

# Something old ... something new



The 5th hole at The Ledges Golf Club in York, Maine.

## Cape Arundel GC resurrecting Travis' design from 1921

By MARK LESLIE

**K**ENNEBUNKPORT, Maine — Noted architect Walter Travis built Cape Arundel Golf Club here in 1921. George Herbert Walker kept the front nine open during World War II and grandson George Bush, the former president, calls it his home course. Its mere 5,869 yards has beaten up on such luminaries as England's John Majors and Canada's Brian Mulroony, and on such golf greats as Arnold Palmer, Hale Irwin, Doug Sanders and Jose Marie Olazabel.

In July, Fred Couples and Davis Love III visited Bush and played Cape Arundel for a week, shooting a best of 65 in generally calm conditions on a site where winds can ravage a golf game.

"The old girl still holds up," remarked Bruce Hepner, a golf course architect with Tom Doak's Renaissance Golf Design in Traverse City, Mich., who is renovating Cape Arundel.

Calling the course "a great example of architecture," Hepner said it has "the two great variables in golf: putting surfaces and wind. Those are the great equalizers of golf. They will stabilize anybody."

Besides that, Hepner said: "There is quirky stuff here. But that's what I love about these old golf courses. There is character to them. Man has a hard time

The state of Maine is a microcosm of the entire country. New course construction... old course renovation and restoration... nine-hole additions from the Atlantic Ocean to the White Mountains. Great tracks like the Walter Travis-designed Cape Arundel Golf Club and Donald Ross-created Poland Spring Golf Club are being restored. Members at Penobscot Valley Country Club and Augusta Country Club — both Ross designs — are seriously considering restoration work. And at the same time new tracks, like Brad Booth-designed The Ledges Golf Club in York (at left), Dan Maples-designed Dunegrass in Old Orchard Beach (at right) and Clive Clark-created Belgrade Lakes (Maine) Golf Club, have opened.

This abundance of work is keeping course architects, builders and superintendents bustling from East Coast to West. Here we take a look at two particular projects in Maine.



Cape Arundel Golf Club's 18th green complex, with its bunkers and green restored to the way Walter Travis built it nearly 80 years ago.

making character. It's more difficult to make something look natural. Nature is random, very random."

Using old deeds, photographs, aerial photos, and Turn of the Tide magazine stories about Travis and his 16-man crew working here, Hepner has gone far in restoring the course's original greens and returning long-extinct bunkers.

Although not a lot is known about Travis' design philosophy — he was not a prolific writer like George Thomas or A.W. Tillinghast — Hepner said of the

three-time U.S. Amateur and one-time British Amateur champion: "Travis was a great player and one of the great putters of his time. He wrote a book about it, in fact. You see that here [in his design]. You have to have a short game here to be a player. Length has nothing to do with it. Equipment hasn't changed this course."

"We're doing fine brush-stroking," Hepner said, "getting the course back to the original elements of its design."

Foremost has been returning the

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The 17th hole at Dunegrass in Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

## Poland Spring GC reclaiming Ross' famous bunkering

By MARK LESLIE

**P**OLAND SPRING, Maine — "Donald Ross was the father of golf architecture in the United States. He was the best. He still is one the best. But he's gone," says Dick Fahey. So Fahey, the course superintendent at Poland Spring Golf Club here, has shouldered the burden of restoring the track to the way Ross envisioned it.

Despite Ross' fame, Poland Spring Resort owners Mel and Cindy Robbins were not aware he had designed their course until Fahey attended a workshop taught by golf course architect and historian Geoffrey Cornish in 1988. "Cornish told me Poland Spring was a Ross course — an addition of nine and a revised nine," Fahey said.

The original nine holes, Fahey discovered, were designed by Arthur H. Fenn in 1896. In 1910 Ross visited the property, revised the original nine and added nine, completing the work in 1913.

Since the discovery, the resort has named its entrance road Donald Ross Drive. Its score card proudly states it is a Ross design. And Fahey has been given the go-ahead to use his staff in his restoration efforts as well as resolve drainage and cart-path problems.

Bolstering the bunker work was the

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## BRIEFS

### HILLS' LEGENDARY RUN OPENS 9

#### CINCINNATI

— Legendary Run Golf Club, an 18-hole upscale public course here designed by Arthur Hills and Associates, opened its second nine on May 15. "Legendary Run is an intriguing golf course," said Hills. "The front nine, which is almost treeless, has a series of holes that are as good as any we have done; the back nine plays through deep, wooded ravines..."

### PRESERVE PICKS PALMER

FENTON, Mich. — Arnold Palmer and Palmer Course Design Co. have selected to design the Preserve at Black Bear Resort here. The 18-hole championship course is being developed by the Preserve Corp. The Preserve at Black Bear Resort is scheduled to open during the summer of 2000.

## Leaving behind other careers, Hammer opts for golf

By MARK LESLIE

SIREN, Wis. — "What would be your ideal job?" the career counselor asked civil engineer and MBA student Jim Hammer.

"To own a golf course," Hammer answered.

"Then why don't you?" the counselor asked.

That simple exchange several years ago, while civil engineer Hammer was two-thirds through his studies toward an MBA at the University of St. Thomas, changed his life.

"That question really got it rolling," recalled Hammer as he looked ahead to the opening of Siren Glen Golf Course here in midsummer 2000. "I decided then to chase my life dream of owning a golf course."

Married and working as a civil engineer, Hammer realized that something more fulfilling awaited him. He had returned to school part-time to pursue his MBA when he had that fateful meeting in 1993 with the career



Jim Hammer stands at the championship tee for the par-3, 240-yard 8th hole at Siren Glen Golf Course. Some 40 feet below, a pond will hug the green to the right and rear.

counselor. He was in a perfect position to tailor his education toward his dream. He enrolled in a course on

entrepreneurship and venture management and used the in-class training to

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# Cape Arundel

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greens to their original shape. They had lost 30 to 40 percent of the putting surfaces.

"When they went to triplex mowing, they couldn't get all the tight corners and nuances. It's usually the corners, the great little tuck pin positions, that you lose. The key strategic pins — the ones in the corners or behind bunkers — are the ones that went away.

"You lose so much character, and just by mowing a golf course correctly you get greens back out, the approaches out so you can bump-and-run in."

"From our experience with old courses," Hepner said, "we can tell you exactly where the green was. They used a mule and men to build the fill plateaus, and I guarantee they weren't going to waste all that sweat and mule power to build a green that small. They had putting surface right to the edge [of the build-up]."

Meanwhile, Cape Arundel superintendent Greg Searle "has done a better job of any superintendent I've ever worked with in getting the putting surfaces back so that you can't even see where our expansions were," Hepner said. "He has the greens right out to where they need to be."

Searle has been slit-seeding L93 bentgrass into the bentgrass-poa annua greens for the last four years to increase the bentgrass population.

Bunker Restoration and Tree Removal In his bunker work, Hepner said, Travis used "simple construction — an economy of dirt. You dug a hole, took that material and built a mound right next to it. But in a very artistic way. It sounds simple but there's an art form to it. It's scraping the dirt out, digging a hole and putting the dirt somewhere. Here, it's in mounds."

Restoring mounds, too, is part of the plan.

Director of Golf Ken Raynor, coincidentally a descendant of course architect Seth Raynor, said: "I'd like to return some mounds. Every one out here is in a grouping of mounds, just like every white pine is in a grouping. I want to return the fairway bunkering."

"Travis used mounding complexes as a hazard," Hepner added. "We have photos of where the mounds used to be. He used them to frame and define the tee shot. It's artificial looking, but there's some antiquity to it that makes it interesting to me."

While bunkers are being restored, a number of arbivitaes and ornamental trees are being removed.

"You want indigenous species here," Hepner said. "The main species are the white pines. They get real windswept. We've tried to get the course back to being windswept. This is short and an old-style design where the wind is supposed to affect the ball."

Short, because Travis had just over 100 acres to work with. "But it's as efficient a golf course as you'll find," Hepner said. "He used natural features, some ravines and the stream [tital Kennebunk River] to its fullest."

Cape Arundel is a golf-only facility. Players come, they golf, they go home. It has a small pro shop and no dining.

Raynor reflects the club's position on Hepner's restoration. "My feeling," he said, "is that if you are going to do a restoration project, you can't do any personal preferences. You have to do 'restoration.' If you know what used to be here, it's not your choice. It's an obligation."

To that end, Greens Chairman Jim Stephenson and the members are committed to the project, Raynor said.

As Hepner said, "There are some places in this country that still have the feel of how golf was. Cape Arundel is holding onto the heritage. It's one of those special places in golf. There is a lot of character here that you don't see elsewhere."



Superintendent Dick Fahey stands amidst three greenside bunkers he has restored on the 11th hole at Poland Spring (Maine) Golf Club. Donald Ross had originally designed the bunkers in 1913. But, as at many courses around the country, the bunkers were bulldozed over during World War II to save maintenance dollars.

Mark Leslie photo

## Poland Spring reclaims Ross' intricacies

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Robbins' discovery, in 1997, of Ross' original drawings. They show that during the World War II, "most of the fairway and approach bunkers were bulldozed over to keep maintenance costs low," Fahey said. "What we'd love to find is the 'as-built'."

Thus far, Fahey's crews have resur-

rected five lost bunkers on the 7th fairway and three greenside bunkers on the 11th hole. This fall he hopes to work on the 12th, 13th and 14th holes, "if we have a good season."

Future projects will get done as soon as they can be worked into time and budget constraints. The 9th and 10th holes, for instance, have seven fairway bunkers waiting for rebirth.

Ross's bunker variety here was wide — from the series of small pot bunkers on the 7th fairway to sweeping cross bunkers on a couple of holes.

Studying Ross "fueled" his interest in reintroducing the Ross philosophy to the game at Poland Spring, Fahey said.

The cross bunkers in particular, Fahey feels, will challenge the games of the club members and resort visitors as they climb up and down its hills overlooking Sabbathday Lake and Range Pond and with Mount Washington in the background.

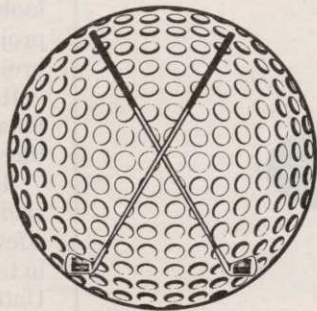
"Everybody wants to play what I call 'lay-down golf,' Fahey said. "Golf is a game board. It's not just a green lawn that you walk on and hit a ball off. The game was formed around three points — the strategic, heroic and penal aspects. But 90 percent of the average golfers have forgotten those aspects of the game, or don't even know they exist."

"It's not just stand up there and hit the ball as long and far as you can. It's strategizing. Then you put the risk-reward aspect into effect."

Soon, Fahey and the Robbinses hope, golfers will be able to play Poland Spring Golf Club and know they have truly played a Donald Ross layout.

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