

MIDWEST BREEZES

Charles Anfield, CGCS, *Heritage Bluffs Golf Course*



The Renovation of Dubs Dread

Cog Hill's #4 course, also known affectionately as Dubs Dread has just gone through a major renovation. The course is located in Lemont, Illinois, was designed by Dick Wilson and opened in 1964. It was truly one of the earliest of the upscale public golf courses. At the time, it was a revolutionary idea when public golf meant you were playing beat down "goat ranches" cut with two mowers, one for the greens and one for everything else. Joe Jemsek took a leap of faith and created "private club" conditions for the public. It opened to rave reviews and changed public golf forever.

In 1964, all golfers used wooden drivers and a big hit with a balata covered, wound golf ball was 250 yards. Today's multi-covered, solid core ball, combined with the extra punch of the 460 cc metal driver and players are driving the ball consistently in excess of 300 yards. Rees Jones, known as "The Open Doctor" was brought in to modernize the course but keep the same overall look. The ultimate goal is to stay relevant as a PGA Tour stop and make the course a potential future candidate to host a U.S. Open. Keep in mind, the majority of the play will still be "Joe Public" on Sundays.

I called Ken Lapp, Golf Course Superintendent at Cog Hill Golf Club to talk about the renovation. I have been stopping in to see Ken whenever the Western Open was in town so he knew what he was in for by taking my call. Cog Hill has hosted the Western Open (now the BMW Championship) since 1991. The course took the year off during the renovation. This year the event was held at Bellerive Country Club in St. Louis, Missouri. Ken has been at Cog since 1973, overseeing all 72 holes. I'll save you the math, that's 36 years! He starting working for the Jemsek family when he began his career working for his father at St. Andrews and took the Superintendent position at Fresh Meadows Golf Club where he worked for 18 years. This adds up to working in the golf business for over 60years. I asked him what the secret was to his longevity. He says "I just enjoy what I do". He also attributes a large part of his success to working for the Jemsek family. "They are golf people and they care about golf". He oversees a crew of 75. Many of those people have worked for him since the 80's. "It was different this year not having the tournament, but the renovation got my adrenaline going".

(continued on next page)



We visited in his office while the crew was coming in and wrapping up their day. We then headed out for a hole by hole tour. All of the original routing remains the same. The fairway bunkers were moved out and pinched in, with more bunkers added. The greens were re-contoured and regrassed with an A-1/A-4 combination. The changes to the greens are very subtle and feature some new cupping areas. The green side bunkers were also renovated. More bunkers were added and they are also steeper and deeper. The tees were redone and seeded with Pennncross. More tees were added and all were squared off. A new triple row Toro irrigation system was added and installed by Midwest Irrigation. As another added upgrade, a Subair system was installed for each green. This is the same soil air/water management system found at Augusta National Golf Club.

Wadsworth Construction started the renovation last October. They are in the process of wrapping up some small stuff and completing punch lists. The grow in is just about completed. I saw Paul Carlson and Paul Berger from Central Sod at the CDGA Field Day prior to my tour and they said they

delivered over 45 acres of Tour Ready Bluegrass sod to the site! Ken expects to open the course this coming spring, "it was a good year for a grow in". Ken was very impressed with all of the individual contractors (Rees Jones, Wadsworth Construction, Midwest Irrigation, Hunter, Subair, Lemont Paving) ability to coordinate and work together.

The new yardage will be close to an impressive 7600 yards. The new course slope and rating are currently under review. The BMW Championship will be back to Cog Hill in '09, '10 and '11. I don't think we will see any of the -20 scores the tour players used to post on the old course. As I was leaving I visited with Frank and Kathryn Jemsek. They are very happy with the results of the renovation and are excited about opening the course to the public and pros in 2009.

There is a reason why Cog Hill #4 is called "Dubs Dread". Now, it just got tougher. Check it out. If you do, you better bring your "A" game. **-OC**

