

# Achieving a Mylestone

Chalk one up for veteran assistant superintendent Myles McLaughlin, who has brought Devereux Emmet's off-the-wall design back to life at Huntington CC

**STORY & PHOTOS  
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While planning a trip to Long Island, N.Y., I noticed an Internet discussion group post by architect and golf writer Tom Doak that referred to the restoration work taking place at a little-known Devereux Emmet-designed course, Huntington CC in Huntington, N.Y. When Doak labeled the restoration work at the 1910 design as “other-worldly,” it became a must-see layout

for me — especially since it's in a region containing more great courses per square mile than any other in the world.

What you'll find at Huntington is not only other-worldly architecture, but some of the most interesting restoration work taking place in any world. The architect and shaper behind the return of the eccentric Emmet's off-the-wall design is the club's assistant superintendent of 28 years, Myles McLaughlin.

During his tenure at the club, which started when he was 23, McLaughlin has handled about every job imaginable for former superintendents Charlie Rupert and Phil Anderson and current superintendent Glen Creutz. McLaughlin's specialties have ranged from irrigation to anything having to do with heavy machinery, and each winter he oversees maintenance of the club's beloved outdoor skating rink.

But seven years ago, when several fairway bunkers had become “decrepit,” McLaughlin was given the task of putting them back into working order. In doing so, he found an old aerial photograph of the course. The fascination with restoring Emmet's design had begun.

“I'd always had the instincts to do the work, and finally decided that this was what I was going to try to do,” McLaughlin says. “Then

*Continued on page 66*



**In 28 years, Myles McLaughlin has performed about every job possible at Huntington Creek. These days, his dog Bunker accompanies him on projects.**



**"Emmet Devereux  
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architects. He  
was brilliant."**

**— Myles McLaughlin**

*Continued from page 64*

I started finding out more about Emmet. I knew his design at Garden City. I realized that at one time we had just as much great architecture at Huntington — a great routing and a more challenging course. Plus, the green chairman at the time was a member at Garden City and understood what a classic course looked like, so he helped pushed it through."

The "it" McLaughlin refers to is the written master plan he compiled after being given the official go-ahead to research the course and make his argument for restoring much of Emmet's original design. The report is as thorough as you'll see from any architect's office. But because McLaughlin felt secure enough in his job and passionate about the Emmet design, it's a more honest and forthright presentation than most committees will ever receive.

"The reasons why trees were allowed to disrupt Mr. Emmet's idea for the Huntington CC course are really beyond the scope of this text," McLaughlin wrote in the 28-page master plan. "It is not my province, nor is it my intent, to

question the politics, personalities, friendships, and perhaps most importantly, lack of knowledge and/or concern as to the architect's original creation. I would say, however, that all of the above have in effect conspired to totally alter what, to my mind, was a brilliantly conceived golf course."

Continuing the honest analysis of the design, McLaughlin made one point that many superintendents might want to borrow in trying to convince members that they should remove trees: "If one subscribes to the theory that trees are '90 percent air,' how can they logically be an absolute means of protection from an errant shot?"

Through his research, McLaughlin pieced together the complex evolution of a layout that saw an 1910 Emmet design, followed by a late-1920s redesign and lengthening by Emmet's design partner, Alfred Tull, who also implemented more changes in the mid-1930s.

"When a man has created something so unique, so ingenious, it is almost incompre-

*Continued on page 68*

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*Continued from page 66*

hensible that anyone would tamper with it," McLaughlin wrote. "The fact that a governing faction of any club can do as it sees fit is in some ways immutable. But a healthy respect for tradition, and also for the artist involved, should always be paramount in one's thinking. Clearly, from 1955 on, it was not."

The key selling point to McLaughlin's plan may have been his personal knowledge and passion for the course. However, it didn't hurt that he could testify to how the bunkers had changed in the last 25 years.

"Contributing to the alteration of the shapes of the original bunkers was the introduction of the mechanized 'trap' rake," he says. "This machine first appeared on our golf course around 1975. This is easily verified, as I was the first to use it."

Still unsure whether to proceed, the Huntington green committee sought the opinion of restoration specialist Ron Pritchard, who responded positively to McLaughlin's plans.

So armed with the approval of the green committee to proceed one hole at a time under the eye of Creutz, the restoration of Huntington began six years ago.

McLaughlin has only two more holes to complete (along with a few more trees he hopes to take out). Visiting the course today, the trained eye notices that McLaughlin's earliest work appears less dramatic than his more recent efforts. As members have seen the improvement in the design (and the value of memberships soaring), they have gradually embraced the work and given McLaughlin more freedom with each hole undertaken.

McLaughlin was able to bring back some of Emmet's and Tull's wackier features, which include quirky fescue covered mounds, a blind bunker and corner hole locations that will surely earn a few complaints from careless golfers.

Even though the course's evolution has been constant with the addition of trees and the subtraction of design character over the years, McLaughlin has managed to bring back the key features while preserving those that had survived. The project has also allowed Creutz

to focus on the course's excellent day-to-day condition, something that tends to suffer during in-house projects.

Huntington CC has several standout holes that any golfer would love to play. Five stick out as must-see holes for architecture aficionados:

- The par-5 seventh features a green in the spirit of the Road Hole at St. Andrews, only angled differently.

- The dogleg right, par-4 second and eighth holes are classic two-shotters featuring some of the finest bunkering on the course.

- The par-4 10<sup>th</sup> hole, whose green was originally part of a par 3 and was ultimately converted by Tull to today's long, rambling par 4, rivals anything on Long Island in challenge and interest.

- Maybe the finest of all the holes at Huntington is the fescue-lined par-4 16<sup>th</sup>. It features a blind approach for all but the most perfectly placed drives, with a recently restored green that has brought back several dramatic hole locations and a false front.

As his restoration work nears its end, McLaughlin's interest has turned to music and giving guitar lessons in his spare time. He's keeping an eye on his blonde Labrador and Huntington assistant, Bunker. But McLaughlin is also thinking of moving on after 28 years. His brother runs a successful trucking company in Arizona, a place where McLaughlin wouldn't have to handle snow removal as he does during nasty winters at Huntington.

In addition, he has had a few offers to help out on other restoration jobs, some of which pique his interest. But he knows that none will capture his heart like Huntington.

"Emmet was as good as any of the old architects," McLaughlin says. "He was brilliant. Our original 1910 course was probably even more impressive, but [the members] wanted to lengthen it back then and some of the original character was lost. It was my challenge to get it back as close as possible, and when I'm done there's nothing left for me to do here."

Then McLaughlin talks about the possibility of obtaining another aerial photograph from 1910. Maybe the photograph will show some really wild stuff on the course that could be restored, McLaughlin says. Then he wouldn't leave Huntington after all.

"As long as I'm creating, I'm happy," he says. "So who knows?" ■



**McLaughlin's key selling point to restore the course may have been his personal knowledge and passion for Huntington CC.**