

# 850

THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA



## MILITARY MIGHT

OUR COMMUNITIES LIVE AND BREATHE MILITARY AND ITS LIFE BLOOD — THE BILLIONS OF DEFENSE DOLLARS THAT SURGE THROUGHOUT THE REGION EACH YEAR

\$4.95 DEC/JAN 2010



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**#1 PICK:**  
Hombre No. 2



# KENNY KNOX'S Dream<sup>18</sup>

Pro golfer Kenny Knox is your guide as you take a tour of his 18 favorite public golf holes in Northwest Florida

**BY LINDA KLEINDIENST AND DANIEL MUTTER**

THE DAY IS MILD, A GENTLE BREEZE BLOWS off the Gulf of Mexico, and the emerald waters just beyond the green are sparkling in the sun.

What better day to tee off from one of Northwest Florida's long roster of public golf courses, many of them nestled close to the Gulf?

Up north, the cold bite of winter has set in. Down in South Florida, where flattened courses sport manmade lakes and scrubby pines, it's still hot and humid — and not nearly as scenic.

"The Gulf, the pine trees, the oak trees with the hanging moss — from the standpoint of being naturally beautiful, nothing beats Northwest Florida," says Kenny Knox, who attended Florida State University on a full golf scholarship and has three PGA tour victories to his credit.

Across the region, tourists, local residents and business leaders — yes, deals are still often sealed with a handshake on the 18th green — flock to the local golf courses year-round.

And now there is a move under way to tell the area's golf story to the world through an official Northwest Florida Golf Trail that will highlight the best that the region's public courses have to offer and encourage tourists to "Golf THE Beach."

"We're simply trying to get courses to realize that if you want to increase your business we need to get the word out," says Nick Watson, general manager of the Santa Rosa Golf and Beach Club, adding that the golf-trail idea is still in its early stages.

Getting the message out is particularly important now, in light of the scheduled May 2010 opening of the new Northwest Florida-Panama City International Airport and the region's focus on luring more Northern and European visitors to the area.

But what would particularly attract outsiders to play golf here? To find out, *850 Magazine* asked Knox, who lives in the Jefferson County town of Monticello and plays on the PGA's senior circuit now, to pick out what he considers the top 18 golf holes on Northwest Florida's public courses, which are open for anyone to play.

His favorite? Hole No. 2 at Panama City Beach's Hombre Golf Club. Rounding out his top four: Camp Creek, Hole No. 17; Emerald Bay, Hole No. 8; and Summerbrooke, Hole No. 17.

Hombre's 457-yard Par 4 is one of the most challenging holes at the PGA Qualifying School, which the course hosts each November.

"It is one of the best golf holes, private or public, anywhere in the world," Knox says. "There's a lake in front of the green, which is an extremely small target that slopes from the back to the front. The wind off the Gulf is in your face, and you need a heroic carry. A lot of people don't want to play it."

Here is a closer look at Kenny Knox's Dream 18 public golf course holes in Northwest Florida. >>



Kenny Knox