

# QUAIL HOLLOW TURNS TOUGH



Soon after it opened in 1961, Quail Hollow Golf Club outside Charlotte, N.C., which has hosted the last six Kemper Opens, began to hear rumblings its course should be tightened up.

In the last six months of 1974, the course has followed a carefully thought-out plan and turned tough.

Today Quail Hollow features a 7,149-yard course in a 250-acre complex. The restyled course boasts 75 traps; better-placed, elevated tees; improved bunkering; tournament spectator mounds; a 15-acre man-made lake; and a rapidly increasing number of trees to provide player penalties.

When the course was built 14 years ago, club members and touring pros had comments like: "a lush, beautiful meadow" . . . "with all those flowers around it, almost too beautiful to play" . . . and "immaculate, perfectly conditioned."

But some static began to pepper the comments: "it's a wide-open

course" . . . "those long fairways are like bowling alleys" . . . "the greens are so slick in the morning a squirrel could go ice skating on the" . . . "a gorilla couldn't play this hole" . . . "not enough trees to provide hazards."

"I don't know whether there was farmland there previously," course superintendent Robert L. Mashburn, Jr., told GOLFDOM, "but the course lacked trees in the right places and it was too open." The course was long and difficult for the high handicapper, Mashburn said, yet the low handicapper found when he visited other clubs his handicap was not accurate. And the final negative was the fact Kemper pros were turning in some of their lowest scores at Quail Hollow. One pro toured the course at 18 under.

"The problem, to put it plainly, was the course needed more trouble," Mashburn said. The membership agreed. After two years of planning, the club authorized improve-

*The 18th hole at Quail Hollow in North Carolina, completely remodeled with new bunkers and spectator mounds added for better viewing during the Kemper Open.*

ments to start right after the sixth Kemper Open last June. Greens chairman Jack Christ said the revamping was undertaken not because of the low scoring by Kemper pros, but to make the course more playable and pleasant for the members.

Tom Jackson, earlier an architect with the firm of George Cobb who designed Quail Hollow, had opened his own office in Greenville, S.C. The club appointed him the architect for the new look. "Right from the start, we did something that was very helpful," Mashburn said. "Before plans were drawn up, the club committee, our pro Jim Hood, Jackson and I had meetings, talked out everything and were all in agreement about the changes in advance of the actual design. I think this saved us a lot of energy, time and money.

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"For example, I was able to convince the architect not to design traps with such steep sides, because we would have to get expensive new equipment to maintain them. So instead he put a more gradual slope into the sides which we can handle with our present equipment."

Basically, the plan was to add a new system of bunkers, tees and tighten up the unusually open layout. Especially important was the strategy to move more trees closer in to the fairways and also to buy and plant major trees to create hazards

in play. Right after the June Kemper, the tightening got underway.

Immediately, Mashburn faced several problems. "One was the weather," he said. "To get enough hot weather in North Carolina to grow new turf, I had only about six weeks between the Kemper and about August 1 to get the ground to heal.

"And frankly, we had a little trouble with our equipment because of some hard rains. We needed fairly dry ground to use the bulldozers." Nevertheless, by taking advantage of every possible working day, Mashburn met his timetable and got the turf in.

Mashburn said another problem he faced was to do all the work with his existent year-round crew of 13, except for drivers of the construction bulldozers he rented about six times during the summer. Sitting in his office in the two-story maintenance building and consulting his scheduling board, Mashburn had to constantly plan the crew's schedule and instruct them in remodeling procedures that were new to them.

To help hold costs down, Mashburn planned and supervised the removal of many trees on the outskirts of the course to more strategic places to provide hazards. When major trees were needed, he carefully selected them from a nearby nursery. This careful attention paid off because he had a high percentage of successful tree planting without losses. In overhauling the course the only extra equipment Mashburn bought was a Vermeer tree spade "which has done a real good job for us," he said.

Another problem was that the course is played by the membership



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year-round because of the good weather in the area. "We shut down only a day or two in January and February because of storms," Mashburn said. "So we did our reconstruction without once closing the course. In fact, on a temporary basis, in only two instances, we made a par five hole a par four, and in one instance, a par four a par three. But the course was played all during reconstruction."

Some of the improvements were:

- About 90 acres of fairway were reduced to about 50 acres.
- In some areas, a 50-yard fairway was cut down to 30 yards.
- To increase the rough in the landing areas and around the greens, Mashburn overseeded the 328 Bermudagrass with Manhattan Rye green grass.
- 200 to 300 trees were added. A number of these were 15- to 20-foot trees from the other side of the fairway. The club also bought thirteen 35- to 40-foot trees.
- Traps increased from 67 to 75. Mashburn and his crew covered up some traps, remodeled others, and



Quail Hollow Pro James Hood: "The remodeling of the course makes you think about your shot a little more . . . it centralizes your target. While not every member likes it, there has been remarkably good acceptance. We think we did what we started out to do — not make a monster, but a fun course."

built some new traps. The renovation on the old traps, which were fairly shallow and mostly oval, made them deeper, more free-form, and with more aesthetic appeal.

- Transplanted trees, plus one major tree added on the 9th hole.
- Major remodeling occurred on the 15th hole, a dogleg par five. The new-look hole now includes two large fairway bunkers in the landing for tee shots on the right side. And revamping the second shot area provided three more bunkers and spectator mounds behind that green, where only one had been previously.
- The 16th hole had some dramatic remodeling, including a new

tee, which was moved to the right of the old one but back into the tree line. "So the drive will have to be accurate," Mashburn said. The remodeling crew added a fairway trap and lengthened the hole to 415 yards, an increase of 40 yards.

• The 18th hole also had a significant overhauling, including two bunkers added on the right side of the fairway near the tee shot, and three traps around the green where none had existed before. Spectator mound were built behind the 18th green.

The club plans about two more years of construction, mainly on the first nine, perhaps bringing the lake into more play. □

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