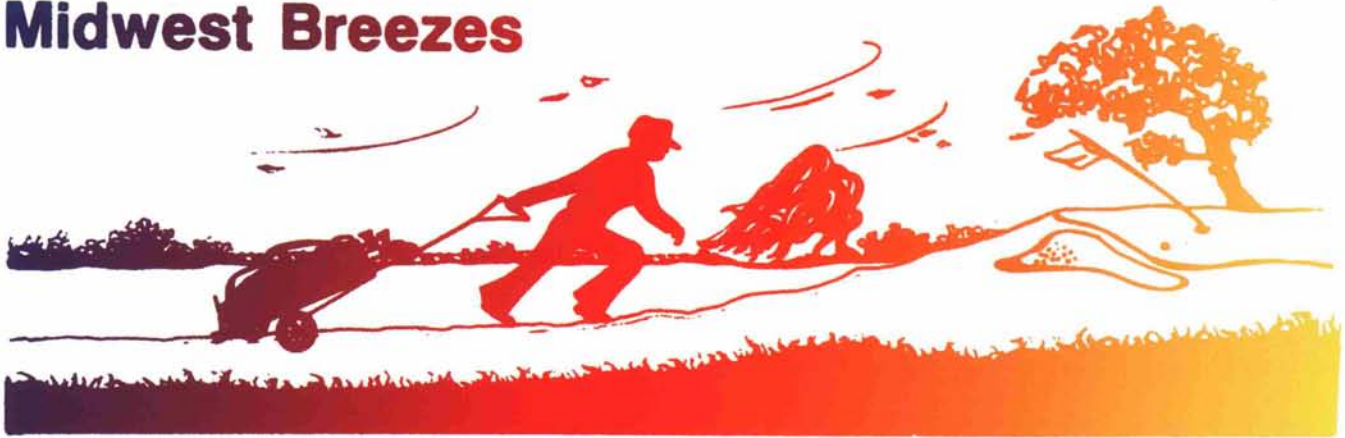


# Midwest Breezes



## Thunderbird Country Club's Rebirth as Makray Memorial Golf Club



On June 17, 2002, Thunderbird Country Club closed its doors to undergo a large-scale renovation and redesign. After two long years and a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of course superintendent Gordon Kappe and grow-in superintendent turned director of agronomy Chris Blake, the course reopened this past Memorial Day weekend under its new name, Makray Memorial Golf Club.

Though much of the old layout is still evident, several significant changes have been made. For starters, the front and back nines have been switched. Also, holes 4, 7, 8 and 17 underwent redesign. The par-3 fourth hole, for example, used to play uphill to the green. The direction of the hole, now reversed, plays downhill from an elevated tee to a narrow 50-yard-long green that is tightly guarded by a pond all along the right side.

To make all of the necessary changes required hauling in 1,000,000 cubic yards of clay. A large portion of that extraordinary amount of fill was used to construct a berm along the entire south edge of the course, which runs parallel to Northwest Highway. The berm, which has been seeded with a wildflower mix, stands 15-20' high and has helped reduce noise coming off the busy road. The rest of the fill was dedicated to extensive shaping and mounding that is featured on the course. In stark contrast to the relatively flat Thunderbird Golf Course, the new Makray Memorial is anything but. The creation of mounding not only adds to the aesthetic appeal of the course, but also should improve drainage.

While all of that fill dirt was coming in, removal of a large amount of problematic peat occurred from the area that is now the 18th hole. All of this peat was hauled to an out-of-play area located behind the driving range and

buried in three holes measuring approximately 90' wide by 70' deep, then capped off with clay.

Also rebuilt were all 18 greens, tees and fairways of the new Makray Memorial. Greens were built with a 90% sand/10% sphagnum peat moss mix and seeded with G-2. Tee construction used a 70% sand/20% sphagnum peat moss/10% humus mix. After careful research, Princeville was the choice for seeding tees and fairways. The primary reason for the selection of Princeville was its excellent heat-tolerance.

Like the greens, tees and fairways, all of the bunkers have also been rebuilt, with some added, some removed, all reshaped and deepened. A mechanical rake cannot get into many of the new bunkers. Therefore, all 31 bunkers will be hand-raked. A three-man crew accomplishes this task each morning. The sand selected for the new bunkers was from Best Sand in Ohio. It is a white sand and drainage and playability have reportedly been good thus far.

Also installed during the construction were a new pump station and irrigation system. The new pump station is a Wadsworth VFD with two 75-horsepower pumps and one 15-horsepower jockey pump. The irrigation system is a modified double-row with approximately 900 Toro 750- and 780-series sprinkler heads and Toro Sitepro central control.

Aside from the course itself, other project highlights include a 60,000-square-foot bentgrass driving-range tee, a new 4,500-square-foot maintenance shop, and a 24,000-square-foot clubhouse that is currently under construction.

—*Brian Mores*  
*Inverness Golf Club*

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