Mount Hawley sports new look

PEORIA, Ill. — Mount Hawley Country Club, which turned 75 years old this summer, had seen better days.

"The members felt, quite rightly, the course simply didn't have many memorable holes," explained architect Bob Lohmann. "The greens had no contour, no pizzazz. The bunkers were in disarray. It was just a worn out private club."

Lohmann Golf Designs (LGD) of Marengo, Ill., has completed its full-scale renovation here. With construction assistance from Lincoln, Neb.-based Landscapes Unlimited, Lohmann directed reconstruction of all 18 greens, regrassed all 18 fairways with bentgrass, created five new ponds, improved the tee areas, added appropriate fairway bunkering and installed of a new irrigation system.

"This wasn't so much restoration as it was complete renovation," explained Lohmann, vice president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "The putting surfaces at Peoria were very small, less than 4,000 square feet, and some had slopes of 6 to 8 percent," Lohmann explained. "This is mainly a bunker restoration project. We'll redo a great many greenside bunkers, adding bunkers and shape around the greens, and recontouring the fairways.

"We'll redo a great many greenside bunkers where they are — we won't be moving them down the fairway," said Lohmann. "Instead we're concentrating on the creation of strategy off the tee. It's a very short golf course. With some fairway contours we can toughen it up and provide the player better shot values without moving the bunkers."

The course is 100 years old and the greens were just worn out.

"After consulting with the USGA [U.S. Golf Association], the members decided to completely rebuild them. We also convinced them to do them all at once. If we do three or four greens at a time, often we hear complaints like, 'They don't play like the old greens.'

"Well, of course they don't. It's the transition period that invites the comparison. By doing them all at one time, the renovated surfaces have the same style and play consistently."

Lohmann Golf Designs has also been retained to provide more minor restoration and renovation services at Calumet CC in Homewood, Ill., and Kankakee (Ill.) CC.

"Calumet is supposed to have — quote-unquote — 'Donald Ross features' on it. But it's been recontoured and fiddled with several times," Lohmann explained. "This is mainly a bunker restoration project. We're leaving most of the bunkers where they are, but we will restore them to the Ross-style. Currently, they're best described as big blobs of sand."

In Kankakee, LGD will perform similar tasks: Moving bunkers, adding bunkers and shape around the greens, and recontouring the fairways.

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True to his disdain for mounding and other artificial effects, there is very little earth being moved, except from three new ponds and a driving range. As a sidelight, the 300,000 cubic feet of dirt from the ponds and the range are being used to create another 40 feet of elevation on the top of the resort's ski hill.

In addition to Palmer, there are resort courses by Jack Nicklaus, Arthur Hills, Robert Trent Jones Sr., Tom Fazio, Gary Player, Tom Doak and Rick Smith within a 40-mile radius of Shanty Creek.”