

Tom Lively -N- Medinah Country Club



Thomas Lively, CGCS.



Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."



The new 17th green, returned to the water's edge.

I think this statement reflects Tom Lively's first couple years at Medinah. The difficulty was the immediate impact of the decision to renovate Medinah's championship course, #3. The opportunity lies in the fact that #3 will be on display for everyone to see at the 2006 PGA Championship.

Once a year, we drive through the gates and past the guard house at Medinah as we enter the grounds for the Midwest Turf Clinic. As we slowly traverse the winding road, we see the 18th green for Course #3 and the adjacent flagpole. Little do we know the changes that have occurred on this course over the last two years!

Medinah #3 has received a major facelift, a renovation from tee to green, from hole no. 1 tee to hole no. 18 green. The only area that remained untouched was the historic flagpole that stands behind the 18th green. The flag on top of the pole waves its approval of the completion of a \$4 million course renovation.

Never before in the history of Medinah #3 had the members felt the need to completely shut down the course. Never, until Tom Lively began his career at Medinah with just this opportunity. Tom's mission was to oversee the complete renovation of one of the preeminent golf courses in the country, Medinah #3. After almost two years of planning and actual construction (from fall 2001 to May 2003), Medinah #3, the championship course, reopened to rave reviews and the PGA was ecstatic with the new look.

The actual process began after the 1999 PGA Championship, when the members expressed the need to foster design continuity on Course #3. Golf

(continued on page 10)

course architect Rees Jones was selected to develop a master plan to renovate #3. The spring and summer of 2001 saw the presentation of numerous proposals to various committees and Medinah membership as a whole. In August of 2001, the final proposal received approval and the renovation process began in the winter of 2001-02.

The initial step was to complete the Arborcom study and determine the extent of time that shade covered the greens. Due to the size, age and quantity of old-growth trees dispersed throughout the course, portions of

many greens received only one to two hours of sunlight per day. This limited amount of sunlight was proving to be more and more detrimental each year. As difficult as it was to approve removal of trees, the members knew this was the best long-term course of action. A total of 235 trees were removed around 16 green sites.

As part of the renovation, seven greens were completely rebuilt. With lack of sunlight no longer an inhibiting factor, the club approved the killing and regrassing of the remaining 11 greens. An additional 50 trees were removed from the

various tee boxes. The purpose was twofold: increase the size of the tees and allow more sunlight to the tees. "These type of reviews and removals will continue on a selected basis," explains Tom.

Originally, Course #3 had 66 bunkers, but this jumped to 72 during the project. The bunker renovation included changes in design, location and elevation, addition or complete removal. The location and presentation of the bunkers were evaluated as to the effect on the professionals as well as playability for the members. Bunker



Photos by Jim Trzinski

The newly remodeled par-3 no. 13, now playable from 244 yards.

positioning will have a major effect on how and where the professionals approach each and every hole. In conjunction with the bunker project, four fairways were regraded, allowing golfers to view the greens from areas that were previously blind.

At Tom's suggestion, several other projects that were not part of the Rees Jones master plan were added to the renovation. The club approved the installation of a new irrigation system and pumphouse for Course #3, replacing the older, outdated system. Approximately 15,000 feet of new drainage tile and piping were installed and connected into an existing system. All cart paths were eventually removed and replaced. New vinyl seawall was installed in several areas where the older steel walls were deteriorating. Tom's staff also laid out 1.3 million square feet of new sod around all the tees, greens and bunkers throughout the course.

Although the yardage increased to 7,508 yards from the previous 7,406 yards, extra length was mainly
(continued on page 13)



A view of par-3 no. 2 from behind the green.



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limited to a few holes. Two major hole changes were a new tee on the first hole, increasing the length from 388 to 435 yards, and a new tee on the par-3 13th hole, increasing the length to 244 yards. However, the most dramatic change was moving the green on hole no. 17 back down to the water. This will provide new challenges for the professionals and a great viewing environment for the fans.

Although Tom is happy with the way the project turned out, he notes, "It isn't without some issues." Despite last year's warm summer, last fall and this spring were very cool and some greens and reconstructed fairway areas took longer than others to grow in. In addition, Tom says, "Because of the amount of work that was done in such a short time period, there will be some areas that will need extra attention through next season." Although Course #3 opened May 30 as scheduled, another month or two with warmer temperatures would have helped.

The bulk of the work may be completed on Medinah #3, but renovations are just beginning on Courses #1 and #2. With the completion of the PGA Championship in 2006, the other two courses will begin to receive the major portion of their facelifts. Rees Jones is expected to be involved with the future renovations of these courses, as well.

In the meantime, this fall other improvements on Courses #1 and 2 are already underway and include the installation of a new pumphouse and irrigation system. New keystone and vinyl seawalls are to be installed in selected areas on each course as well. At the same time, the club is beginning the rebuilding and expansion of the pro shop and gun club.

No doubt about it, the next few years are going to be very busy ones at Medinah as the club continues to prepare to stage the 2006 PGA Championship while undertaking renovations to move forward into the future.



Looking across no. 18 green towards the clubhouse.



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