



The new model at the
**OLD
BARNWELL
CLUB**

By Kim Fernandez, CAE

A new kind of private club marrying championship-quality golf with a foundation of inclusivity is taking shape in Aiken, S.C.

The Foundation

From the moment you arrive, you'll feel it. Warmth and welcome. Kindness. A spirit of camaraderie and healthy competition. A genuine curiosity and care for you—and your golf game.

—*OldBarnwell.com*

Schreiber grew up playing public courses and caddying at a few clubs around Chicago; his father, who grew up without much, and later worked in commercial real estate, didn't join a club until later in life. "My friends were all members of those clubs," Schreiber remembers, "I was caddying, which I think gave me a different perspective." Schreiber's mom stayed home to raise eight children and the couple's success allowed for privilege; he graduated from Vanderbilt and then Northwestern before going into sales and marketing and eventually co-founding and helping grow and sell a successful software-as-a-service startup.

"My mom and dad have had incredible success," Schreiber says. "There's no chance I'd be able to consider something like [Old Barnwell] if I hadn't had that privilege."

But his particular career path has its own roots, and those, Schreiber says, came from his years as a caddie at Old Elm Club.

"I was about 14 years old, and I used to caddie for D.C. Searle, who was a pharmaceutical giant, and Chris Galvin, who was CEO of Motorola in its heyday," he remembers. "In any other scenario, there would be security between me and those people, but I got to talk to them, learn who they were, occasionally ask questions. For a 14-year-old kid, that was the world."

He grew up, went to college, eventually found success in venture-backed start-ups, and then—"this is the part of the story I don't like telling," he says—found himself married with a young child, a lot of money and a substance addiction.

Nick Schreiber knew what he was looking for, theoretically, on his 50 or so trips to scope land within a six-hour drive of Charleston, S.C. Sandy soil was a must. Hills were good. Interesting potential turns, attractive topography, somewhere a course or three could roll and curve with a nice spot for a clubhouse. But every time he thought he'd found it, the golf course experts he excitedly called to confirm found flaws: you're missing a key piece of topography, the soil's not quite right, it's close but not perfect. And perfect was key.

He thought the 440 acres in Aiken, S.C., about 30 minutes outside of Augusta, Ga., were right when he saw them in December 2020, but he'd thought that before. And, like before, he called course architects Brian Schneider and Blake Conant to have a look with familiar hope and trepidation.

"The land wasn't perfect," Schreiber remembers. "The original parcel was 440 acres, and it was unique—there were kind of three blades of a fan, you'd have to navigate a hole in the middle to get to different aspects, I was worried we'd have to buy additional parcels to make it work." But for the first time in a nearly three-year search, Schneider and Conant were adamant: You have to buy this. So he did, adding another 130 acres for a total of 575.

Those 575 acres of rolling hills, sandy soil, towering trees and now bulldozers and heavy equipment are well on their way to becoming Old Barnwell, a private club Schreiber and the team he's carefully assembled hope will transform both golf and, perhaps, the idea of private clubs themselves, offering world-class play, opportunity and a love of the game to people who've never considered picking up clubs, much less being part of a club. Everyone, top-down, general manager to caddie, and every member on the roster, has to buy in to what he's doing, too, before becoming part.

Physically and philosophically, every detail of Old Barnwell was crafted to be groundbreaking.





Founding member Izzy Dawood with Old Barnwell founder Nick Schreiber on part of a future club golf course.

He successfully completed rehab and then started thinking—deep thinking. “My wife is an attorney and when we moved to Charleston seven years ago, she started working for a nonprofit law firm. The amount of fulfillment she gets from that is remarkable. It became clear I had to change. I grew up with every privilege imaginable. What is it I want to do?”

That reshuffling of priorities, his own background, and a love for the game of golf led to the idea for Old Barnwell: a private club that would offer championship-quality golf, camaraderie and opportunity to both traditional club members and people in the community who’d never considered anything about the club lifestyle.

The Schreibers set a priority. “If we’re going to do this, we’re not doing it for the money. We want to do this for something else entirely,” he says. “There’s a bigger role private golf can play in these people’s lives, and that’s what this club is going to do.”

The Club

Our mission is simple: To bring people together through golf.

—Old Barnwell member prospectus.

When Old Barnwell is completed, it will feature two carefully designed 18-hole golf courses, a 12-ish hole kids’ course designed for families, a driving range, a 5-acre pond stocked with fish, outdoor movies, a beautiful clubhouse, lodging for members and guests, a treehouse, club tournaments, family weekends, charity events and, perhaps most importantly, a built-in sense of opportunity and potential discovery around every corner.

“That’s all I talk about,” laughs Schreiber. “We can create a sense of discovery.”

That goes beyond members; Old Barnwell and its members will be committed to bringing in the community as well:

- A youth caddie program sponsored by Evans Scholars designed to offer kids a paying job, an introduction to golf and the opportunity to build a network like Schreiber found caddying at Old Elm. Designed to also teach honor, integrity and values, the caddie program will offer training and support to children who’ve never played golf before. “We’re already talking to schools, churches and organizations to find good candidates,” says Schreiber.
- Sponsorship of four aspiring female golfers per year, offering 12 months of local housing and unlimited access to the club for practice, play and networking.
- Partnerships with two historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The men’s and women’s golf teams at Paine College, Augusta, Ga., will have access to Old Barnwell’s courses and facilities for practices, while 10 to 12 students from Paine and Voorhees College, Denmark, S.C., will have the opportunity to build a professional network with members and employees alike. An accounting student, for example, might have lunch or play nine holes with a member who has experience in the field.
- A paid maintenance apprenticeship program for local high school seniors to work with maintenance staff for one year after graduation.
- Monthly golf clinics for local children, including transportation to and from the course, lessons, meals, and the chance to meet members and staff.

Other programs are in development but they're all designed to accomplish the same goal: use golf to develop professional networks that can kick off or enhance career success for those for whom nothing is guaranteed. To do that, golf will be largely played with a sense of fun, learning and improvement; you won't have to be a fantastic golfer to play here. Inclusion is the name of the game, on all fronts.

"For folks without means, a professional network is extremely hard to come by," says Schreiber. "They don't get 'My dad knows so-and so,' or 'My mom is friends with this person.' We're going to provide that access. There's research that says if you have friends who are wealthier or have more opportunity than you when you're a teenager, that's a way to give yourself an opportunity. We're going to do that here. It doesn't cost us money. It just requires our members to say they want to participate in that." Which is already exactly what they're doing.

The Members

We're creating programs that empower, invite, and celebrate people and communities historically underrepresented in the game of golf—to create new traditions and a legacy that belong to everyone.

—*OldBarnwell.com*

When it opens in fall 2023, Old Barnwell's membership will cap at around 225 with lower-than-normal initiation and annual fees in tiers that include local, national and under/over 40. Members must commit to the club's mission, agreeing to make themselves available to play and connect with community members participating in the club's caddie, apprenticeship and other programs. Schreiber worried a bit that finding those people might be a challenge. He needn't have.

"We've been very lucky," he says. "I thought if we had 125 members, we'd be in a good position to really focus on our partnerships and programs. We're already at 170 members and another 50 have expressed interest. I don't know how that's possible but here we are."

Izzy Dawood, chief financial officer at Paysafe Group, knows exactly how it's possible.

"I grew up in Dubai," he says. "There weren't too many golf courses then. Like Nick, I didn't grow up in country clubs. I picked up golf after college but probably didn't know what a country club was until later in life—now I know that would have helped my career. You are who you hang around with."

He moved to the U.S., realized clubs were a terrific way to grow friendships and networks while having fun, and joined a few as he moved around the country. "I never bought homes,



What will be the 8th tee box.

OLD BARNWELL AND ITS MISSION

From Old Barnwell's Membership Prospectus:

Our mission is simple: to bring people together through golf.

There are few activities that have the power and opportunity to bring people together, regardless of race, gender, age, or creed, in the way that golf does. At its best, golf unites us with nature, connects us to others, feeds our competitive spirit, and inspires our imagination. Old Barnwell is a celebration of these elements, and of all that is exciting, affirming and joyous about golf. Through our mission, our membership, and our community, our goal is to create new traditions and a legacy that belong to everyone.

The Ideal Member

In alignment with our mission, Old Barnwell aims to serve a broad range of golfers and their families. And while all are welcome to apply for membership, there are certain key criteria that define our target member. We are looking for members who:

- Believe in and support our mission.
- Respect other members, guests and employees.
- Want to be a part of a community that goes beyond golf.
- Enjoy meeting (and playing with) new people.
- Value an unrushed but brisk pace of play.
- Understand that welcoming beginners & families is a pro, not a con.
- Appreciate exceptional golf course design.
- Enjoy alternate formats (match play, foursomes, etc.).
- Want to improve and help others improve.



Sarah, Henry and Emmett Schreiber enjoying the club's construction.

but I joined golf clubs. They were somewhere to relieve stress, I felt invited and welcomed and comfortable, I made friends and contacts.”

He jumped at a founding membership to Old Barnwell specifically because of its mission. “Why are you doing this,” he says. “What’s the driving force? It’s not making money or getting rich, but leaving a legacy well after we’re gone. We all have the opportunity to play at nice clubs with exclusive memberships. At the end of the day, I’m part of something that’s actually helping other people.”

Schreiber has taken great care to craft his membership with people like Dawood, who are as committed to the mission as they are to the game.

“Out of those 170 members,” he says, “there are probably 10 who, when push comes to shove, maybe we missed the mark. Maybe they’re not as committed to the mission as we hoped. It’s inevitable. But that doesn’t mean we’re not just as committed to striving for that goal.” He and the club’s director of partnerships spend time with prospective members on the phone, through Zoom and in person, getting to know them.

“In each case,” he says, “if you haven’t expressed real interest in the mission or if we ask what about the mission speaks to you and you give a ho-hum answer, we set that application aside. We ask, ‘Are you committed to being part of the mission of Old Barnwell,’ and I want them to say yes.”

The Experience

Old Barnwell exists to celebrate all that’s exciting, affirming, and joyful about golf, with a modern approach that serves all kind of players, families, boon companions, and connoisseurs of the game.

—OldBarnwell.com

Schreiber meticulously assembled the club’s professional team, from selecting Schneider and Conant as architects to his pros, his maintenance staff, his partnerships team, and everyone else at Old Barnwell. He got some attention when John Lavelle, whose pedigree includes stints at Augusta National and Congaree, signed on as director of agronomy, and says it was both Lavelle’s professional expertise and his interest in the club’s mission that sold him.

“I can’t overstate how important he’s been to our club,” Schreiber says. “He brings a wealth of experience from some of the best clubs in America and has an unbelievable management style. People say it’s difficult to get employees right now—we are not having that problem. Everybody wants to work with John.”

For his part, Lavelle says Old Barnwell was clearly a great opportunity.



Course routing, art by Don Placek (Renaissance Golf Design).

“Nick’s passion was one of the things that brought me in,” he says. “There’s a charisma about him.” They met through friends, played golf together, and realized they made a great team.

“It’s certainly unique,” he says of the club. “We’ve got a one-of-a-kind mission going here. Who wouldn’t want to be part of something like that?”

Schreiber is careful to stress the importance of every person on the Old Barnwell team—staff, members, everyone—when it comes to the club’s success. The mission has to integrate with fantastic golf and opportunities for fun for everyone. That’s critical—and his 10-year goal speaks to it.

“Ten years from now, I would love if Old Barnwell was known for its golf,” he says. “Wouldn’t it be great if in 10 years, a whole bunch of clubs were doing what we’re doing and we weren’t an outlier? I’m not saying I don’t want to be known for the impact we’re trying to make, but wouldn’t it be great if more clubs were working like we’re working so it wasn’t as unique? Then we could be known for our golf.” **CD**

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Old Barnwell founder Nick Schreiber will speak about his club, its philosophy, golf, opportunity and inclusion at the 2023 National Club Conference, May 7–9, The Union League Club of Chicago.

Details to come—watch your email!