

Super gets head start on Irondequoit remodeling

BY LOIS GREENE STONE

Getting a jump on a possible renovation of Irondequoit Country Club, superintendent Rick Holfoth has his 15-man maintenance crew redoing the Pittsford, N.Y., course's 18 greens.

While waiting for Irondequoit's members to vote this summer on a proposal to renovate, Holfoth decided to get the greens done on his own.

He began the project last fall, "got aggressive about it this spring" and will complete the job by this fall, according to the 22-year-old member of The Finger Lakes Association of Golf Course Superintendents.

Holfoth said the Donald Ross-designed course "lost some character" over the years as the size and shape of the greens and bunkers changed.

"Most of our greens — and it's true of a lot of older courses — became round over the years. Yet they were anything but round when they were first built."

Holfoth theorized the greens lost their shape when employees found it easier to straighten out an edge rather than mow a difficult contour; and during some of the war periods the club may have chosen to reduce the size of the greens to save money on chemicals.

So "redoing" had to begin with "rediscovering."

After consulting with architect Brian Silva of Cornish & Silva in Massachusetts, Holfoth set out to find the original green contours in several ways:

- Taking some of Irondequoit's older members onto the course for their recollections of the former contours.
- Examining the shape and contour of the land to help locate the original fill pads, on which greens are built.
- Locating bunkers and sprinkler heads.
- Searching for peripheral bentgrass on collars and aprons, since the greens have always been bentgrass.

"We're restoring the aprons and rough back to greens" by gradually lowering cutting height and overseeding with Penncross bentgrass on the collars and Pennlinks on the greens, Holfoth said.

"We're adding five to seven pin placements on some greens. We're adding 10 feet to the perimeter on a lot of them."

Some greens will have an additional 1,000 square feet when completed, he said.

Subtle undulations in the raised greens have never permitted a weak approach shot to hold, so restoration won't alter precision.

Holfoth said the Greens Committee's opinion, not his, carries weight on the issue of renovation.

The Greens Committee gives direction and, in this case, the full membership will decide.

"My input is more concerning

whether any redesign will produce a maintenance problem, or a safety concern," he said, "plus questions on cost breakdown of reconstruction work."

But he would like at least to see tee and bunker reconstruction.

"The tees are not level and not big enough. Bunkers have constantly been changed and are not up to quality," he said.

Holfoth added that his crew has done "some tee reconstruction — not redesign — to make them as playable as possible because they're not level. It's a maintenance practice rather than redesign."

Holfoth believes if renovation is



Rick Holfoth

approved, four sets of tees will be built. The course now carries a 75.5 rating for women, versus 70.8 for men. It is difficult for all but the longest hitting women to reach most greens in regulation.

Thirty-six years after the front nine's tight, side-hill construction, the wide back nine, with its creek crossing six holes, was designed by Ross associate J.B. McGovern. It sits next to Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester.

Different construction techniques of greens and tees means Holfoth has to address different soil and management conditions.

The members know shots exe-

cuted on the front nine require planning since side-hill lies on narrow fairways are unforgiving. The superintendent said this layout even involves different drainage and mowing problems.

Holfoth expects added labor would accompany bunker renovation.

The classic Ross green-side bunkers, a combination of grass and sand faces, would be rebuilt. Four- to five-foot bunkers would require hand-raking.

On the other hand, he expects fairway acreage would decrease from 32 to 27 on the 110-acre course.

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