

## The Benefits Of Enhanced Playability

The Club at Ravenna  
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*Reducing both the number and size of bunkers at Ravenna helped improve the player experience and reduce maintenance costs.*

### Issue

Playability was an issue for The Club at Ravenna due to the mountainous terrain, narrow playing corridors, excessive bunkering and severely undulating putting surfaces. The golf course also had numerous bunkers located in areas that penalized higher-handicap golfers. The course was described as intimidating and difficult by both prospective members and guests, a reputation that became an impediment to gaining new club members. The bunkers were also difficult and expensive to maintain on a regular basis.

### Action

Ravenna's team engaged Golf Course Architect Kevin Atkinson to develop a plan for creating a more enjoyable golf experience while modifying the Jay Morrish design to be more sustainable for routine maintenance. Atkinson recommended selective bunker

removal, maintaining green speeds that were more appropriate for the course, removing trees and shrubs that interfered with slightly errant golf shots and creating a “transitional native cut” that would expand the playing corridors. The club also signed up for a USGA Course Consulting Service visit to reach a consensus among course officials and the ownership.

Several items on the plan were low-cost or no-cost solutions to problems on the course. These included maintaining appropriate green speeds, removing trees and shrubs, and mowing native grass areas at a height of 4-6 inches to improve pace of play. For more significant changes, the club purchased several pieces of equipment and created an in-house construction team to make quick work of the bunker removals. Eight crew members worked on the project during the winter months. They brought soil from nearby home sites at no cost and strategically filled bunkers over the course of several seasons. The work proceeded as follows:

Spring 2015 – six bunkers removed, two bunkers reduced in size

Fall 2015 – five bunkers removed, two bunkers reduced in size

Spring 2016 – fourteen bunkers removed, six bunkers reduced in size

## **Results**

Ravenna removed one-third of its bunker acreage during this process, improving playability and reducing bunker maintenance costs by an estimated \$25,000 per year. Additionally, the club saved over \$150,000 in construction costs by performing these projects with an in-house team. The staff at Ravenna did an outstanding job on the project, masking the bunker removals by tying into existing grades and relocating several small trees.

Teamwork between the ownership, architect and staff greatly improved the golf course at Ravenna, putting the club on a path toward sustainability. Ravenna gained 100 new members during the first season following the golf course improvements. The golf course remains challenging for skilled players, but higher-handicap players find the course more enjoyable and far less intimidating than it was in the past.