

SEMA spent almost \$3 million on continuous dust control using water trucks and irrigation lines. Photo: Joshua Clyne

challenge is wind. On a site where one can bore down through 10 feet of pure sand, dust control can become a considerable expense. SEMA spent almost \$3 million on continuous dust control using water trucks and irrigation lines.

Another important feature of Toscana is the separation of the golf courses from the home sites. The course is set down into the terrain, and the home sites sit on top of bluffs, which, while expensive, provide better site lines for the golf holes and home sites.

A TRAGIC LOSS

The development of the awarded-winning project didn't go without a tragic loss, however. Tragedy struck the project as a result of the untimely death of Brandon Steele just a few months before the project was completed. Brandon Steele's contagious enthusiasm had inspired hundreds of workers on the site for months. After his passing, every subcontractor involved took the initiative to continue the job as a tribute to his memory. It was this type of commitment that helped carry the project along to the completion of the first 18 holes in November 2005.

LASTING MEMORIES

Overall, SEMA did an excellent job throughout the project, says Rick Sall, golf course superintendent at Toscana who worked on the project through the construction and directed the final grow-in.

"We got pressed toward the end of the job to have enough time to establish the Bermudagrass sprigs, and SEMA made extra efforts to get

this process going," Sall says. "We managed to get sprigging done around the end of August and were able to have puttable surfaces by the middle of October."

SEMA completed the South Course and the first nine holes of the North Course on budget and is discussing completing the North Course with Sunrise.

"SEMA Golf performed admirably throughout this project by making sure all of the work was completed as each hole was signed off," Peterson says. "The work was completed in a timely

fashion to allow for sprigging prior to growing season. This is why we are discussing the North Course completion with SEMA."

Since opening, Toscana has established itself as a premier club in the region. It's success can be gauged in several ways, one being that many new members have come from the other established golf clubs in the area.

Looking back on the project, one of Bob Steele's lasting memories always will be coming through the front gates as the project was nearing completion.

"I've been building golf courses for 20 years, and I've never seen one that was so complete at the end," he says. "With the hundreds of mature palm trees and the massive entry, it seemed as though the complex had been there for 10 years. It was a project that holds many memories, both good and bad, and one that I'm proud to say we were a part of." **GCI**

Doug Saunders is a freelance writer based in Truckee, Calif. He can be reached at dougs@sierra.net.

What the judges said

"An excellent job on a very demanding site with a very demanding architect. From all reports from the architect, owner and superintendent, it coordinated the job very well. All parties were happy with the finished project, and the pictures that were provided would attest to the good job it did."

— **Mike Bylen, owner of Pine Trace Golf Club in Rochester Hills, Mich.**

"The builder worked for a very demanding owner and architect. Everything was meticulously done on time and on budget. It had a large design/construction/ownership team, and they all worked well together. The return on investment was very good."

— **Terry Buchen, president of Golf Agronomy International in Williamsburg, Va.**

"This was a good situation in which the owner and architect raised their demands and expectations, and the builder just went ahead and beat those."

— **Jeff Brauer, golf course architect and president of GolfScapes in Arlington, Texas**

"Not only did it have a very particular architect in Nicklaus, it had a very particular owner. The builder completed the job within budget and did it within the time frame, and the owner got a wonderful return on its investment. The builder received excellent reviews from the architect, owner and golf course superintendent."

— **Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas**

DESIGN CASE STUDY

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RESTORING A classic

Aspen Corp. helped restore The Old White Course at The Greenbrier. Originally, the course was designed by C.B. MacDonald. Photo: The Greenbrier

2007
Legacy
Award Winner

“It’s like finding an old car in a barn. If it’s a Duesenberg, you don’t want to try to put a Chevrolet motor in it. You want to restore your Duesenberg.”

– Lester George, golf course architect

A BUILDER OVERCOMES INCLEMENT WEATHER AND TIME CONSTRAINTS TO RESTORE A RESORT COURSE

BY BOB SELIGMAN

When you’re dealing with a classic – whether it’s something like a Duesenberg or an old golf course built by a master architect – you have to be careful. Restoring a classic to its previous grandeur can be extremely slow, time-consuming work.

Therefore, it would be normal to expect that when The Greenbrier opened up the barn, so to speak, in 2002 to restore its classic C.B. MacDonald-designed and Seth Raynor-modified The Old White Course, the resort in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., would undertake the task with some trepidation.

Resort management wanted to make sure the restored version of the course had the same flavor and character as the original, with an increased level of challenge to entice and satisfy golf’s current premium on distance.

“It’s a course that people have loved to play for 90 years,” says Robert Harris, director of golf at the resort. “It’s like an old shoe or glove. It just feels very comfortable. The Old White Course has fond memories for generations of Greenbrier guests. We have three or four members that are former presidents of the USGA. When you’re going to renovate something like that, you have to be very careful.”

Especially when research showed the initial course had been lost.

“It had the modern, TV-look of Firestone (Country Club in Akron, Ohio) – the tree lined fairways,” Harris says. “Most of America’s courses try to emulate Augusta or Firestone in the ’50s and ’60s, but what we had here was basically an open farm that was broken up into hundreds of features – bunkers, creeks, mounds of all sorts – and all those went away.”

ADVERSE CONDITIONS

Management committed itself to restoring The Old White’s distinctiveness. Files and data gathered from a historian on property were used during the research process. Aerial photos taken throughout a two-year period depicted the course MacDonald originally created. Lester George, the architect from Richmond, Va., who was hired to do the restoration, remained true to MacDonald’s elements and vision. George, president of George Golf Design, compares the work done on The Old White Course to performing eye surgery.

“Properly done, restorations are very tedious and difficult,” he says. “They take a lot of time, research and planning. If you’re building a new course you pretty much have your way with the site and put in whatever you want to interpret. When you’re doing a strict restoration, it’s difficult, time consuming, long-hours-type work. It’s a very delicate operation and process.”



At times, Aspen used more than 2,000 man-hours a week, which is more than double the norm, for the project. Photo: The Greenbrier

Especially when you're dealing with adverse conditions. Because of the popularity of The Old White Course and the fact The Greenbrier's management didn't want it closed during the season, the restoration was done in the late fall and winter throughout a four-year period from 2002 to 2006. Generally, work was started in mid- to late October and ran until the course reopened about the second week of May. Snow, sleet, rain and cold temperatures were constant combatants that had to be dealt with. The weather and time constraints were the biggest challenges, says Ronnie Adkins, vice president of Daniels, W.Va.-based Aspen Corp., the builder on the project.

"Those are the two factors that were always driving the project and how we approached things," he says. "The time frame wasn't going to change. They needed the place open for their guests in the spring. The weather was totally unpredictable, so you had to be prepared for every possibility that would come along, and, of course, it did."

Aspen elected to man-handle the situation by using an enormous amount of man power. At times, the company used more than 2,000 man-hours per week, which is more than double the norm,

AT A GLANCE **The Old White Course at The Greenbrier**

Location: White Sulphur Springs, W.Va.

Type of project: Restoration/renovation

Cost: More than \$5 million

Construction started: Fall 2002

Course opened: May 2006

Builder: Aspen Corp.

Architect: Lester George

Golf course superintendent: Pat McCabe

Owner: The Greenbrier

REPAIR CASE STUDY
GOLF COURSE
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Because of the popularity of The Old White Course and the fact that The Greenbrier's management didn't want it closed during the season, the construction work was done in the fall and winter throughout a four-year period. Photo: The Greenbrier

for the project. Workweeks ranged from 70 to 90 hours, seven days a week, with about 60 people on the project. There were no days off until the greens were shaped, which had to be done before Nov. 25 to allow for proper grow-in time. Light plants, which Adkins says are unusual in the golf business, were used so work could start earlier in the morning and continue late at night.

There was plenty of work to do and challenges to meet. Turfgrass had to be delivered in the right quantities at the right time. Irrigation had to be charged and tested even though it was winter. New cart-path construction and relocation was immense. Existing underground utilities were discovered along with utilities that weren't identifiable before work began. The resort's internal roads had weight restrictions that required the use of additional trucks to get the necessary materials to the site on time. Flotation tires were used on equipment to eliminate as much damage as possible. Sod had to be contract grown and delivered inside an enclosed trailer to avoid freezing.

IT'S ALL GOOD

The project had to be done in a way in which The Greenbrier didn't get too far ahead of itself. The four-phase operation was completed on time, and although more than \$5 million was spent, the restoration remained on budget.

The project has made The Old White a much better course, Harris says. Before, most of the

holes weren't memorable, and they would blend together in a golfer's mind. But not now.

"They don't all look the same," he says. "There are several open creeks that weren't there before. The mound work and many of the cross-bunkers were put back in. There's 18 holes of decision-making. There's the risk, there's the reward, there's the safe route. It's a little harder to score on the longer shot."

Everyone is happy with the outcome, says Pat McCabe, director of golf maintenance.

"It worked out great," McCabe says. "Our golfers enjoy the course. You've got to think now when you play. We initiated some fine fescue grasses and some naturalized areas that's given the golf course added character. C.B. MacDonald and Seth Raynor would be very happy if they played it." **GCI**

Bob Seligman is a freelancer writer based in Suffren, N.Y. He can be reached at bhseligman@aol.com.

What the judges said

"There was great coordination and order from an owner's perspective. The course opened for every season, as well as parts of the resort that had to be opened. It was a very complicated project, and it was stunning to do that, especially in the winter."

— **Charlie Birney, managing director of The Brick Cos. in Edgewater, Md.**

"It did a good job of coordinating a four-year period restoration project dealing with many different challenges, not the least of which was weather and traffic patterns for nongolfers, moving roadways and dealing with existing walking paths. Another challenges was time constraint of getting this work done and seated so the following season's play could be realized."

— **Mike Bylen, owner of Pine Trace Golf Club in Rochester Hills, Mich.**

"It had tough time constraints building and renovating the golf course during the off season and during the wintertime, and the company did it on time and on budget and had a good return on investment."

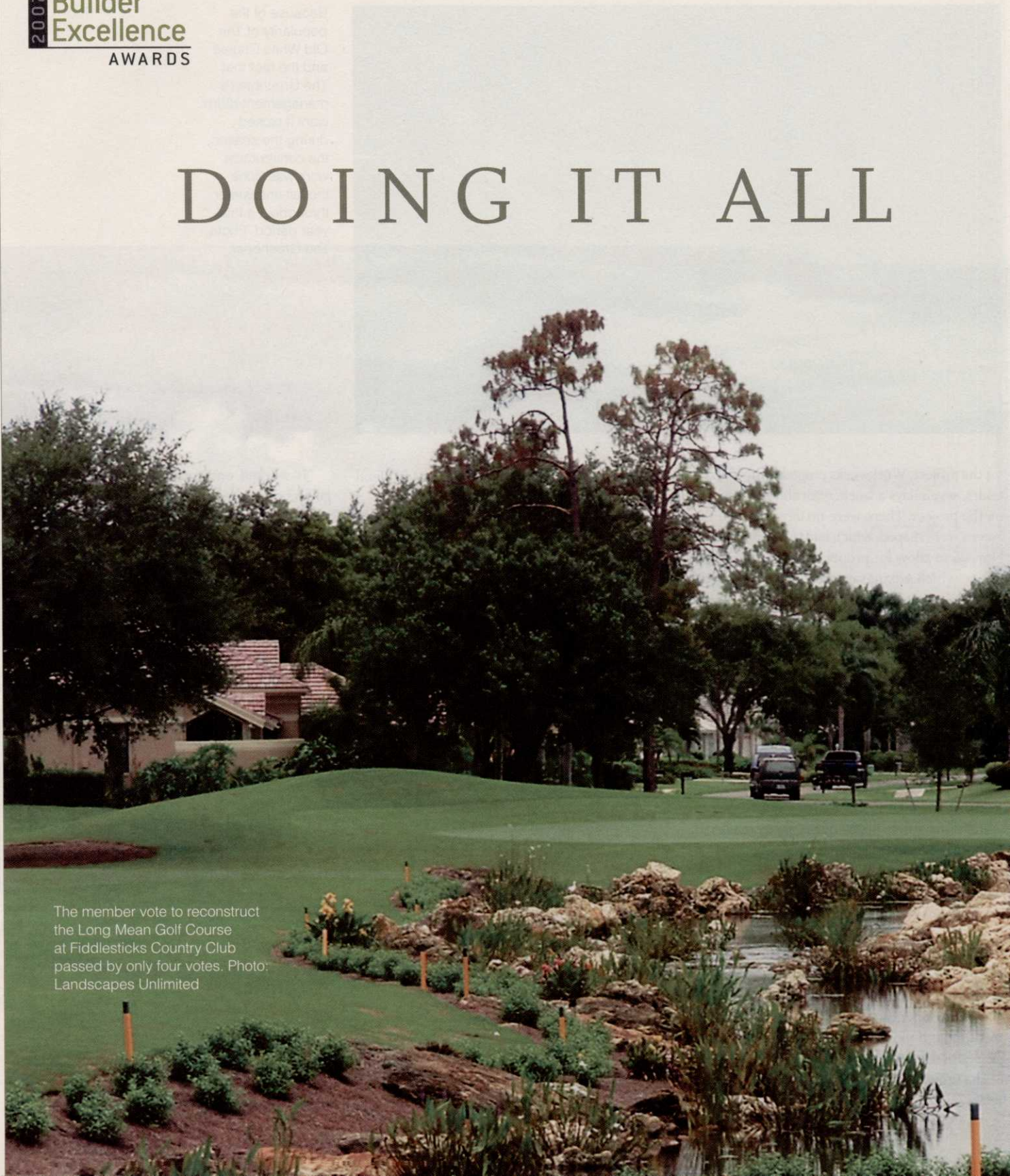
— **Terry Buchen, president of Golf Agronomy International in Williamsburg, Va.**

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DOING IT ALL

The member vote to reconstruct the Long Mean Golf Course at Fiddlesticks Country Club passed by only four votes. Photo: Landscapes Unlimited



2007 **Heritage**
Award Winner

A builder takes a turnkey approach and battles hurricanes to reconstruct a Florida course

BY MICHAEL COLEMAN

After successfully reconstructing the Long Mean Golf Course, members of Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers, Fla., feel like they've turned back the clock 23 years when they step on the first tee. The restoration is an accomplishment that earned Landscapes Unlimited a vote of confidence from the most demanding client: the club's members.

"The members voted to do this, and it passed by four votes," says Greg Pick, executive vice president of Fiddlesticks. "Now, you can't find anybody that voted against it."

Unlike projects that disintegrate into squabbling among various contractors involved, this one was marked by teamwork and exceptionally good communication between contractors and club membership.

Landscapes Unlimited had responsibility for the entire package, including engineering, architecture, design, purchasing, construction and grow-in. With its background of building golf courses, some of which it owns, Landscapes has the resources to manage the additional risk of the design-build approach.

"We learned from our own experience," says Leonard Schilling, a regional manager for Landscapes based in Southern Pines, N.C. "We're better able to identify many pitfalls earlier."

While a company's capabilities are crucial, it all boils down to people, says architect Ron Garl of Ron Garl Golf Design based in Lakeland, Fla.

"They sent a very capable golf course superintendent down there," Garl says. "They picked CT Shaw, who was the right one for the job. He did a great job and was an excellent choice."

Alongside Shaw was golf course superintendent Ryan Costello, who was brought in by the club to assist with the construction phase.

"He and CT were joined at the hip for the entire project," Pick says. "Ryan would write a weekly report for the members so they knew what we were doing. It eliminated a lot of controversy."

In the eyes of the members who voted against it, the polished communication helped the project evolve from a rough stone into a crown jewel. Having a primary contractor also contributed.

"Having a contractor that has the capability to oversee

all aspects of a job is fantastic for the club," Costello says. "You don't have to worry about who to call. It's their job to handle everything."

The original contract stated the guaranteed maximum price to be \$4.9 million and the designer-builder to be responsible for additional costs except for scope changes. The final cost was about \$5.2 million after several club-approved scope changes and improvements.

AT A GLANCE **Fiddlesticks Country Club**

Location: Fort Myers, Fla.

Type of project: Reconstruction

Cost: \$5.2 million

Construction started: February 2005

Course opened: November 2005

Builder: Landscapes Unlimited

Architect: Ron Garl Golf Design

Golf course superintendents: CT Shaw and Ryan Costello

Owner: Club members



During the reconstruction, Landscapes Unlimited was responsible for engineering, architecture, design, purchasing, construction and grow-in. Photo: Landscapes Unlimited

NOT SO EASY

Even though Landscapes' turnkey approach made certain aspects of the project easy, Mother Nature wasn't so helpful. The crew at Fiddlesticks Country Club survived repeated lashings from hurricanes, but with the help of Landscapes, it restored the course to prominence within a tight schedule. With some of the turf eradicated because of a fall pesticide spraying, the construction phase began Feb. 14, 2005. The course was finished and grow-in of the Tifway 419 Bermudagrass complete when another hurricane came lumbering through and conflicted with the opening.

Pick toasted the team involved for collaborat-

ing to overcome the hurricanes that swarmed the area from day one until the opening Nov. 3, 2005. Pick's crew rebounded quickly from the first blow from Hurricane Charlie in August of 2004.

"We had a lot of clean up to do, and we just got it done," he says.

Much of Costello's work early on was coordinating the cleanup of 500 trees blown down by Hurricane Charlie. Once the cleanup was complete, the project progressed more smoothly. Fiddlesticks' membership helped with that progress. It was represented by two members with construction backgrounds, Hap Skillman and Frank Scott. They helped Costello track the progress of the work and communicated,

A cleanup of 500 downed trees as a result of Hurricane Charlie affected the reconstruction project. Photo: Landscapes Unlimited

FROM



“You really had a good mesh of the right people and personalities,” Schilling says. The group Fiddlesticks put together with members Skillman and Scott was terrific because they knew construction and how to work through challenges, Schilling says.

Garl, who designed the course 25 years ago, was brought back for the reconstruction to help the club retain the heritage of the course. One of the enhancements Garl likes is a new waste area that swings around the first fairway, adding a wow factor to the opening hole. The waste area mimics the soft dunes of inland Florida.

“If you go inland, that’s what happens to the natural land,” Garl says. “Mother Nature is our best guide.”

Members are enjoying one of the better courses in Florida since the reconstruction.

“It truly is the flagship of golf in Southwest Florida because it withstood the test of time,” Garl says. “We’re excited to have a job done that well by a great team.”

Michael Coleman is a freelance writer based in Kansas City. He can be reached at mike.coleman@comcast.net.

almost daily, with the team from Landscapes, including Shaw and Oscar San Juan, the irrigation superintendent.

“Just the way the three of us worked together was far and away the best part of the project for me,” Costello says. “No one was trying to be special. We were all doing our part. That was fantastic.”

In addition to the hurricanes, there were other challenges:

- Shrinking greens and bunkers. Greens suffered a loss of pin placements under normal maintenance. The bunkers and greens were restored to the original specifications while adjusting for TifEagle greens.

- Outdated irrigation. The original plan was to replace two old pump stations and improve water capacity. During planning and design, it was determined that one of the pumps also served the Wee Friendly course at the club. The team determined both courses’ water problems could be solved by installing a larger pump station at that site and leaving the second pump station in place.

- Deteriorated cart paths. Old paths were replaced and waste areas were utilized to handle much of the cart traffic.

- Stagnant canal. The third hole was improved by adding a series of waterfalls to a revamped creek. Native limestone found during construction was used for landscaping the signature hole.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

All members of the team working together was crucial because the approach to the project was so different.

“Having Landscapes Unlimited be the only go-to, I’d never heard of that before,” Costello says. “It was very interesting having one person in charge of construction, architecture, grow-in, grassing – just every aspect of it.”

Landscapes’ expertise in multiple areas made the project run smoothly, Schilling says.

“It was just a matter of focusing the resources we already had into that, and we felt we could do it pretty successfully,” he says.

Knowledgeable club members also were helpful.

What the judges said

“There was a unique relationship in which Landscapes actually became the owner agent and was the only go-to company through which the ownership or membership worked. Landscapes then went out and contracted with the original architect, Ron Garl, irrigation architects and anyone needed to provide engineering or landscape design for the project. It was a success because they created a good product at an agreed upon price in a timely manner.”

— **Terry Buchen, president of Golf Agronomy International in Williamsburg, Va.**

“It’s pretty remarkable that it turnkeyed the job from design to actual grow-in. It looks like the owner is very happy with the outcome. They’re making money on their investment, which shows the builder accomplished its job.”

— **Joe Livingston, CGCS, River Crest Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas**

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FROM SUPERFUND TO supersite



On the course at Liberty National Golf Club, there's as much as 45 feet of fill above the cap in some spots. Photo: Philip Sokol