

## (Re)build it and they will come

**T**here are several reasons to rebuild or remodel a golf course or portions of it.

Probably the number-one reason is to restore the integrity and playability of the golf course.

Wear and tear by man, machine and the elements take a toll on the turf and the infrastructure like drainage, irrigation and cart paths. All of these processes disfigure the course from its original design.

Advancements in the game itself of-

ten challenge the owners or members of a course to reroute holes, add or eliminate bunkers, add tees, plant trees or just make overall improvements to the facility to make it attractive to new members and remain competitive in the marketplace.

If your club is thinking of rebuilding or remodeling your course, the American Society of Golf Course Architects has several free brochures that may be of some help in your planning: *Selecting Your Golf Course Architect*; *Remodeling Your Golf Course* and *Golf Course Devel-*

*opment Planning Guide*. These brochures may be obtained by writing or calling the ASGCA at 221 LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 6061; (312) 372-7090.

The Golf Course Builders Association of America also has valuable information in its cost and estimating guide. Contact the GCBAA at 920 Airport Rd. #230, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; (919) 942-8922.

Finally, the National Golf Foundation has several useful publications. Contact the NGF at 1150 S. U.S. One, Jupiter, FL 34477; (561) 744-6006.

### The Forest Country Club: Starting over from scratch

BY BILL KILPATRICK

*Freelance Writer*

It isn't often a decision is made to tear up an existing golf course and start over again more or less from scratch.

But that's what the board of directors of Fort Myers' The Forest Country Club decided to do with the 36-hole golf course community's Bobcat course, the result being that as of May 5 of this year it was shut down for what was billed as "an extensive \$1.5 million renovation."

The line between completely rebuilding a golf course and renovating it can be pretty thin, and in the case of The Forest, the Bobcat project is right on the razor's edge. Just about everywhere you look you see and hear the roar of bulldozers and graders, see and hear the ponderous clanking of massive mechanical shovels, see and hear the crunch of ditch-digging backhoes.

"This is the first major overhaul the course has received since it was built over 10 years ago," said The Forest superintendent Rick Tatum, the man ramrodding the project. "We're leaving Nos. 10 through 13 pretty much as is except for enlarging the greens, but the rest of the course is being extensively worked over."

When completed, the revised Bobcat



*Going up* — When completed, rebuilding project at The Forest will have used 42,000 cubic yards of fill to raise the level of 10 of the Bobcat course fairways, some by as much as 2 feet as shown here on No. 2. Photo by Bill Kilpatrick.



*Big noise* — The roar, thump and clank of heavy construction equipment has been a summer-long constant on The Forest's rebuilt Bobcat course. Looking back toward the tee, the fairway on No. 16 has been recontoured, its drainage improved. Photo by Bill Kilpatrick.

will feature bigger greens, some of which have been enlarged as much as 50 percent. In addition to being bigger, they'll be somewhat unique.

"USGA specs for a green call for a four-inch layer of gravel," said Tatum, "but we've eliminated the gravel to facilitate percolation of water down through the soil.

"The purpose of the gravel is to enable a green to hold water, but when you're in a geographic area that gets 100 inches of rain a year, holding water isn't exactly something you have to worry about. If you allow the water to be held you risk algae problems, especially in shady areas. Besides, with our sprinkler setup any of our greens can get all the water they need."

Tatum added that doing away with gravel and thus facilitating percolation of water also helps get rid of salt in a soil profile.

Also certain to be noticed on the revised Bobcat will be enlarged and leveled tees.

"The tees will be pointing down the fairways, too," said Tatum, adding that with the Bobcat course such wasn't always the case.

Although some fairways and greens are being recontoured, the changes implemented by Sarasota golf course designer Chip Powell and Clearwater contractor MGI, Inc. are subtle as opposed to dramatic. For example, golfers familiar with the Bobcat of the past will notice that on some greens putts that once curved right will instead curve left. Otherwise, the course will play pretty much as it always has.

But if it's drama you crave, consider that the levels of 10 fairways are being raised to improve drainage, an undertaking that required moving 42,000 cubic yards of fill. The fill was extracted from what will — when the project is completed — be seven acres of lakes, some of them new, some extensions of existing lakes.

One of the most dramatic features of the project overall is raising the level of No. 2 fairway by two feet.

"That fairway's always been a problem," said Tatum. "During the rainy season it often was under water, or if not under water then too soggy for a golf cart to drive over. It was a pain to mow, too."

He said that when all the new drainage

is in place and all grading is completed, the fairways and tees would be planted in GN-1, so-called Norman grass. The greens will be planted in Floradwarf.

"We've given the Floradwarf a thorough test and like the way it performs," said Tatum. "It's resilient, has a high density, and can be mowed to a lower height, as low as 1/10th-of-an-inch. In fact, mowed to that height it has greater density than Tifdwarf mowed to 1/4-inch. They claim it has density comparable to bentgrass, and in every test we've conducted here at The Forest, the claim seems to be right on the money."

Tatum is more than enthusiastic about the potential of the new ultradwarf grasses, and says it's only a matter of time until all South Florida greens are planted in one of the new varieties.

"They grow in faster and they mature faster," he said. "In fact, they could be the best thing that has happened to courses down here in 30 years."

Southwest Florida being where and what it is, Tatum's admittedly overriding concern throughout has been the weather; considering the extent of the work being done, the region's rainy season isn't exactly conducive to the rebuilding of an entire golf course.

"Our target date to open is November 1," said Tatum. "Right now we're about halfway. But if we get a few breaks from the weather, we should be right on schedule."

## Rebuilding projects done in-house

BY JOE ONDO, CGCS

*Winter Pines Golf Club*

### Greens

The decision to rebuild our worst greens was based on several factors:

(1) Some of the greens with Tifgreen 328 surfaces were acceptable when

The Central Florida GCSA and GCSAA  
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