

The wave of new golf course development that has occurred over the past decade throughout North America and in other parts of the world has no doubt encouraged many older established golf clubs to undertake various renovation projects, in order to stay current and competitive in their market place. Many of these older established clubs often struggle with the decision to either “renovate” or “restore”.

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GOLF COURSE REMODELLING *VS.* **GOLF COURSE RESTORATION**



The term “restoration” as it relates to golf courses is a term that is often misunderstood. A true restoration would return a golf course to its’ original design when it was built. This would mean returning the course to its’ original layout and yardage complete with original green, tee and bunker locations. A true “restoration” is in most cases impractical due to the pressure that advances in modern equipment have placed on the game. However a sympathetic restoration can meet the demands of today’s golfer, while retaining the original design character and spirit of the course.

Not every old golf course is worthy of a “restoration”. Some older golf courses may have fundamental flaws in the layout, serious safety issues to address, they may lack a distinctive design character or they may have a mixture of design styles that have evolved over time, through a series of renovations by various architects or green committees.

Often what is required is a comprehensive master plan for improvements that will help to re-establish a cohesive design style and character to the golf course.

Design features such as mounds, free form tees, large sprawling bunkers or overly contoured fairways and greens may look out of place on an older classically styled golf course. Scale is also an important consideration in restoring or remodeling an older golf course. Newly constructed greens, tees, bunkers and / or fairways should be designed

in a scale similar to the original features of the golf course, in order for them to look like they belong there.

Two of the greatest assets that most old golf courses have that newer courses don’t have are maturity and charm. Large mature trees, small subtly contoured greens, intricate bunkering and the rich colour and texture of mature poa annua turf are what give many older golf courses their charm and character.

There is also a certain intimate feel to older golf courses where greens, tees and fairways are often located close to one another. Some of these intrinsic qualities can often be lost in an effort to increase yardage, resolve a safety issue, eliminate a shade problem or replace a problem green.

Great care must be taken in the execution of new course improvements to consider these special qualities and preserve or incorporate the same qualities into the new course improvements.

If the quality of poa annua turf on the original greens is good and there is a desire to match a newly constructed green with the original greens on the course, then sprigging the new green with cores taken from the original greens is a very effective way of re-establishing the same colour, texture and playing characteristics on the new green. If the emphasis is on rebuilding all of the original greens on the golf course, then re-

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grassing with one of the newer varieties of creeping bent grass is a more practical option.

All features on a golf course can deteriorate over time from the wear and tear created through years or regular play and ongoing maintenance. The two features that seem to show signs of wear most quickly are tees and bunkers. It is not unusual for these features to require restoration every 10 years or so. However, the restoration or addition of new tees and bunkers can often provide the most perceived value in terms of improved playing characteristics and aesthetic character to an older golf course.

The use of water for irrigation purposes is another important issue that is becoming more and more scrutinized with each passing year. Not only have new golf courses been forced to implement water conservation techniques in an effort to meet the ever increasing restrictions on water use, but older golf courses are also being held to the same stringent standards.

Creating adequate storage reservoirs for irrigation water, on older golf courses can often be quite a challenge. Finding adequate space to create a reservoir without impacting the playing and aesthetic characteristics of the course can be very difficult on properties with limited acreage. Assessing water supply and irrigation requirements into the future should be incorporated into every golf club’s long range plans.



Doug Carrick is the 2009-2010 President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. A leading golf course architect, his recent design credits include The Muskoka Bay Club in Gravenhurst, Ontario, Canada Cobble Beach Golf Links in Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada and The Carrick on Loch Lomond, Loch Lomond, Scotland. Carrick is based in Dons Mills, Ontario, Canada and may be reached at (416) 447-6295 or doug@carrickdesign.com

