



Photos: Richard Mandell

Reclaiming nature

New design for Edina municipal provides opportunity to expand wetlands and restore oak savanna

Braemar Golf Course is a municipal facility in the city of Edina, Minnesota, originally built in 1964. Over time, course conditioning had deteriorated to a point at which golf was becoming unsustainable.

“A handful of holes were routed in boggy soils and the course frequently flooded, closing for days at a time,” says golf course architect Richard Mandell, ASGCA. “A lack of tee locations, eroding conditions, difficult forced carries and narrow fairways forced golfers elsewhere.”

According to Mandell, one of the three nines was so poor that golfers would cancel tee times if they were assigned that nine as part of their round.

“The problem was how to revitalize an under-performing and outdated 27-hole course on an environmentally-sensitive property dismissed by golfers, and seen by citizens as draining tax dollars,” he says.

Mandell created a renovation business plan that analyzed the existing layout and provided solutions

for improvements. His course redesign proposal was approved in 2014.

“The solution was a new eighteen holes that preserved floodplain, increased wetlands, restored oak savanna, and provided a great strategic and playable challenge for all golfers,” says Mandell.

Reducing the course from 27 to 18 holes meant that the topography of the property could be better used to provide strategic challenge to golfers.

“The first task was to eliminate the holes that sat on poor soils,” says Mandell. “Poorly-drained soils that are a challenge for golf make a wonderful wetland, which is what it became. To further hedge bets in a challenging permit process, I utilized the maximum sixty-foot wetland buffer surrounding all water bodies, to ensure space was dedicated to golf without any later compromise on the permit side.

“Minimizing maintained turf married perfectly with an opportunity to restore lost oak savanna throughout the golf course as well.”

The design maximizes playability

and strategic options with wide fairways, some of which are shared with adjacent holes, and central hazards. The routing of the course evolved organically and includes a unique six-hole stretch that alternates between par fives and threes.

Construction began in October 2016 and the new course is scheduled for a spring 2019 opening.

Braemar

Location:
Edina, Minnesota

Golf course architect:
Richard Mandell, ASGCA
www.golfarchitecture.com

Project summary: Richard Mandell, ASGCA, transformed a 27-hole municipal course into a brand-new 18-hole layout that preserves floodplain, increases wetlands, restores oak savanna, and provides a strategic and playable challenge for all golfers.

Partners: Mid-America Golf and Landscape, Inc (construction); EC Design Group (irrigation design); Toro (irrigation); Better Billy Bunker (bunker liner)