Resort offers a great program for golfers through its spa with Mark Heller. Also, Crossfit FSI in the Airpark is run by Carson Kemp. Carson works with a ton of accomplished players and has worked with some tour professionals assisting with flexibility, strength training and injury rehab."

Morgan Wallace: "Guests come to Topgolf for many reasons. Healing injuries could be one for sure. Fifty-one percent of our guests are non-golfers. Only 22 percent are a mix of moderate and avid golfers. The last 27 percent are occasional golfers." ■