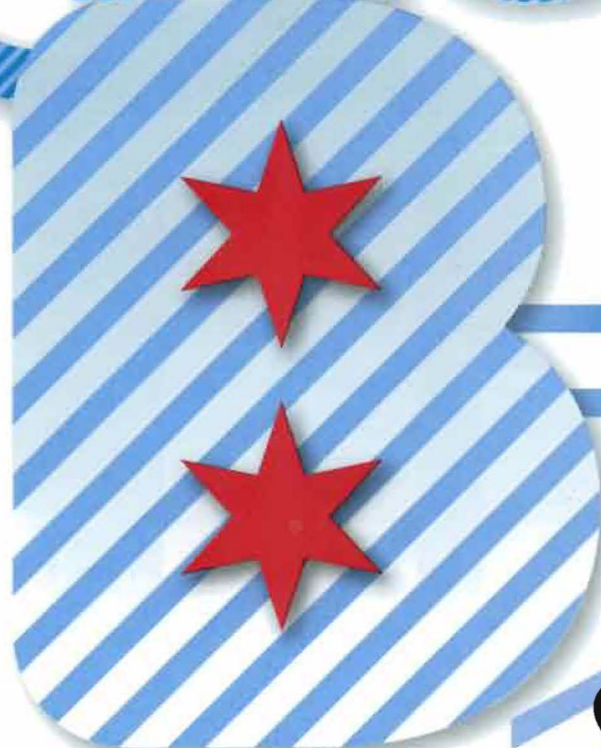


THE BEARS'
JAY CUTLER:
BOMB THROWER OR BOMB?

HOW AN EX-COP
PLANS TO RESCUE
CHICAGO'S SCHOOLS

Chicago



OF CHICAGO



AUGUST 2009

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THE BEST OF LIBERTYVILLE

BEST BATTING CAGE DRIVE PERFORMANCE

►► From beer league softball to major league baseball, hitting boils down to the timeless mantra of coaches everywhere: See the ball; hit the ball. Like several other top baseball and softball training facilities in the Chicago area, Drive Performance in Wheeling offers indoor cages that allow for year-round practice at hitting, along with knowledgeable instructors who work in one-on-one or group sessions and use tools such as video to dissect a player's swing. But what sets it apart is its focus on the first part of the batting equation—seeing the ball—using its iTrac Vision Training System. In drills involving a device that shoots tennis balls at speeds up to 150 miles per hour, hitters work on recognizing the speed, rotation, and location of pitches. This year the Mets, Indians, Rays, and Giants are using the system, and some players—among them the 2008 American League rookie of the year, Evan Longoria, and the Mets' star center fielder, Carlos Beltrán—swear by it.

1543 Abbott Dr., Wheeling; 847-229-1009,
drive-performance.com



BEST GOLF HOLE

PUBLIC #16 AT COG HILL GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB COURSE #4 (DUBSDREAD), PAR 4, 456 YARDS

►► If you survive the notoriously brutish 13th hole on Cog Hill's legendary course, site of the 2009 BMW Championship in September, you are rewarded with this beauty. You've got options off the elevated tee: a 3-wood, hybrid, or even long iron. Hit a draw to avoid the cavernous bunkers on the right, but hook it and you're in the jungle. A narrow, elevated green awaits your approach.

12294 Archer Ave., Lemont; 866-264-4455

PRIVATE #12 AT MEDINAH COUNTRY CLUB COURSE #3, PAR 4, 456 YARDS

►► You may have bunker fatigue by the time you get to this stunner, but as the only sand-free hole on the course, it's a welcome respite with its sloping fairway and elevated green protected by an inlet of Lake Kadijah. The course architect, Rees Jones, wasn't shy during his 2002 renovation, but when he arrived at number 12, he said: "Let's go to 13. Why tinker with perfection?"

6 N001Medinah Rd., Medinah; 630-773-1700

Tip of the beanie to Teddy Greenstein,
Chicago Tribune golf writer

* BEST ALFRESCO DINING OUT TO LUNCH IN COOK PARK

The patio at 545 North Bar & Grill stands as the obvious spot for a meal under the sky. But the more communitarian choice takes place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Friday through the end of August in downtown Libertyville, when local restaurants and treat purveyors set up makeshift operations and turn Cook Park into a rollicking outdoor food fest.

* BEST DESTINATION SHOPPING KATHRYN KERRIGAN

A year ago, Kathryn Kerrigan, a 29-year-old Libertyville native and former Lake Forest College basketball player, returned home to set up a cozy boutique featuring apparel and her handcrafted line of women's shoes made in Spain in sizes up to 15.

741 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 847-557-5067,
kathrynkerrigan.com

* BEST THING TO DO WITH KIDS LAMBS FARM

Originally a pet store on State Street in Chicago that gave adults with developmental disabilities a place to work and grow, Lambs Farm is now a family destination with a pet store, farmyard, petting zoo, restaurant, and bakery. Families can spend the day walking through the red barn buildings viewing farm animals, riding the miniature train, and feeding the sheep, lambs, and goats.

14245 W. Rockland Rd.; 847-362-4636,
lambsfarm.org

* BEST PLACE FOR A DIP LAKE MINEAR BEACH

Situated on a small private lake in the middle of town, Lake Minear Beach is a former gravel pit that for the past 52 years has been a spring-fed oasis for families insightful enough to join the local boat club that owns it (just \$150 for the summer). Groomed and sandy, the beach is a tiny stretch of summer bliss.

Oak Spring Road and Appley Avenue;
847-680-8897, lmbeach.com

* BEST BEER MICKEY FINN'S BREWERY

Mickey Finn's is not your average beer bar; it's a serious microbrewery that cranks out an average of 28 different styles of beer over the course of the year. The better-than-average menu of pub grub and steady flow of loyal regulars already foretell a good time, but the always-on-tap house stout—rich, dark, and smoother than Guinness—delivers it.

412 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 847-362-6688,
mickeyfinnsbrewery.com

* BEST PARK INDEPENDENCE GROVE

Part of the impressively large Lake County Forest Preserves, the sprawling Independence Grove offers parky fun of just about any sort humanly (or caninely) imaginable. In it, you'll find a pristine lake, a section of the 31-mile trail connecting Lake Cook Road to the Wisconsin border, 400 feet of sand beach, and a nearby 30-acre park dedicated to off-leash recreation for dogs.

16400 W. Buckley Rd.; 847-968-3499

* BEST NEW RESTAURANT MAIN STREET SMOKEHOUSE

This storefront 50-seater apparently filled a gaping void in the Libertyville restaurant scene, considering that residents bought out its first-day supply of ribs when it opened on Memorial Day. The dry-rub baby back ribs and brisket taste authentic to their respective traditions, and we secretly love the slightly strange appetizer mash-up: the pulled pork quesadilla.

536 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 847-247-4330

