

MIDWEST BREEZES

Charles Anfield, CGCS, *Heritage Bluffs Golf Course*



The Big Fill

I was playing at the MAGCS meeting at Royal Melbourne, and I was paired up with Scott Fischer of Art Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates Design. Scott is a Senior Design Associate and is the lead architect on the Chicago Highlands design project. He is based out of the Toledo, Ohio office. We played that day (not very well) and talked about his work at Chicago Highlands Golf Club. He offered to invite me out to the course the next time I was in town to tour the course and meet the owners.

Scott called me a few days before I was to arrive. We were to meet at 8:00 a.m. I arrived a little early and found a place to park out of the way of the never ending semi truck traffic. I rolled up my windows, knowing by the end of my visit the car would be coated in dust and walked around near the staging area looking for Scott.

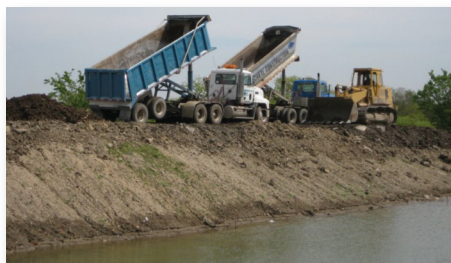
I saw three men arrive and get out of their car. They took off their shoes and put boots on. They saw me and so I walked over. I was greeted by one of the three owners, John Baxter who had a donut in his hand. "You aren't anyone important are you"? I assured him I wasn't and was then offered a donut. John is the legal expert of the team. His gregarious nature lends him the role of membership recruiting. I then met the rest of the ownership team. Tom Healy is originally from the Chicago area but cut his teeth working as a banker in the finance district in Manhattan, New York. Joe Hills is the third member of the team. His knowledge of golf course design and construction comes from his family ties with father, Arthur Hills. Joe and Tom met while in college. This isn't their first "rodeo" having built and developed two other courses in the Washington D.C. area. We visited for a few moments and munched on donuts while

we waited for Scott, Superintendent Michael Heustis, and Mario Salas of Wadsworth Construction to arrive. As soon as we had our posse gathered, Joe took the lead and headed out on the back side down hole #11. John broke off from the group shortly, to give a tour to prospective members.

The landfill site where Chicago Highlands Golf Club is being built (I-294 and 31st St.) has been dormant since 1986. Not so any more. The site has been busy with trucks hauling fill and topsoil to the site. On an average day, 400 semi trucks drive onto the property to dump their load. The daily record is 611 loads. Illinois regulations on fill are very strict. There is a man stationed near the entrance on a scaffold with a truck scale. Each load is carefully regulated for weight and quality—contaminated fill is not allowed.

The fill arrives from all points on the compass. The sources of fill vary but at this point in the construction phase, it is mostly black loamy soil. When it's all hauled in, the total will be more than 1.2 million cubic yards. The goal is to minimize the number of cuts and utilize mostly fill to shape the golf course features.

As we walked along the discussion ranged from additional fill and cut areas to opening site lines and finalizing details of some of the landing areas. Drainage concerns, grassing lines, bunker shapes and path routing were discussed. The mood of the group was upbeat and positive; they seemed confident they had a winner. Mario took notes as we walked along and always had the right question, "What would you like us to change"? Scott had an air of quiet confidence, making notes on a topographic map of the changes.



The eighteen hole course sits on a 272 acre site. The holes are separated by mounding that will be seeded in prairie. It will feature extra wide fairways and some decent elevation changes. All of the perimeter holes have extra high mounding to create inward views and seclude the golf course from the sights and sounds of Interstate 294.


The layout is designed to be challenging yet playable. Being a landfill course, the theme is more links than parkland. It features some holes with some unique design features not found anywhere else in a Chicago area golf course. It will have six sets of tees that range up to 7400 yards. It will have a large driving range and practice area. The Chicago skyline can be seen from many areas on the course.

The course was in the process of having the pump station installed and seeding was soon to begin. The greens will be seeded in A-1 and the fairways and tees will be seeded with Authority. Michael will start to get busier very soon. The target opening date is July in 2009.

I got the hint that my tour was over when the group said good bye and was moving off to paint some bunker shapes and make some final tweaks. Mario went back to attending to his crew installing irrigation pipe. I trudged back to my car across the hot, dusty, moonlike landscape trying to visualize the course with the grass green; bunkers filled with sand and the prairies flowering and mature.

The owners are excited about being in the Chicago market. This will be an all inclusive, resort style private club complete with clubhouse, fitness center, spa, swimming pool, paddle courts, a full size hockey rink, basketball courts, bowling lanes, jogging trail, and tennis courts. So far, the membership sales are strong. Anybody that has an extra \$125K lying around is welcome to apply for membership. Chicago Highlands is going to be a great addition to the local golf scene. This place is big enough to do anything—the sky is the limit. Check it out on the Chicago Highlands website. **-OC**






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