

The 700 members of the Country Club of Orlando gave their golf course a 72nd birthday present: 18 rebuilt greens and 32 new bunkers.



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Grand old lady gets a facelift

BY LARRY KIEFFER

At the Country Club of Orlando, the pride is back.

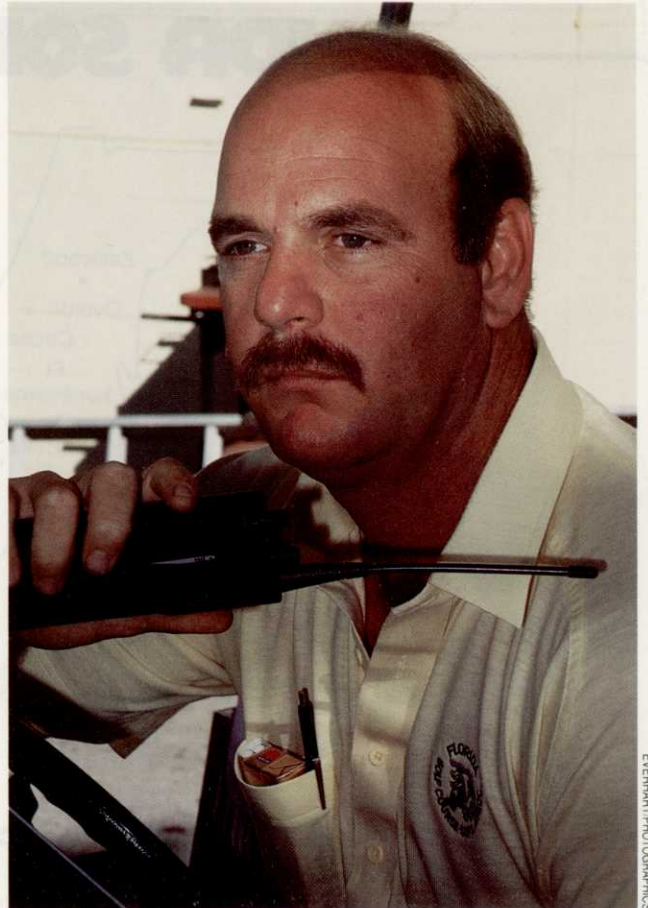
"We paid the price," says Tom Scarborough, chairman of the CCO greens committee. "And every time we walk out onto the golf course, we get our reward."

The price paid by CCO members was \$800,000 and loss of their golf course for five months.

The reward is a decidedly Donald Ross-flavored golf course with 18 completely rebuilt greens that will hold up to summer rains and heavy traffic.

"It was definitely worth it," says Scarborough. "I love playing Pinehurst No. 2 and Seminole, and now I can truthfully say I love playing my home club."

Above, the first hole sports five new bunkers and a chipping area. Bunkers at CCO will be hand-raked from now on, according to Superintendent Cary Lewis, CGCS, right, who helped sell the members on the renovation project. Mature oaks around 12th hole, left, show the dignity with which CCO wears her age.



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For the uninitiated, the No. 2 course at Pinehurst, N.C., is universally acclaimed as the best course by Donald Ross, the architect whose prolific work between 1912 and 1947 still influences American golf course design. Seminole GC in North Palm Beach is another outstanding Ross course.

As reported in the Spring 1990 issue of *The Florida Green*, CCO is credited to Ross although there is no proof that the architect himself ever visited the site when the course was built in 1918. It has enough Ross characteristics, however, that most experts count it among the more than 200 courses built by one of Ross's construction superintendents.

CCO's small greens, built mostly on muck with World War I-era techniques, could not withstand the heavy traffic of the club's 700 golf members. Scars from three major surgeries on the greens, all done with limited budgets, destroyed much of the Ross character.

When it came time for surgery number four, the CCO members decided to follow the advice of superintendent Cary Lewis and architect Brian Silva: Completely rebuild the greens, this time to USGA specifications and rework the surrounds to inject some Ross flavor.

In particular, Silva wanted to put Ross-style chipping areas next to several greens.

Everyone was excited and optimistic as the project was described in that issue last year. How did it turn out?

"The chipping areas came out better than my wildest dreams," Silva said. "Keep in mind that we were not following any kind of a Donald Ross plan. We were just trying to inject the essence of the Ross flavor."

"Fantastic," reports Lewis. "We finished on time, on budget and I have not heard a single complaint from the members."

"I haven't heard a complaint either," says greens chairman Scarborough, "not one complaint since we re-opened the golf course Sept. 28."

"A greens chairman at a club with 700 active golfing members who hasn't heard a single complaint in three

months? That's unheard of!" says Silva. "But then so is just about everything else with this project.

"I have never before been involved in a project of this magnitude with so many people where everybody left his ego at the door. That's really what made it work.

"These were all reasonable, rational, down-to-earth people. From the general manager to the committee members to the superintendent to the contractor to the members, I have never seen such a diverse group so single-minded of purpose.

"It was the greatest work experience I have ever had.

In separate interviews, all three principals agreed that planning and commitment to excellence were the keys to success.

"You must give yourself adequate time to analyze the program and plan the project," says Lewis, who put in 18 months of preparation before construction began. "Take a hard look at your golf course with the idea that you are going to have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to solve some problems.

"Think about where materials are going to be staged, and how the tight areas of your golf course are going to be accessed. The core of a green is 400 tons of material. Moving it can damage the soil, bridges, paths, and so on. And you've got to do it 18 times.

"Make sure you can put the puzzle back together again."

"You must have the right people," says Scarborough. "Even if it's a turn-key operation, the superintendent must have construction experience. And you must have the right contractor. We did not put the job out for bids and I think that's why it was successful."

Silva stresses the single-mindedness of purpose.

"Because we wanted to inject a Donald Ross character at CCO, we all had to be of one mind what Ross character was and what we could do about it," he said.

To that end, Silva, Lewis, contractor Jeff Harstine of Central Florida Turf,

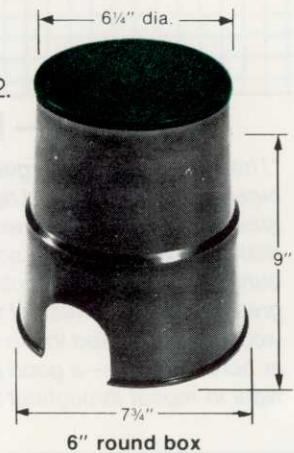
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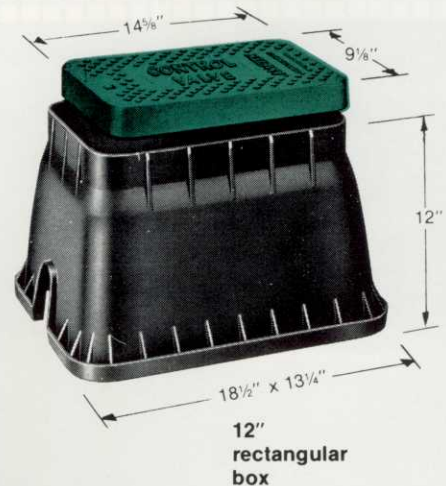
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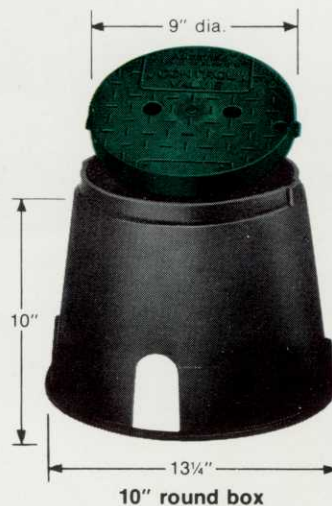
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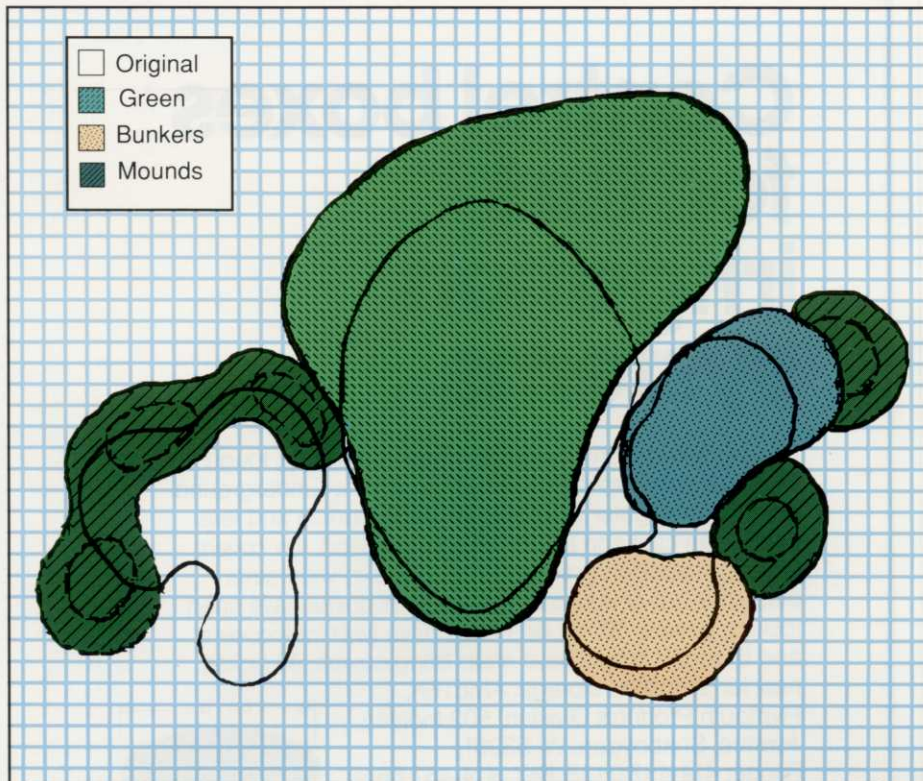


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No. 1 — Lots of Ross character left

"The current green is a good example of a Ross-style plateau green that bleeds off to the left and right rear. The proposed green would restore the green to its former size, extending the green to the left rear, rear and right rear. This would restore some very strategic pin positions. The right front bunker would be re-cut into a Ross pair that sets against the fill pad of the green so as not to restrict visibility of the putting surface. The left bunker would be re-worked into a Ross-style chipping area maintained at fairway or apron height — a good precursor to a classic Ross hazard that we want to repeat throughout the course."

-Brian Silva



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**Before and after
a tale of two greens**

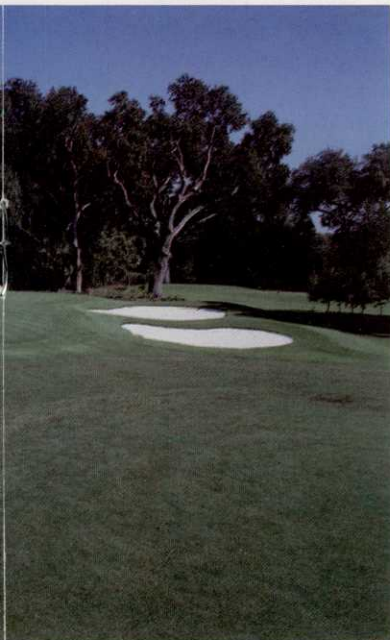
Was the renovation at County...
ful? Judge for yourself. Left is a
renovation with Silva's sketches
of the finished product. Right is
"before" photo of the fifth hole





d after... two holes

ry Club of Orlando success-
photo of the first hole before
s and notes. Below is a photo
re the sketches, notes and
; above is the "after" photo.



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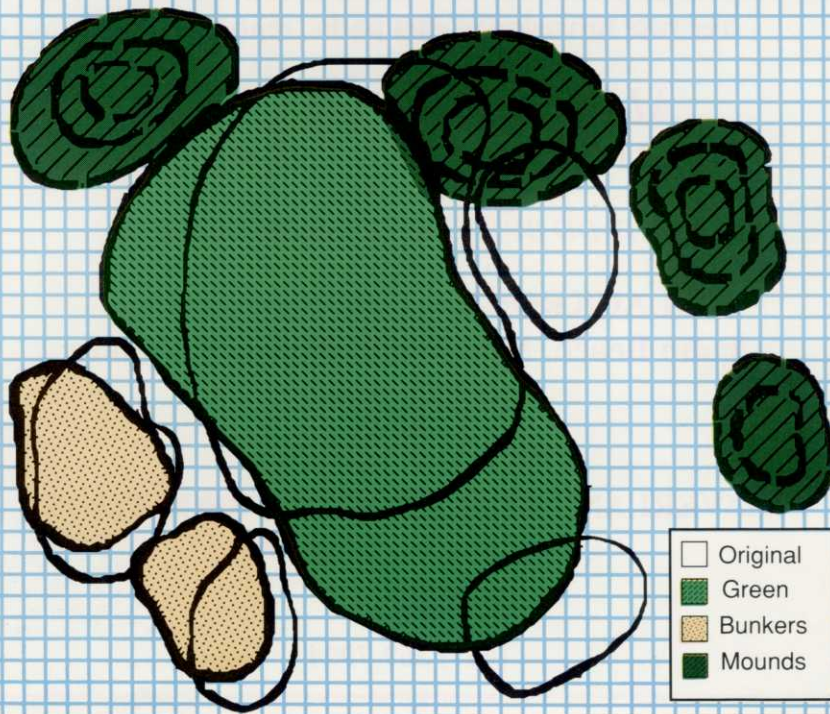


KIEFFER/JANLARK

No. 5 — No Ross character here any more

"The goal here is a completely redesigned green that reflects a couple of Ross characteristics. (See below.) First of all, the left rear portion of the green plays up on a mound and this characteristic, combined with an exaggerated back-to-front pitch on the first half of the green, seeks to improve the shot-holding characteristics of the new green when compared to the old. A Ross-style chipping area, replete with a small area on the right side of the green that directs balls to the close-cut chipping area, adds interest to the green. Bunkers left are re-cut more in a Ross style with the final touch being a Ross approach bunker set some 75 feet short of the green. This bunker is detailed to appear as though it immediately fronts the green and will result in quite a few approach shots falling short as players try to just clear this 'fronting bunker.'"

-Brian Silva



(from page 19)

and CCO head professional Billy Sellers traveled to Pinehurst to play No. 2.

"We learned a lot from that trip," reports Lewis. "One important thing that Billy and I agreed on was that we didn't want undulations as severe as they were at No. 2. A few of the slopes there are at seven percent; the highest

we wanted was four."

"None of this would have been possible without the complete support of the membership," says Scarborough. "They must be willing to make the sacrifice."

Sacrifice is required on two fronts: money and loss of the golf course during construction.

The cost of the renovation does not stop with construction. CCO reopened in September with 32 more bunkers than it had when it closed in April and their configuration makes power raking unfeasible.

"We added a walk mower and increased our maintenance staff by four," Lewis reports. "We probably could have maintained the course with the same number of people but we wanted to increase the level of maintenance to match the quality of construction."

As for closing the golf course, "We could have done it nine holes at a time, but that would have meant being torn up for the better part of two years," Scarborough says. "This way, we were in and out in five months."

Silva concurs. "You can do it nine holes at a time, but it's not like when one nine gets closed for aerification. It's not as easy as it sounds. You will have haul roads cutting across the nine that's open. You'll be able to play golf, but I don't know how much you'll enjoy it."

The project went so smoothly that Lewis had to think a moment before coming up with any lessons learned from it.

"I learned the value of as-builts," he said. "We found a lot of undocumented material underground — irrigation pipes and power cables in particular."

What advice would they give to other clubs contemplating a similar project?

"Plan," says Lewis. "Plan, plan, plan... and everybody must have the same goal. No hidden agendas, no personal monuments. Plan."

"Communicate with the people," says Silva. "Design and construction is easy; administration and communication are the real tasks. Leave those egos at the door."

"Get the commitment from the members to do it right, be prepared to spend enough money to do it right and get the architect, contractor and superintendent who know how to do it right," says Scarborough.

"We paid the price. And when we walked out on that golf course in September, it was worth it."

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