

BY MARISA PALMIERI

SIMPLE BUT ELEGANT

Blind shots are no more thanks to a challenging yet rewarding reconstruction at Naperville Country Club

Perhaps the greatest compliment for any builder is when long-time members of clubs that have been rebuilt can't place the course's old holes within the new layout.

That's the case at Naperville (Ill.) Country Club, which reopened in May 2008 after a reconstruction that included rerouting 14 holes on a 124-acre landlocked site.

"Everyone raves about how natural and mature it looks and plays," says David Tierney, a 30-plus-year Naperville member, who served as project coordinator for the reconstruction. "Most don't believe we're just in the first year of postconstruction grow-in."

Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. is the builder on the receiving end of the compliments, along with golf course architect Steve Forrest of Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest & Associates in Toledo, Ohio.

"Wadsworth implemented the vision of Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and the Naperville membership – simple but elegant," Tierney says.

Naperville's original Tom Bendelow design, circa 1921, featured rectangular tees, greens and bunker styles characteristic of its time. Unfortunately, because of several

factors – poor earthmoving, funding and/or vision – the original design and an unsuccessful renovation in the 1960s left many holes playing directly across steep contours. About 65 percent of shots were blind or uphill, which caused problems and posed safety hazards for golfers.

"It just wasn't up to today's standards and what's needed to attract members and families to the club," Tierney says.

In 2006, members approved a reconstruction, including rerouting the course; installing a new drainage system; constructing all new greens, tees and bunkers; expanding the water supply and water storage facilities; constructing a new practice facility; and relocating the maintenance facility.

Though scheduling challenges, regulatory bodies and Mother Nature stood in the way, the reconstruction team transformed a tired, blind-shot-ridden golf course into an updated design with the classic style of rectangular tees, grass-faced bunkers and rolling greens compatible with today's faster green speeds.

The project has paid off for the club, a golf-only, member-owned facility in the Chicago area. It's added 43 new full members and has seen guest fees almost double.

"The golf course embraces the land and accentuates the beauty of our property," Tierney says. "The new course looks like it's been here since 1921."

SCHEDULING AND PERMITTING

Typical of many renovations, the project was on a tight schedule. The original plan called for a July 2006 start date and November 2007 completion; however, permitting problems caused unexpected delays.

"It was exceptionally challenging," says Tom Shapland, Midwest president of Wadsworth.

Because a floodway bisected the property, four regulatory agencies – the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, DuPage County and the city of Naperville – claimed jurisdiction over the project. It wasn't until after construction began the project team knew the extent of the permitting issues and realized the agencies weren't going to allow work on the primary drainage corridor until the following spring. One permit needed for completion of the back nine took more than 400 days. This delay and others caused Wadsworth to revamp its strategy and schedule.



It's a pretty big gamble when renovating your golf course and you aren't able to work on the last four holes because you don't have a permit, says Tom Shapland of Wadsworth Golf.

Wadsworth was restricted from even crossing the floodway with its equipment before the permit release date, but it devised a staging plan that accommodated the restrictions and found a way to crisscross the course and complete as much work as possible without disturbing the floodway.

"It's a pretty big gamble when renovating your golf course and you can work on the first 14 holes, but not be able to work on the last four because you don't have a permit," Shapland says. "It was a big leap of faith by the club. It took some resolve on the committee's part to have the confidence the subsequent permits would be in place so they could finish the work."

"There was a worry the last four holes would be delayed, which would delay the proper usage of the golf course," he adds. "I was more concerned we'd miss a grassing window again, but the permits came in time for us to finish the last four holes."

Naperville's golf course superintendent Tim Anderson, whose crew was involved in the construction, was impressed with Wadsworth's flexibility and commitment to the schedule. For example, even though the original construction permits arrived late, Wadsworth crews mobilized the site, using the time to their advantage to stage the project, and began working on items not specifically covered by the construction permit.

"Wadsworth could have easily said they weren't willing to commit resources to the site until they were sure the construction permit was released," Anderson says.

Creative solutions and a commitment to the

schedule paid off. Despite the extensive permitting issues, the 18 holes opened just several months later than the original schedule.

WEATHER WOES

Once construction began, the main challenge was trying to control the uncontrollable – weather. On October 2, 2006, the course was hit with 5 inches of rain in two hours on six recently seeded golf holes. The setback would have been serious if it weren't for Wadsworth's quick response.

"Under the contract terms, this damage was on the club's ticket," Tierney says. "Nevertheless, [construction supervisor] John Cotter and [site superintendent] Mario Salis of Wadsworth were on site the next morning to assess damage and help us formulate a plan to restore the affected areas. There's great comfort in listening to Cotter's more than 50 years of experience and wisdom telling you, 'Dave, I've seen worse. We'll get this fixed.'"

Wadsworth fixed the problem just in time. The storm-related damage was reseeded by Oct. 7, just days before the fall seeding window closed Oct. 12.

"Had they not responded so quickly to our request for a change order, the repairs wouldn't have been completed before the end of the fall seeding window," Anderson says. "This would have resulted in six of the front nine holes needing work the following spring. If that occurred, we wouldn't have been able to open the front nine by June."

OTHER KEYS

Wadsworth's experience also shined through

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

"Wadsworth had five months in the fall for the project. They were delayed and had to complete four holes the following spring. They did it in 10 weeks. They controlled costs well. They worked with 12 holes that were already carved out and had to recreate six holes in the practice facility and did a good job of blending those in with the existing 12 carved-out holes. They made good use of the wetlands and the existing rock, which was performed in a timely manner. They had a timely change order in the fall that proved valuable for opening up the following spring after 22 inches of rain during October."

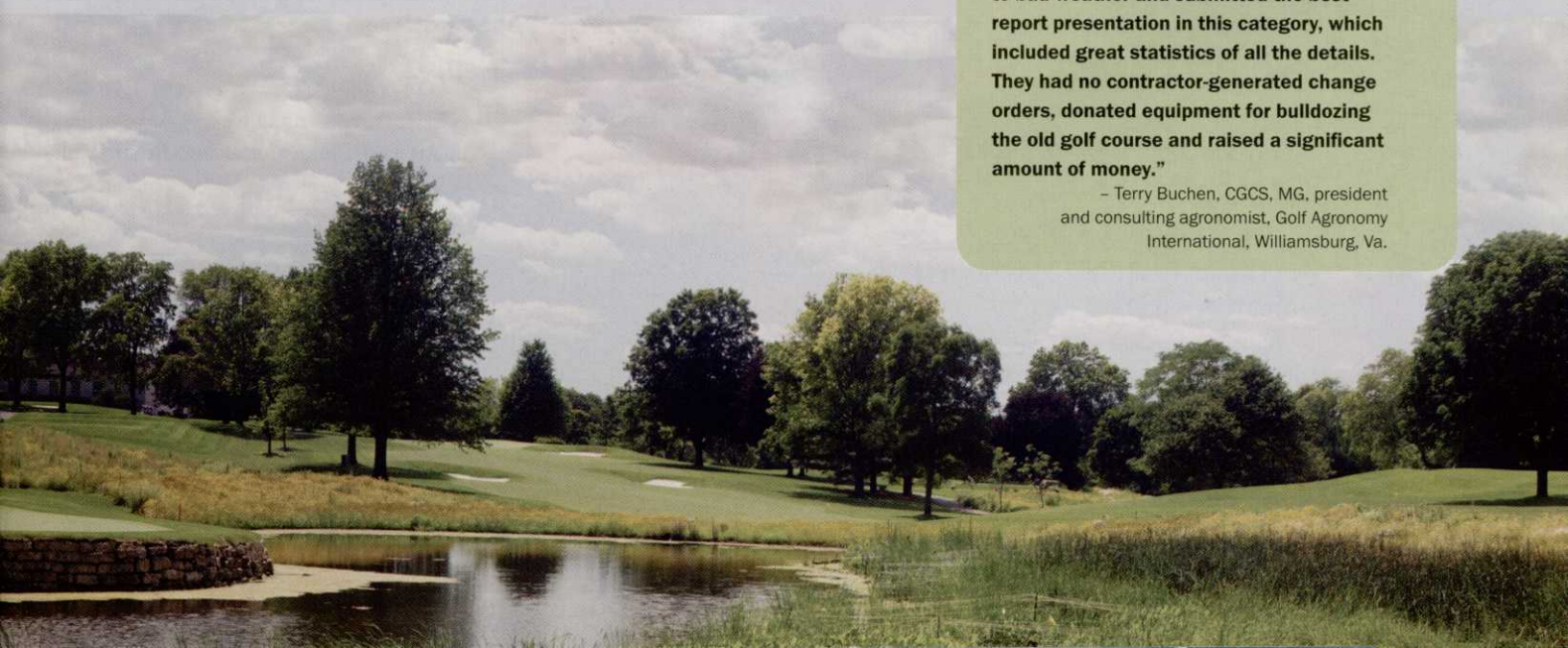
– Craig Felton, golf course superintendent,
Oak Hills Country Club, San Antonio

"Wadsworth worked through permitting, which caused delays, and then they made accommodations to get the practice area and at least nine holes complete for opening the next spring. They accommodated the membership and kept them happy. They kept the course going, enabling the club to increase membership after the project was finished. They responded timely to a washout in October to allow those nine holes to open."

– Mike Benkusky, golf course architect and
president of Michael J. Benkusky Golf Course
Architecture, Lake in the Hills, Ill.

"I was most impressed with Wadsworth for rebuilding the entire golf course on a difficult site. They responded timely to bad weather and submitted the best report presentation in this category, which included great statistics of all the details. They had no contractor-generated change orders, donated equipment for bulldozing the old golf course and raised a significant amount of money."

– Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, president
and consulting agronomist, Golf Agronomy
International, Williamsburg, Va.



in several areas that paid off for the project. "We were amazed at how well the project was priced out in advance," Anderson says.

Change orders were minimal, and not one was initiated by Wadsworth. The difference between the initial contract value and the final contract was \$73,669 (on a \$2.75 million final project) – less than a 3-percent

difference. The slight difference was caused primarily by the devastating rain event and measures imposed by regulatory agencies after the design was submitted.

Tierney was impressed with Wadsworth's expertise and partnership mentality that made his job easier and even saved the club money. For example, Wadsworth reviewed the park-

'09 *Heritage* Award Winner

Naperville Country Club

Location: Naperville, Ill.

Web site: napervillecc.org

Type of project: Reconstruction

Cost: \$2.75 million

Construction started: July 2006

Course opened: May 2008

(September 2007 soft opening)

Architectural firm: Arthur Hills/

Steve Forrest & Associates

Builder: Wadsworth Golf

Construction Co.

Golf course superintendent:

Tim Anderson

Project manager (club green

committee member): David Tierney

The Professional's Choice for Bunker Lining



SandMat®

Geosynthetic Bunker Liner

- Engineered for performance
- UV stable
- Superior drainage capabilities
- Increased design flexibility for improved bunker aesthetics
- Two colors (white and tan)
- The "green" bunker liner composed of recycled fiber
- Faster installation with reduced waste
- Reduced labor costs associated with installation and maintenance

www.sandmat.com
toll-free 877-sandmat

ing lot stormwater engineering design and made suggestions, which the county accepted. It saved the club more than \$40,000.

The way the project team worked together was the reason for success.

"From Brent Wadsworth, John Cotter, Tom Shapland, Greg Korneta to Mario Salis and his crew, communication and coordination were exemplary," Tierney says.

Anderson's team-player mentality also helped move the project along.

"He's what I refer to as a true working superintendent," Shapland says. "He's not only a good manager, but one who dug in and did whatever he could whenever he could to help the project proceed."

Anderson takes pride in the fact that his 22 maintenance crew members were able to change gears well and take on construction work. As a cost-saving measure and time management tool, the crew did a lot of work in-house, including erosion control, grassing and tree removal.

A unique aspect of the project was the years of experience and collaboration between the builder and architect.

"On occasion, we had 150 years worth of golf course construction experience on hand in Art Hills, John Cotter and Brent Wadsworth," Shapland says. "We've been building golf courses for Art for more than 40 years."

The project's success was based on mutual respect and experience.

"If they knew that I really wanted to achieve something with the design, they would take the steps necessary to make it happen," Steve Forrest says. "If we could make a revision to help them and not adversely affect the golf course architecture, we did it. How can you do anything but succeed when you have a builder with such extensive experience?" **GCI**