



ISSUE 64 // WINTER 2023

BY DESIGN

Excellence in Golf Design from the American Society of Golf Course Architects



GOLF HERITAGE

Balancing the desire to respect history while making courses fit for the future

MIKE, MARION AND MEDINAH

The new ASGCA President Michael Benkusky reflects on his life in golf and goals for the future

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Michael Benkusky
President, ASGCA

Maintaining traditions

One of the most gratifying projects of my career so far has been at St. Charles in Illinois, where I had the opportunity to work on a course laid out by Tom Bendelow, one of the Golden Age designers whose work is still admired and studied, and an inspiration for many of today's architects. During that project, I did feel some weight of history on my shoulders, in the knowledge that I was renovating the work of one of our profession's most respected designers.

But all golf courses need ongoing attention, as the passage of time and sometimes the hand of man takes its toll on their features, and as they adapt to new technology – whether that's the availability of, for example, more sustainable turfgrasses or more efficient irrigation, or the need to accommodate longer hitting.

I was therefore fascinated to read about how some of my fellow ASGCA members have gone about respecting a course's heritage when embarking on renovation work. In our cover story on page 14, we hear from architects and club officials who have worked to restore aspects of a classic course, while also being mindful that these layouts need to remain relevant now and into the future.

It has become a *By Design* tradition to interview new ASGCA Presidents about their life and career in golf (see page 22). I really enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on how I got into this wonderful profession, the designers that have inspired me, projects I have worked on, and my ideas on how to continue the Society's great work and positive impact on the golf industry. I am immensely proud to serve as ASGCA President for the year ahead and look forward to welcoming you to more issues of *By Design* along the way.

I hope you enjoy the read!

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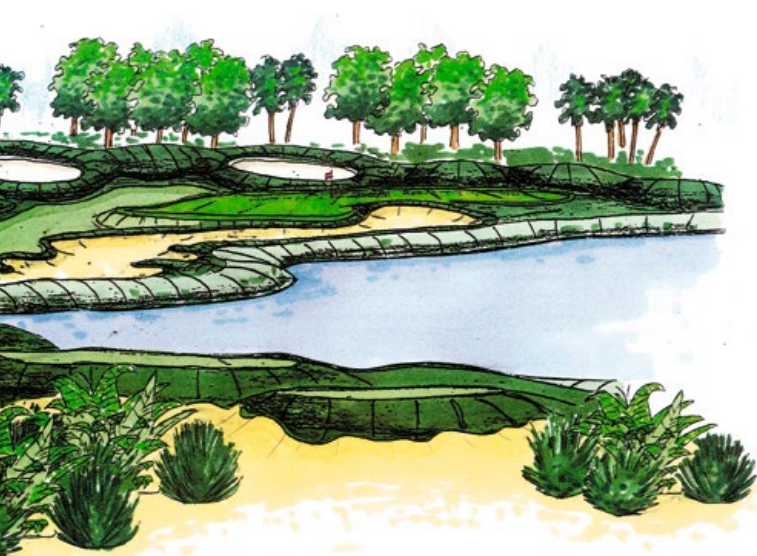
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Kirtland Country Club in Ohio, a Hugh Alison design that was laid out over 100 years ago. Photograph courtesy of Forse Golf Design

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Ground broken on new design by Lester George in Blue Ridge foothills

Construction is under way on a new golf course, designed by Lester George, ASGCA, for the new Contentment club in Traphill, North Carolina.

George's design is inspired by the work of C. B. Macdonald and Seth Raynor, with each of the eighteen holes based on one of the Golden Age duo's template designs. The course begins with a par-five Maiden hole and includes Biarritz, Redan, Punchbowl, Double Plateau and Road holes, finishing with a Narrows eighteenth.

The course will be part of an 800-acre private destination in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains that will also include cottages and lodging for members and their families, as well as small groups. There will be no home sites, with Contentment owner Curt Sidden wanting to preserve the rural site that has been in his family for three generations.

"Contentment is a tribute to my grandparents with whom I spent time here as a boy," said Sidden. "My family showed me the

benefits of a quiet, uncomplaining and satisfied mind, and we hope Contentment is a true, tranquil haven for the body, mind and soul."

A project development group from construction firm Landscapes Unlimited has overseen all aspects of site planning, design and engineering, permitting, contractor selection, project administration and budget planning. The company will build the course and direct development of the club amenities.

"The property on which Contentment sits is one of the most



Photo: Contentment GC

Golf design boot camp to be held at Erin Hills



Photo: Erin Hills with Boot Camp logo

The ASGCA Foundation has revealed details of its first ever 'Design Boot Camp' for aspiring golf course designers.

Attendees will have the chance to contribute to the design of an imaginary course on undeveloped land next to Erin Hills Golf Course, the 2017 US Open venue in Wisconsin.

From 10-13 September 2024, the ASGCA Foundation will host 16 participants, who will receive education from ASGCA Past President Mike Hurdzan, Dana Fry, ASGCA, and Ron Whitten, the design trio that created Erin Hills, and eight other ASGCA members: Tom Marzolf, Bruce Charlton, Jason Straka, Jan Bel Jan, Jeff Blume, Steve Forrest, Jeff Brauer and Damian Pascuzzo.

The cost is \$20,000 per person, with \$15,000 qualifying for a charitable tax deduction to the ASGCA Foundation.

For further information and a day-to-day schedule, please visit <https://asgcafoundation.org/architects-boot-camp-2024/>. To enroll or ask specific questions, email bootcamp@hunter-pr.com.

relaxing, rejuvenating and overall special topographies in our company's history," said Jack Morgan, senior vice president of Landscapes Unlimited's project development group. "No wonder those looking to dodge the hustle-and-bustle are joining Contentment before the first shovel hits the ground."

Contentment is expected to open on 25 September 2025, 100 years to the day since the wedding of Sidden's grandparents.



George's routing for the new Contentment club is inspired by the work of Macdonald and Raynor

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Schoeder and Richardson collaborate on Los Alamos plan

Todd Schoeder, ASGCA, and ASGCA Past President Forrest Richardson will begin the renovation of Los Alamos County Golf Course near Santa Fe, New Mexico, in spring 2024.

The masterplan includes rerouting holes six to nine, reversing the seventh and eighth, 13 new bunkers and remodeling all existing bunkers, two new greens and renovations to all others, new tees, new cart paths, and a new driving range and practice area.

“Combining our design strengths will contribute to a more successful project, meeting the goals of Los Alamos County,” said Schoeder.

“The course is set in a forest and on the edge of a rugged canyon,” said Richardson. “What we’ve created is a look that lives up to that



Photo: Icon Golf Studio and Forrest Richardson

ambiance, and over the long term it will help relax the need to maintain the edges with nail clipper precision, something this site does not need.”

Schoeder added: “Also, an emphasis has been placed on

restoring the golf course to its original character by repairing and replacing the aging infrastructure. The overriding goal was to use the golf course to create a point of pride for the community!”

McLemore begins grassing The Keep

McLemore Resort in Rising Fawn, Georgia, is grassing its new golf course, The Keep, which is a collaboration between Bill Bergin, ASGCA, and ASGCA Past President Rees Jones.

The Keep lies on a plateau 1,000 feet above the valley floor of McLemore Cove, and the design team has routed several holes along the cliff edge.

Most of the trees on the rocky site have been cleared to create an open landscape. This is a marked contrast to the Highlands course at McLemore where holes weave through woodland.

“Nowhere else will you find two courses of this caliber with the breathtaking views and scenery as we have here atop Lookout Mountain,” said Duane Horton, president of Scenic Land Company, the developer of McLemore.



Photo: McLemore Club

Dothan reopens following Golden Age-inspired project



Photo: Billy Fuller Golf Design

Dothan Country Club in Alabama has reopened its course following a renovation by Billy Fuller, ASGCA. “My work is for a complete transformation in design strategy and aesthetics,” said Fuller. “I felt strongly the course should go back to the Golden Age design philosophy and appearance.

“We have removed hundreds of large trees that obstructed tee shots and long views, shifted some green complexes, and reshaped all tee complexes, and incorporated several template green designs, including a Biarritz, Redan, Thumbprint and Punchbowl. “The par-five fourth green

complex now has many similarities to the eighth at Augusta National, and the par-three fifth offers the aesthetics and strategic angle of the twelfth at Augusta. The course also now offers Seth Raynor-style bunkers with grass slopes and sand below the putting surface elevation.”

Nine-hole course by Tyler Rae opens at Spy Ring

Heritage Spy Ring Golf Club on Long Island, New York, has held a grand opening for its new nine-hole course designed by Tyler Rae, ASGCA.

The site was previously home to the 18-hole Heatherwood Golf Club, which closed in early 2020. Rae’s new par-36 layout can be played from 2,323-to-3,105 yards and has holes ranging from 97-to-520 yards.

“The greens are mainly perched up and their vast sizes and flowing contours should provide a thoughtful test for each golfer,” said Rae. “There likely won’t be a straight putt on the golf course but they won’t feel contrived or forced.

“All bunkers were shaped and built into landforms as if to feel like they were always meant to be there. The wandering sand lines and natural feel to them derives from some of the heavy land movement.”



Photo: Larry Lambrecht

ASGCA begins search for new Executive Director

The ASGCA has announced Executive Director Chad Ritterbusch (pictured) plans to retire from the position he has held since 2004. Ritterbusch will stay in his current role until a successor begins in the second half of 2024.

ASGCA has started its search for a new Executive Director, who works with the ASGCA Executive Committee and Board of Governors, and helps oversee the programs of the ASGCA Foundation.

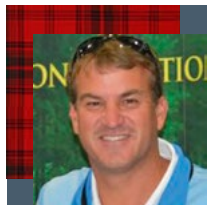
“ASGCA is grateful to Chad for his leadership and the time, caring and commitment he has shown,” said ASGCA Immediate Past President

Brit Stenson. “He has put together a great team of staff members who will continue their good work on behalf of ASGCA.”

Ritterbusch said: “I am so grateful to ASGCA and put a lot of prayer into a decision that I ultimately felt was best for my family and many others. I feel it’s best for ASGCA, too, as it can seek a new leader with fresh ideas, able to tackle a golf landscape that has changed a great deal since I was tapped to lead 20 years ago. And now is a good time for a gradual transition, as ASGCA is very healthy and has such strong volunteer leaders and staff.”



A complete job description can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/mrx7z6h3>. Those interested in applying can also send questions to SearchCommittee@asgca.org. Inquiries will be accepted until March 15, 2024.



“The golf business is as busy as I have ever seen”

Kipp Schulties, ASGCA

In the latest podcast from *Golf Course Industry's* “Tartan Talks” series, Kipp Schulties, ASGCA, talks about working in south Florida following the Covid boom.

“The golf business is as busy as I have ever seen,” said Schulties, noting a lot of the private clubs he works at are full, have waiting lists and are making a lot of money. “They are all wanting

to do projects, however, there just aren’t enough contractors and resources to go around to support them all.”

Schulties, who largely works in Florida, has completed five or six projects in Florida each year since 2014. “The contractors don’t have enough staff and resources to keep up with the intense demand for golf at the moment,” he said.

“Because of that, we’re having to bid our projects out earlier – the drawback with this is that pricing for labor, products and services fluctuates so it’s harder to lock in prices. It’s crazy right now, we’re bidding for projects for them to start in 2025 and 2026!”

Listen to the full “Tartan Talk” at golfcourseindustry.com.

Here are links to other recent “Tartan Talks,” now featuring over 50 episodes:

- Drew Rogers, ASGCA, and Mike Gogel, ASGCA, talk about what is required to evaluate and enhance greens.
- John Fought, ASGCA, discusses designing holes along southern Utah cliffs and the importance of site visits.

Tripp Davis completes bunker project at Sonoma

Tripp Davis, ASGCA, has completed a bunker project at Sonoma Golf Club in northern California.

“It is part-renovation to install a sustainable structure for the bunkers, part-restoration of the style of the original architect Sam Whiting, and part-redesign to position bunkers to fit the modern game with more strategic interest,” said Davis.

“Whiting designed the Olympic Club in San Francisco, where he exhibited a simple but very elegant style for his bunkers. That was his style at Sonoma back in 1928 and I could not be prouder of what we have done there.”

The 16-week bunker project was completed in October and is part of a larger masterplan.

“Tripp clearly wanted to create an historic look, while adapting to the modern game for all levels of golfers,” said head golf professional Tony Marshall. “His course enhancements will continue to challenge the competitive golfer through new shots and sightlines. The renovated bunkers provide easy access to walk in and out of them.”



Photo: Sonoma Golf Club

New course by Wilczynski opens in Florida

The new 18-hole Astor Creek Golf & Country Club course, designed by Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA, has opened in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

“Our goal was to create something unique on the Treasure Coast – a golf course that is beautiful and features fun, strategically designed risk-reward holes that blend classic and modern design elements,” said Wilczynski.

The designer has included versions of template holes, including a ‘Surprise Redan’ second, ‘Astor Biarritz’ third, ‘Astoria Punchbowl’ twelfth, and ‘Short Horseshoe’ fifteenth.

On several holes, Wilczynski has introduced free-flowing waste bunkers that feature islands landscaped with native grasses, oaks, palms or pines. “The waste areas are not only aesthetically appealing but, given their composition, you can play your shot out of them, or even drive a golf cart through them,” said the architect.



Photo: Chris Wilczynski



Phoenix gears up for GCSAA Show

The GCSAA Conference and Trade Show will take place in Phoenix, Arizona, for the first time in more than 30 years.

The show will be held from 29 January to 1 February 2024 in the Phoenix Convention Center. The presenting partners include ASGCA, the GCBAA and USGA.

“The 2024 GCSAA Conference and Trade Show will offer something for everyone in the industry with a full lineup of education, interactive experiences, golf events and opportunities to source products and services,” said Rhett Evans, CEO of GCSAA.

At last year’s show in Orlando, Florida, members of the ASGCA designed a golf hole on the show floor that was the centerpiece for education programming throughout the event.

ASGCA Foundation Inner Circle open to corporations

The ASGCA Foundation has renamed its Society of 1872 program, where ASGCA members and non-members can pledge \$15,000 to support Foundation projects, to the Inner Circle and has extended inclusion to companies.


Rain Bird Corporation, an ASGCA Major Leadership Partner, recently became the first company to pledge their support and join the Inner Circle. “Their commitment to the industry is well-known, and it is great to have such a respected and dedicated company show the value they place in the Foundation’s work,” said ASGCA Foundation President Steve Forrest, ASGCA. “We look forward to adding more companies as we move forward.”

For more information on ASGCA Foundation Inner Circle, contact Marc Whitney: marc@asgca.org.




SOCIAL UPDATE



 Steve Pike
@Steve Pike

The Chain, the newest design from Bill Coore, ASGCA, and Ben Crenshaw, opens today Streamsong Resort in Bowling Green, Florida.



 Evan Schiller
@evan_schiller_photography

Love the renovation work Fry/Straka did at Valencia Country Club, especially the bunkers. Pictured here is the first hole... what a great way to begin the round.



 ASGCA
@ASGCA

ASGCA members Quitno and Crace team up to masterplan sympathetic renovation of Merit Club (Libertyville, Ill.) home to 2000 U.S. Women’s Open.

Search ASGCA on the below channels for more posts:



History in the making

Golf clubs with a rich heritage may favor a restorative approach to their courses. But, asks Richard Humphreys, can a design from the past accommodate the game played today and in the future?

Working on a layout that is steeped in history can be just as rewarding for a golf course architect as creating a new design of their own.

As living organisms with features that have a finite effective lifetime, even our most cherished layouts from the past will require some attention, from time to time. And while faithful restoration may seem the obvious approach to a Donald Ross masterpiece, for example, how can a course design from 100 years ago present a worthy challenge today?

“There is hardly ever a bona fide opportunity or warranted need to completely restore a golf course in the truest sense of the word,” says Drew Rogers, ASGCA. “If we are

to interpret the past quite literally, that may mean that the course had hardly any trees, much wider fairways, no cart paths, no practice area, bolder bunkers and features, and stronger strategic options. So, more appropriately, the architect needs to evaluate what aspects of the past continue to be relevant now and into the future – and whether they should be expressed in the same or different way.

“Most courses are now experienced by golfers of a wider range of ability, so we have to determine how the past design intent can be evolved and translated authentically, but in ways that provide enjoyment for a broader spectrum of players.”

Developing a balance

“Do we reference the past in our work?” asks Rogers. “Certainly. Do we sometimes channel some of the specific design intent that may have eroded over time or was misinterpreted by past influences? Yes. We sometimes identify aspects that may have made it distinctive at some point – or may still do today – and that may play a large part in reclaiming aspects of the historic identity of a course.

“It’s vital for historic venues to understand who they are and value their history, but they also have to go forward and acknowledge that not everything can stay the same. It goes without saying that golf courses are going

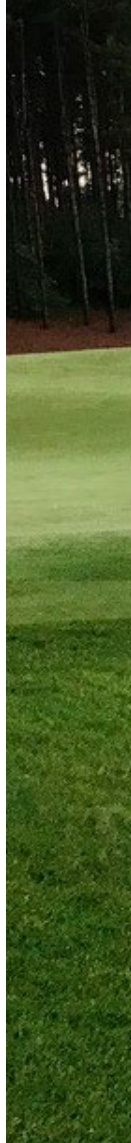




Photo: Andy Johnson, The Fried Egg

The course at Pine Hills CC in Wisconsin was originally laid out almost 100 years ago

to continue to evolve whether we want them to or not.”

Often the most difficult conversations relate to trees. Rogers says: “The realities caused by misguided tree plantings and uncontrolled maturity can wreck a golf course, to the point that building better tees and greens becomes irrelevant if there’s not enough space for those elements to exist, or for the game to be played as the design was intended.”

Rogers has recently completed two projects in the Midwest where tree management was crucial. “Both were cluttered by tree growth so that the intended architectural strategies were no longer possible,” he says. “The

proper scale of the holes was entirely compromised. We had to open them back up to reclaim basic design elements – all the details that those Golden Age architects were so intent on producing in their work deadline.”

“We knew we had features that were unique and needed to be

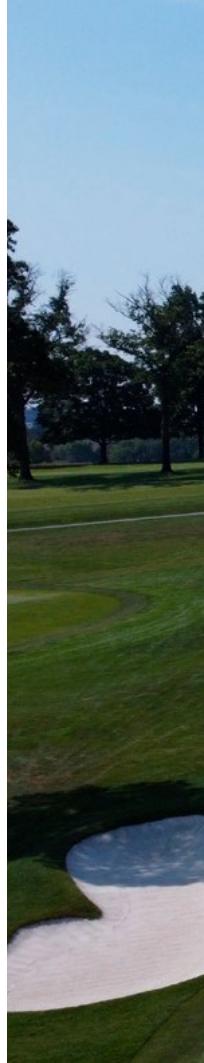
of Rogers’ clients. “If they were going to be largely untouched, the feel of the course would remain, but a renovation could highlight their unique character, the quality of the land and overall playability.”

Tree removal has also helped to connect the course - originally laid out in 1928 - with the clubhouse.

“Golf courses are going to continue to evolve whether we want them to or not”

preserved, notably our greens,” says Keith Robel, course improvement committee chair at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, one

“The clubhouse is at the center of the property,” says Robel. “It is the quintessential clubhouse on the hill, overlooking a good portion of the



Forse Golf Design is restoring Hugh Alison's design intent at Kirtland CC in Ohio

layout, so opening vistas – to and from the clubhouse – connects the property as it was intended.”

At Knollwood Club in Lake Forest, Illinois, which has a Hugh Alison design, Rogers has overseen tree removal to return Alison’s original scale and width, reintroducing playing strategies that haven’t existed for decades. Two green complexes have been rebuilt, forward tees have been added and some bunkers have been relocated.

“Although having an Alison bunker style was important for the club, playability was of paramount importance,” says superintendent Drew Barnett. “Drew struck a balance by raising bunker floors, improving shot angles from forward tee locations and relocating a few to reflect the distance the modern ball travels.”

Rogers says: “It’s all about developing a balance of old and new. Unlike an original painting, a golf course is expressed through years and years of influence and adaptation – a living piece of history. It isn’t fixed with hard edges and its elements won’t live for 100 years. Our goal is to sensibly preserve as much of an expression as we deem appropriate with our clients.”

Restoring the intent

“By restoring design intent, we are less inclined to impose our own will on a course, but rather relocate features consistent with the original design,” says Jim Nagle, ASGCA, of Forse Golf Design. “What is always important to consider when relocating bunkers, mounds or ditches, is that the land

allows for the relocation without making the features appear forced. The introduction of shortgrass around greens is another way to introduce creativity and variety for classic courses, with large, broadly contoured shortgrass areas the most suited.”

Nagle is working on the William Flynn-designed course at Philadelphia CC, which in 2026 will co-host medal play with Merion for the US Amateur. The front nine has been rebuilt in 2023 and the back nine follows in 2024.

“Flynn wrote in the lead up to the 1939 US Open, hosted by PCC, that the club needed lengthening and features relocated or added to combat the ever-changing equipment and the new physical and mental capabilities of the modern golfer,” says Nagle.



Photo: Forse Golf Design

"In the case of Lancaster and most Golden Age courses, the layout and club heritage are inextricably combined," says Rory Connaughton, greens chairman at Lancaster CC in Pennsylvania

"These are the very same issues we as architects are challenged with today."

Nagle has completed work at nearby Lancaster Country Club, another Flynn design, which is hosting next year's Women's US Open Championship. "In the case of Lancaster and most Golden Age courses, the layout and club heritage are inextricably combined," says Rory Connaughton, greens chairman at Lancaster. "These are clubs that came into existence on the strength of the pre-1930s golf boom. They survived the Great Depression and then wars and social upheaval on the strength of their courses and golf culture. Without brilliant architecture that would not have happened.

"The job of the successor architect is to ensure that the connection between course and club heritage

is maintained or restored. Clubs that define their identity by their stewardship of Golden Age works of art have stood the test of time and will be there for generations to come."

Strategies for adapting Golden Age courses to modern play include relocating bunkers and extending tees, while history can be recaptured

"In the case of most Golden Age courses, the layout and club heritage are inextricably combined"

by expanding greens and widening corridors. "Each plays a role in the restoration of key strategic elements of a course," says Nagle. "Angles off tees and into greens are paramount when working with a classic course.

Expanding greens to the perimeter can recapture hole locations not utilized for many decades. Widening fairways and expanding greens does not translate into easier golf, rather it makes the round more interesting."

At Kirtland Country Club near Cleveland, Ohio, Nagle is restoring Alison's design intent. "Alison was

a master router, and one who used fairway bunkering to a minimum when compared to his peers," says Nagle. "He often angled greens so that golfers had to choose the correct position to approach the

GOLF HERITAGE

Photo: Nathan Crace

Nathan Crace, ASGCA, has preserved the classic feel at Colonial CC in Memphis, while also making changes to ensure the course remains a challenge

green or they might find themselves in a rather deep greenside bunker.

“He used tasteful restraint when placing fairway bunkers, but the canted and large putting surfaces require an approach that enters the green on the proper angle. Kirtland is not short on wide fairways, treacherous greens and massive, deep greenside bunkers.”

Mark Petzing, general manager at Kirtland, says: “Looking through old pictures, Alison’s design consisted of high, flash-faced bunkers that create a visually stunning scene. And with today’s members wanting consistent playing conditions from bunkers, Jim has been able to use thoughtful creativity and technological advancements to create an experience that is appealing and strategic.”



Photo: Colonial Country Club

Colonial’s general manager Billy Goodnight says “the club is enriched in history”

A singular vision

Nathan Crace, ASGCA, has completed what he calls a ‘restoration’ at Colonial Country Club in Memphis, Tennessee. “Over the last 10 years, the club used multiple

contractors to renovate some bunkers and greens, but they never hired an architect to pull together one singular vision. The work that was completed back then was disjointed and the course felt like a patchwork quilt.”



Willie Campbell's course in Boston's Franklin Park was laid out in 1894 (pictured from 1903) and redesigned by Donald Ross in 1922

Billy Goodnight, general manager at Colonial, says: "We wanted to ensure that the classic feel of the layout was preserved during the renovation. The course has a good reputation as a tough but fair layout and we didn't want to lose that. We kept the integrity of the course in the forefront rather than making changes that would jeopardize its reputation by making it easier."

Colonial hosted the Memphis Open from 1958-to-1988, initially on its original layout and from 1972 at a new site with two courses designed by Joe Finger. In one week at Colonial in 1977, President Gerald Ford recorded a hole-in-one and Al Geiberger shot the PGA Tour's first-ever 59. "The club is enriched in history; you can feel it and smell it the moment you step

foot on property," says Goodnight.

"The project included the renovation/redesign of all bunkers, the restoration of all greens, and the addition of forward and back tees so the course stretches from 4,300-to-7,630 yards to bring the course to modern standards while preserving its history," says Crace.

Among the work done to adapt Colonial to the modern game, Crace has added bunkers on the par-five eighteenth and lengthened it to over 600 yards. "The goal was to make it a finishing hole worthy of the entire project and maybe someday another big tournament," says Crace.

"The biggest compliment you can give this layout is that it will make you a better player," says Goodnight. "You will never get tired of playing the course as it challenges players

of all abilities in many ways. With each hole, you must make decisions from tee to green and that is still very much the case. The course has a heartbeat of its own."

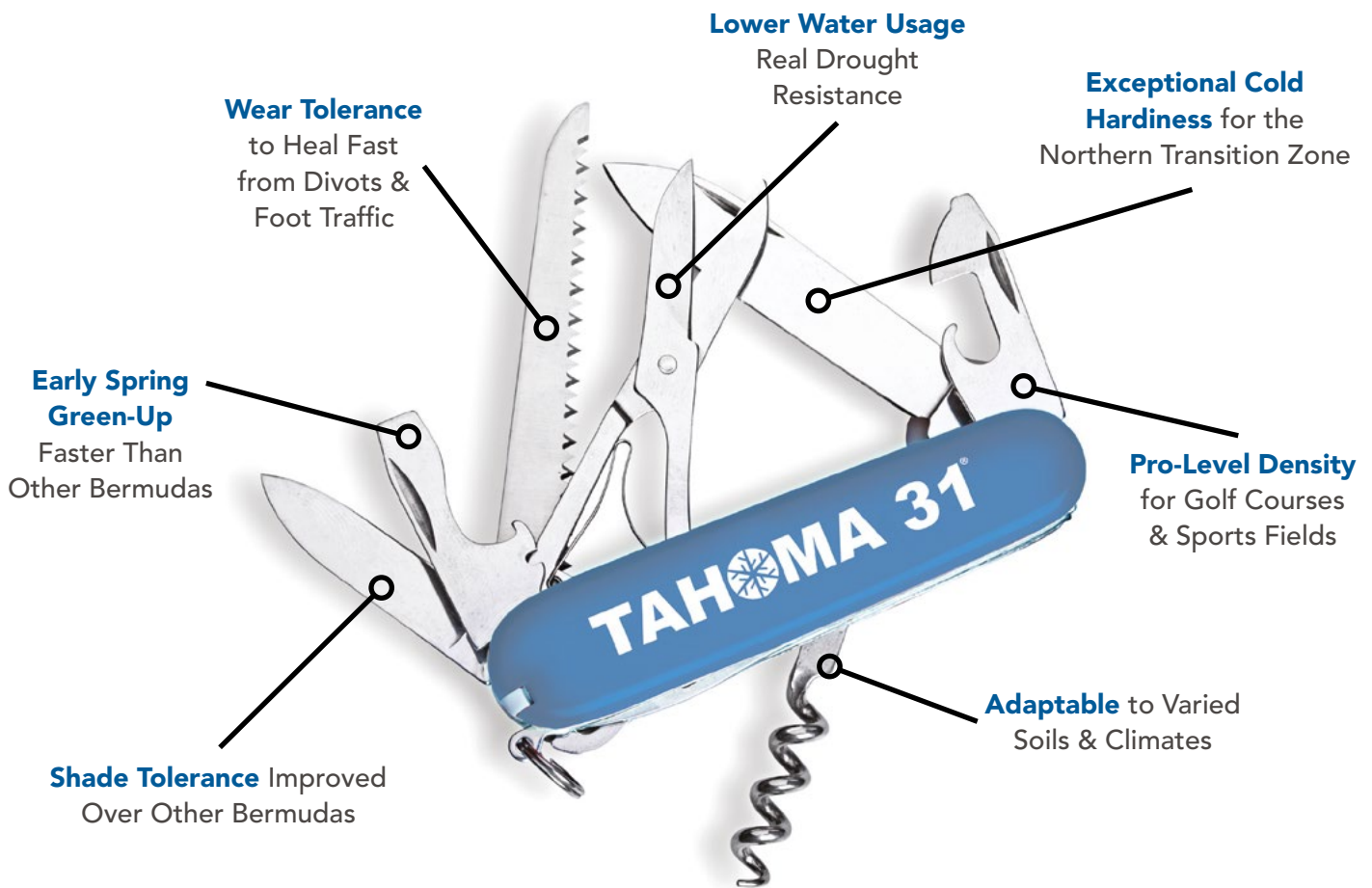
Bringing Ross back to Boston

Boston's William Devine course, initially laid out by Willie Campbell in 1894, was redesigned by Donald Ross in 1922 and lies within Frederick Law Olmsted's Franklin Park. The city's other municipal course, the George Wright, was designed as a private layout by Ross in the 1920s, abandoned at the start of The Great Depression in 1929, and then resurrected by the city of Boston and completed by his associate Walter Irving Johnson in 1938, with funds from the Works Progress Administration.

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Photo: Ross Mungeam

Mark Mungeam, ASGCA, has reinstated Ross features on both the William Devine and George Wright (pictured) courses in Boston

After 70 years of low-budget operation, the courses fell into disrepair. But in the mid-2000s the city decided to invest in both layouts.

“The original goals were to improve playing conditions and address badly deteriorated features, while improving playability for a wide range of handicap levels,” says superintendent Len Curtin. “The city’s golf commission then began to embrace the idea that incorporating restoration work with the ongoing course improvements was the responsible and logical thing to do.”

Mark Mungeam, ASGCA, who is overseeing the work, says: “Neither project is a true restoration. The goal is to restore most features and bring back the Ross-designed attributes while being mindful of the need to upgrade the infrastructure for modern play.

“The original designs had no cart paths, which is a huge part of modern course use, so we are shifting and adding paths to

improve circulation. Ross designed one or two small tees, which are no longer sufficient in area or options, so tee expansion is a major part of our work. Accessibility is another factor that was not considered in Ross’s day, but is something modern designers have to plan for.

“Our work is to make maintenance more efficient and improve conditioning so that the wonderful Ross design features can be highlighted. George Wright has lots of ledges and protected

oak trees that had been hidden by new growth. We have promoted the removal of the younger trees and underbrush to widen the hole corridors, show the terrain and improve pace of play.”

Mungeam says there are many ways to emphasize the heritage of a classic course, including improving maintenance practices, reclaiming greens and fairways, creating short green to tee connections and introducing more short-grass areas — all of which improves pace of play, shot variety and overall enjoyment.

“Part of the charm and very much a selling point of these courses is their long history, classic architects, and the incredible stories of their birth, demise, and ultimate

“Part of the charm and very much a selling point of these courses is their long history”

resurrection,” says Curtin. “Golfers love historic courses and the stories that come with them. Understanding the history is half the fun. It’s a bit like an antiques roadshow for the golf community.” ●

Mike, Marion and Medinah

ASGCA President Michael Benkusky speaks with *By Design* about what influenced his career in golf course design and the value of collaboration

The newly appointed ASGCA President Michael Benkusky has come a long way since picking up the game as a five-year-old boy in Iowa.

Growing up in a golfing family, he was perhaps destined for the game. Mike learned to play at a nine-hole club in the town of Marion, just outside of Cedar Rapids, during long summers that were also spent playing tennis and swimming. But golf

quickly became his sport of choice – and he would go on to win several junior golf tournaments.

While he may not have

realized it at the time, those summers on the golf course would set Mike onto his eventual career path. We caught up with him to find out more.

What inspired you into this profession and how did you get your start?

My parents went to the US Open at Medinah in 1975 and brought back the tournament program, which included a hole-by-hole description for each hole. That was my first introduction to architecture, and I then geared my schooling towards that goal.

I met ASGCA Past President Bob Lohmann in 1985 shortly after he started his firm. He offered me an internship and then I began working for him full time in 1988. The 1990s was the golf boom when we were opening a new golf course almost every day. I was able to learn a lot, from routing a course to detailed grading and construction plans. I still prepare detailed plans to allow contractors to provide excellent budget numbers and keep my projects fiscally responsible.

You've worked on courses originally laid out by Golden Age designers. How have these architects inspired you?

I worked on the grounds crew at Cedar Rapids, which is Donald Ross's only Iowa design. That was back when the routing and most of the course was still an original Ross, so it was great to see how he worked with the land.

At Iowa State, I played on the golf team and our home course was designed by Perry Maxwell. There are still several original Maxwell greens that contain his famous 'Maxwell Rolls'. Those two designers have provided the biggest inspiration on routing a course and constructing interesting features.

I currently work with St. Charles in Illinois, which was an original Tom Bendelow course that also includes new holes designed by David Gill, ASGCA. My philosophy there was to restore the Bendelow vibe and bring back classic design features throughout the course.

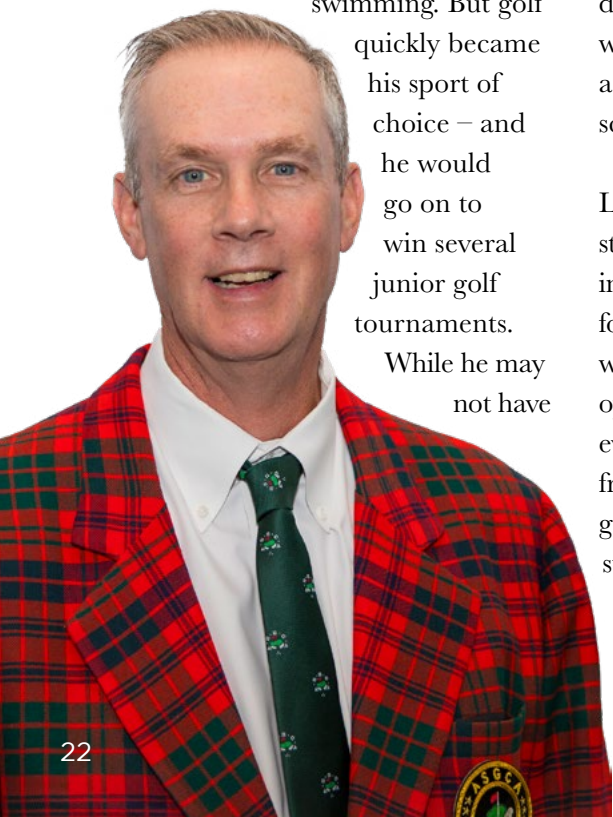




Photo: Jeff Patis

The highly regarded Canyata layout in Illinois, designed by Benkusky during his time working with ASGCA Past President Bob Lohmann



Benkusky's fascination with golf course design began with the Medinah hole descriptions in the program for the 1975 US Open

Would you say you have a particular design philosophy that you adhere to?

I never go into a project with a set idea on a design style or philosophy. Each piece of property is different, and I just let the land talk to me as to what may work best for that site. Having seen hundreds of golf courses and a variety of styles, I can draw from those examples to develop a style for the course I'm working on. Of course, any style needs to work with the superintendent's maintenance team and their budget.

Which of your projects are you particularly proud of, and why?

New golf course designs have been few and far between over the past 18 years. Two new projects that I completed while working for Bob are some of my favorites for different reasons. The first is Canyata, which is a private club in central Illinois with the owner giving us free rein. It allowed me to design a course as if it was my golf course and it opened my mind to bringing in new ideas. It opened as one of the best new courses in 2005 and continues to be ranked in *Golf Digest's* top 100 list.



The wooded site of the Mattaponi Springs course in Virginia, which opened in 2005

Another course was being built at the same time, Mattaponi Springs outside Richmond, Virginia. Here we had a wooded site with terrific topography. The owner was hands-on and very easy to work with, with the course opening in 2005 to rave reviews. The style was more old school with bold greens and flat sand bunkers.

I've worked on some terrific remodels since opening my own firm. St. Charles and the Country Club of Peoria, two Bendelow courses, have been great to work on. I'm currently working on Robert Trent Jones' Point O' Woods in Benton Harbor, Michigan. I have also worked on a Dick Wilson design, and a couple by Larry Packard. Everyone always gives more importance to the classic Golden Age architects, but the modern designers like Jones, Wilson and Packard have some of the best

golf courses out there. They were just built at a different time with more modern equipment.

You mentioned architects 'teaming up' in your first speech as ASGCA President. What are the benefits of this approach?

We are seeing more ASGCA members teaming up on projects – this is due to a variety of reasons. Firstly, many members are extremely busy, and they can combine workforces to complete more projects at a time. Another benefit is the ability to work off each other's strengths. One member may be more free-flowing with the design and the other may be more technical – they can learn from each other. Another is the ability to work on more diverse projects on a variety of sites and draw on each other's site-specific experiences.

One thing to consider is that you need to be able to compromise with each other's ideas. I'm working with Todd Quitno, ASGCA, on a project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Todd and I worked together at Lohmann Golf Designs but haven't done so in 17 years. We knew we could get along, but we also knew that we had developed different styles and ideas since 2006. It has been fun to combine thoughts and ideas on the project and have a second set of eyes to solve a design challenge.

Many of the Golden Age architects did the same thing and it's well known that Pine Valley benefitted from having 10 different architects work on the course. Teaming up brings more variety to a project and will help ASGCA members create better, more site-specific designs.



Photo: Mike Benkusky

Benkusky has completed renovation work at St. Charles CC in Illinois, a Tom Bendelow design

What are your primary objectives for your time as ASGCA President?

It is an honor to become ASGCA President and to be recognized by your peers to represent them for one year. I mentioned in my inauguration speech that one of the best compliments we get is when a non-member attends one of our meetings and sees how well everyone gets along. We compete against each other for projects, but at the same time we are all there to help each other out.

My goal over the next year is to reinforce the camaraderie of ASGCA members and how that helps all golf course architects. We all do a variety of work for the golf industry. We work in areas to help grow the game, improve the environment and create playing surfaces for the greatest game.

What are your observations on the future for golf course architects?

We are seeing our members work on a variety of projects. We recently announced our Environmental Excellence Awards [see page 26] where members

“Courses comprising a non-traditional number of holes will help bring, and retain, new golfers”

create solutions that address unique environmental challenges. That work will continue as we work on projects to help communities.

Other work I see involves the ability to help courses accommodate the growth in the game that we have seen over the past couple of years. I see architects continuing to update

tees to provide more options and undertaking improvements to help superintendents battle maintenance costs.

I expect to see new design work including more alternative courses in lieu of your standard nine- or eighteen-hole courses. We will

see six- and 12-hole layouts, plus other courses comprising a non-traditional number of holes. These designs will help bring, and retain, new golfers and provide alternatives to golfers that may be time strapped, but still want to enjoy the game. I believe golf is in a good spot right now. ●

Making a positive impact

By Design looks at the golf course projects recognized in the 2023 ASGCA Environmental Excellence Awards

Nine golf course design projects – eight in the US and one in Costa Rica – have been recognized with ASGCA Environmental Excellence Awards for their positive impact on the environment.

The awards program was introduced in 2019 to recognize innovative work being done by ASGCA members at golf facilities to address their environmental needs. The program is presented by Ewing Outdoor Supply. Submissions are reviewed by a panel of golf industry and environmental leaders, including representatives of GEO Foundation, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the National Golf Course Owners Association.

“This is an impressive array of projects illustrating the good work being done for the benefit of golfers and the environment,” said ASGCA President Mike Benkusky. “The more than 30 facilities that have been recognised since this program began is a testament to the combined efforts of architects, owners, course managers and superintendents.” ●



SETTLERS HILL GOLF COURSE

Photo: Greg Martin

Location: Batavia, Illinois
Golf course architect: ASGCA Past President Greg Martin

The renovation of the 30-year-old Settlers Hill course included new irrigation, drainage, reconstructed greens, tees, bunkers, reshaped fairways and cart paths. Around 80,000 cubic yards of clean, free, off-site fill was imported to provide the cover to safely install new irrigation and drainage, which was developed to be more comprehensive and more considerate of water quality to the surrounding landscapes.



FREAR PARK GOLF COURSE

Photo: Mark Mungeam



Location: Troy, New York
Golf course architect: Mark Mungeam, ASGCA

Deferred maintenance on the drainage system resulted in many days of closure at Frear Park due to overly wet conditions, with turf maintenance particularly affected. The drainage system was upgraded using small diameter perforated pipe set with minimal slope and with sand or gravel backfill. It also acts as an infiltration system to convey excess water through pipes when flows are heavy. The conversion of around 3.5 acres of rough was done through the overseeding of drought tolerant fescue and resulted in the reduction in mowing from twice a week to twice a year.

Location: Bluffton, South Carolina.
Golf course architect: Nathan Crace, ASGCA

The Pete Dye course at Hampton Hall was experiencing drainage issues on its fairways so more than 35 acres of new drainage was installed. Prior to the renovation, one inch of rain would have kept players on the cart path for a week. Now, members can get off the cart path and onto the course within hours of heavy rainfall. Landscapes Unlimited completed work in a 100-day construction window, with greens restored to their original sizes and regrassed. Bunkers were renovated and new tees have been added.



HAMPTON HALL CLUB

Photo: Nathan Crace



Location: Tucson, Arizona
Golf course architect: Mike Gogel, ASGCA

MountainView is part of the SaddleBrooke Two active lifestyle community, which includes more than 3,000 homes and several amenities. The club sought to update aging infrastructure to reduce maintenance and preserve the playing experience, while recognizing the course's environmental impact and focusing on its access to allotted irrigation water. The masterplan called for a 10 percent reduction in maintained turf. Bunkers were softened and made smaller to reduce hand work, and tees were redesigned to improve mowing efficiency.



MOUNTAINVIEW GOLF CLUB

Photo: Mike Gogel

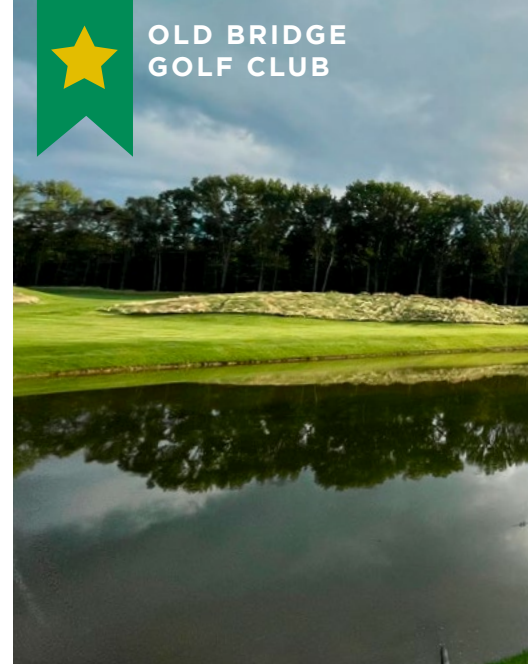


ENVIRONMENT

Location: Park City, Utah

Golf course architect: ASGCA Past President Forrest Richardson

Promontory wanted a fun and challenging golf experience to complement two 18-hole layouts by Pete Dye and Jack Nicklaus, while meeting strict water conservation measures and preserving two canyons. The new 18-hole par-three course has an average of just one acre of managed turf per hole. New practice facilities include a 12-acre academy, short-game area and putting course. The Hills at Promontory uses an existing freshwater recreation lake and full-gravity delivery system requiring no electricity for pumping.



★ THE HILLS AT PROMONTORY

Photo: Forrest Richardson

Location: Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Golf course architect:
Thad Layton, ASGCA

Peninsula Papagayo resides within the Guanacaste Conservation Area, a designated Unesco World Heritage site. Sustainability was a major emphasis of the project, with over 14 acres of maintained turf exchanged for drought tolerant native grasses. Also, a new Rain Bird irrigation system was installed, with water consumption reduced by 20 percent.



★ PENINSULA PAPAGAYO

Photo: Thad Layton



Photo: Stephen Kay

Location: Rose-Lambertson Matawan, New Jersey
Golf course architect: Stephen Kay, ASGCA

The challenge at Old Bridge was to design an 18-hole municipal course (on a farm with poor clay soil) that would protect hydrology and ecology. Part of the project was to capture, filter and recharge stormwater outside of the wetlands. A subsurface drainage system was built to direct all stormwater to retention/detention areas. The wetlands and bio-retention basins were seeded to create a dense mix of native vegetation that filters the stormwater before it infiltrates to groundwater.

Location: Sarasota, Florida
Golf course architect: Richard Mandell, ASGCA

The Donald Ross-designed course at Bobby Jones had drainage issues with low-lying areas and canals for nearly 100 years. The solution was to build new canals that connected to a 22-acre wetland east of the course. A weir was installed along the primary canal to divert water back into the course if flood waters rise, providing detention rather than flooding downstream properties.



Photo: Richard Mandell



BOBBY JONES GOLF CLUB



PALO ALTO HILLS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB



Photo: Marc Howard

Location: Palo Alto, California
Golf course architect: Brian Costello, ASGCA

The Palo Alto redesign included upgrades to golf course features, while also addressing environmental challenges related to drought, diseased pines and storm retention infrastructure. A new irrigation system was installed featuring a subsurface drip at all bunker faces, creating 22 acres of native turf and a 15 percent reduction in water use. More than 125 non-native trees were removed, and 135 native trees replanted.

The best of the brew city

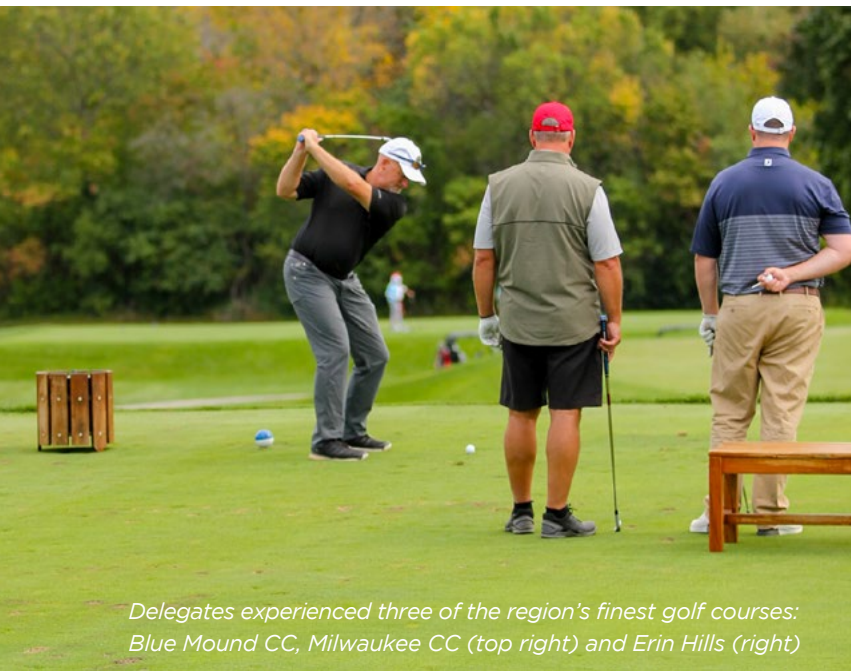
A selection of images from the 2023 ASGCA Annual Meeting, held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The ASGCA's 77th Annual Meeting was held on home turf for ASGCA staff, contributing to yet another successful and rewarding event for members, partners and sponsors. During 2-5 October, attendees participated in education sessions, updates from the Society, golf at three Wisconsin courses and evening functions. ●



Mike Benkusky became the new ASGCA President at the Society's 77th Annual Meeting





Delegates experienced three of the region's finest golf courses: Blue Mound CC, Milwaukee CC (top right) and Erin Hills (right)



Chicago golf operator Frank Jemsek received the ASGCA Donald Ross Award from outgoing ASGCA President Brit Stenson



Wadsworth's Pat Karnick and ASGCA Past President Mike Hurdzan pictured with the 2023 Wadsworth Scholarship recipients



ASGCA Executive Director Chad Ritterbusch announced his plan to relinquish the position he has held since 2004





Credit: Sanford Ferris Golf Course Design

“In today’s digital world I sometimes wish we did more of the old school pencil and paper sketches”

Taba Heights

David Ferris, ASGCA

The par-three thirteenth hole at Taba Heights Golf Resort in Egypt, one of six courses in the country designed by Sanford Ferris Golf Course Design, was envisioned to require an increasingly longer carry over water as you move from the front to the back tees.

“The site had a lot of topographical change, and this

hole is located at the base of a steep slope,” said David Ferris, ASGCA, who sketched the above image with a marker on paper. “Incorporating a par three was a great use for that space. The lake was a necessary part of the course infrastructure, and also created a dramatic setting for the green. The bunkers and landscaping were used as a framing element.

“Going for a birdie requires a shot into the green that navigates the water body and bunkers. There is a bailout area to the left for those looking for a safer route but it’s not an easy up and down from there.

“In today’s digital world I sometimes wish we did more of the old school pencil and paper sketches but I must admit, sketching on an iPad can create a similar feel.” ●



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