



SHOUN A. HILL/ORLANDO SENTINEL

**Playing through.** Surrounded by golf memorabilia, Rebecca Palmer (left) and Caryn Green enjoy Sam Snead's Tavern in downtown Orlando.

# Tee party hits spot

Diners in downtown Orlando will find above-par options at Sam Snead's Tavern.

I can't believe it has been more than eight years since Sam Snead's Tavern opened in Orlando's MetroWest, a community that's a lot more west than it is metro, but never mind about that right now.

It was back in the summer of '92 that the first SST opened, touted by the owners as the prototype of what they intended to become a national chain of golf-themed restaurants. There were some at the time who scoffed at that idea, secretly tittering to themselves that the place didn't have a chance. OK, I was the only one who tittered. But even though Snead's had good food — and I said as much back then — I didn't think it would go beyond the one location. As I said at the time, who



**Chow HOUND**  
SCOTT JOSEPH

wants to eat with guys who wear lime-green and yellow-checked polyester pants?

But just to show how wrong I can be every eight years or so, Sam Snead's Tavern did succeed. There are now 11 Sneads, mostly in Florida but also in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Ontario, Canada, of all places. But it has taken this long for greater Orlando to get another location, one more metro-ly located than MetroWest. And going along the lines of "when it rains it

pours" — though maybe that isn't a good one to use what with golf cleats being such great lightning conductors — not only did we get a second Sam Snead's, we got a third and there's a fourth under construction. Staggering, isn't it?

The second SST is at 221 Wekiva Springs Road, Longwood. That one is in a renovated space that until last year was a little restaurant called Ashton's, though I think the building may have started life as an Appleby's.

But the new Snead's I'm most excited about is the one that just opened a couple of weeks ago in downtown Orlando at 301 E. Pine St., in one of those big, almost identical high-rises just across Central Boulevard from Lake Eola. That's because I'm hoping that the Sneaders are still making good food and that I'll be able to stop in more often without having to use my E-Pass on the East-West Expressway to get to Metro

West. And I'm really happy that downtown Orlando will have another late-night dining option, as Sam Snead's will be open until midnight during the week and until 2 a.m. on weekends. Yea!

We'll take a closer look at the food in another review in a few weeks — after eight years, we should see if things are still as good as they used to be — but a first bite was encouraging. I haven't tried any of the full dinners yet, but my Sam's burger was pretty good. In fact, it may be Foodie Award material.

One interesting thing about the downtown location is that you can get a good view of Lake Eola — if you stand on your toes and look over the banquettes that were constructed in front of the windows. Whose idea was that? Some hydrophobic interior designer? Anyway, the rest of the decor has that same combination of classy clubroom

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