



Mike Trout Teams with Tiger Woods to Build His Own New Jersey Golf Course

[Tom Verducci](#) Mar 27, 2023

Mike Trout has a new teammate: Tiger Woods.

The three-time American League Most Valuable Player has teamed with the 15-time golf major winner to build Trout National – The Reserve, a championship golf course in Vineland, N.J., the southern New Jersey town where Trout was born and near Millville, N.J., where Trout grew up and lives. Trout and Woods plan a 2025 opening for member play.

“It’s pretty incredible having a chance to own your own golf course,” Trout says. “Getting Tiger to design it is crazy. If you had told me before that this would happen one day, I would have said you are crazy. It’s more than I ever thought possible.”

Trout’s love of golf dates to trips to the driving range with his father, Jeff, while at Millville High School. He says he carries a handicap of “seven or eight” and averages “330 to 360” yards on his drives “when I’m not letting it go. It depends on the moment. I try to dial it down to keep it a little straighter.”

Says Trout, “For me, it’s like anything else I do. I want to be the best, whatever it takes. If it means going to the range or looking at video, I will. I’m not going crazy with it. Baseball always is my number one priority. I just enjoy golf. It’s a great mental getaway from the game.”



Trout says the idea of owning a golf course first occurred to him and his wife, Jessica, just before COVID-19 began in 2020. He says Jessica, who also is from Millville, also plays golf and enjoys event planning, such as weddings.

“We sat down and said, ‘Look, if an opportunity comes up it would be a great thing to do. I want to own a course,’” Trout says. “We were close to owning a course when COVID-19 hit. A lot of stuff wasn’t going our way, so we backed out of the deal. We just said, ‘If an opportunity comes down the road, we’ll explore it.’

“It was probably a year or two later somebody sent me drone footage of somebody attempting to build a couple of holes in Vineland while courses were shut down. I sent it to my brother, Tyler, and said, ‘Can you look into this for me?’”

The video led to a meeting with John Ruga of Millville, a developer and president of Northeast Precast in Vineland, and Ruga’s wife, Lorie.

“It came together,” Trout says. “We built a great relationship.”

In searching for a course designer, Trout had one name in mind: Tiger. He says he had never met Woods before he and Tyler contacted Woods’ golf course architecture firm, TGR Design.

“My favorite golfer growing up obviously was Tiger,” Trout says. “I thought it would be pretty cool to reach out. We reached out, got a positive vibe when we mentioned it and got his team down to the site. Once Tiger’s team came down to the site, they loved it. It’s surreal. I mean, it’s friggin’ Tiger!

“We talk now. I’m starting to get to know him. I talk to him over the telephone. It’s pretty crazy.”

In a press release for Trout National, Woods says, “I’ve always watched Mike on the diamond so when an opportunity arose to work with him on Trout National – The Reserve, I couldn’t pass it up. It’s a great site for golf and our team’s looking forward to creating a special course for Mike, Jessica, John and Lorie.”

Trout says partnering with Ruga and building the course close to home “means everything to me. You always want to give back to the community and bringing a golf course to southern New Jersey is part of that. It’s putting southern New Jersey on the map to people who don’t know much about it.”

According to the press release, the golf course is being built on a sandy site that was once home to a silica sand mine and is surrounded by forest and farmland. It is about 45 minutes south of Philadelphia. In addition to the 18-hole championship course, Trout National will include a practice range, short-game area, clubhouse, restaurant, lodging and a wedding chapel.

Asked about the course’s design, Trout says, “Obviously, it’s not fully done. But when I go to a golf course, I hate waiting. I would rather play a two-and-a-half, three-hour round. And whatever you need, whatever comes to mind, that is going to be there for you. And a lot of cool stuff will be happening in the clubhouse.

“I feel like when you go into this golf course, when you pull into the front gate, you want to be excited about just enjoying your day. It’s an escape.”

Trout says he expects one signature hole to include an island green with various tee boxes called “Mike’s Choice.” He says he has one hole-in-one—in 2017 at Raven Golf Club in Phoenix—and among his favorite courses is Bluejack National, a TGR-designed course outside Houston.

“It’s pretty incredible, having a chance to own your own golf course,” Trout says. “And partnering with good friends and family and getting Tiger to design it is amazing.”

By [Tom Verducci](#)

Tom Verducci covers Major League Baseball and brings Sports Illustrated 41 seasons of experience.