

Holanda wraps up renovation work early

By ANDREW OVERBECK

NEWTOWN, Pa. — Superintendent Rick Holanda here at Aronimink Golf Club has taken advantage of a warm, dry winter to wrap up the final phase of a Donald Ross restoration and renovation project a month ahead of schedule. Architect Ron Prichard and golf course builder McDonald & Sons oversaw the work, which was done to prepare the layout for the 2003 Senior PGA Championship.

Over the past two years, the course's greens, tees and fairways were reshaped and rurfed with bentgrass and all of the bunkers have been restored to their original Donald Ross design.

Holanda, who came to Aronimink two years ago after stints at Chestnut Ridge Country Club in Lutherville, Md., and Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., has plenty of renovation experience.

"At Chestnut Ridge we rebuilt all the bunkers in-house over two years and at Merion I was involved with the conversion of the fairways," said Holanda. "That helped prepare me for the work at Aronimink."

While Prichard drew up a master plan for the club back in 1995, it didn't go into full effect until Holanda came on board.

REACTIVATING THE MASTER PLAN

"We reactivated the plan and the first stage was to convert to bentgrass and reshape greens, tees and fairways. The greens had been rounded off over the years and we enlarged them by 25 percent to regain the corners that had been lost. We also squared off the tees and recontoured the fairways and made them much wider. We now have 31 acres of fairways compared to 26 acres before the work."

Holanda removed the *Poa annua* greens with methyl

bromide and the *Poa annua*, ryegrass and bentgrass fairways and tees with Roundup. The greens have been replaced with A4 bentgrass and the fairways and tees are L-93 bentgrass. The areas between the tees and fairways are planted with ryegrass, which Holanda said provides striking contrast. All of this work was completed in 2000.

This fall and winter, Holanda tackled the bunker restoration. "We reshaped them and relocated them back to the Donald Ross design. We have made some of them deeper and added grass faces."

The pond in front of the 10th green that had been filled in back in the 1940s was also restored.

"Apparently the green committee took the pond out during World War II because a lot of golf balls went in there and the members didn't have money to

waste on balls," Holanda said. "We have put it back in and it makes the hole much stronger."

All the work went off without a hitch, even with stronger than usual levels of winter play.

"Ron Prichard came out every week to work with us and give us new field drawings, and McDonald & Sons did a great job keeping a low profile," said Holanda. "We didn't work on more than two holes at a time."

PREPARING FOR THE PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

With the restoration work wrapping up, Holanda is looking

forward to getting the course into shape for the Senior PGA Championship next June.

"Our goal is to manicure the golf course and get it into tournament condition. We need a winter with lots of snow so I can take it easy because we have been working a summer schedule in the wintertime for the last two years," he said. "But it has been worth it. I am ready to turn the course back to the members and let them enjoy it because they have been very supportive and a great team to work with."

Continuity aids reconstruction

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layouts. Therefore it is important to observe the course in order to create a fair and competitive golf challenge. Fortunately at Willoughby we have been able to have continuity in staff, which has created an opportunity for continued membership satisfaction.

As the developer finished off sales operations and the membership peaked, long-range planning started in an unofficial capacity. I documented all weaknesses such as tee locations, severely contoured greens and obstacles that hindered the flow of play for future planning and compiled a list of all projects that had been completed over the years.

As membership turnover became an issue, we have created a renovation

plan that we will implement this summer. Arthur Hills' firm will be involved with the renovation process, allowing for a continuity in course design.

In next month's issue, I will focus on the components of our planning process that include: identifying priorities, categorizing improvements or modifications, creating membership excitement, and establishing construction time tables. ■



Before and after: Part of the Aronimink renovation project was to restore the pond in front of the 10th green that the green committee decided to fill in during the 1940s.



The 13th green at Willoughby will be renovated because members' balls keep rolling over the existing bulkhead and into the water.

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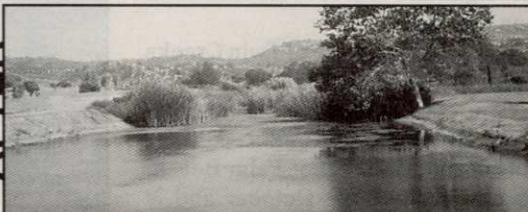


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