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THE WIRE

Membership figures affirm decision to renovate Illinois club

NAPERVILLE, Ill. - A year to the day after completion of its \$8.5 million course renovation (one of the largest ever undertaken in the Chicagoland area), the members of Naperville Country Club have applauded and affirmed the work of Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates (AHSF) in the most convincing way possible:

"The membership has increased since the renovation, which is just what we hoped would happen," reports head superintendent Tim Anderson, who noted that change is always unsettling, Chicago is a very competitive private club market, and the course was closed for an entire golf season. "The course plays great and the members are extremely happy."

That's music to the ears of club officials and the course architects at AHSF. Members of the 18-hole, 124-acre property first contacted Hills/Forrest in 2000 to help deal with flooding issues and a stormwater-management plan then being considered by the city. The city scuttled those plans, but the club reconnected with AHSF to develop a master plan in 2003.

That eventually evolved into a decision to reconstruct the golf course and reroute 12 golf holes at Naperville CC, an 18-hole private club located 45 minutes southwest of Chicago and originally designed by Tom Bendelow in 1921.

"It was a great piece of property, but two-thirds of the shots were blind or uphill," said AHSF partner and lead designer Steve Forrest, whose term as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects expired in April 2008. "Eight holes were very similar in that they played in a parallel fashion back and forth across a broad valley. The valley created the blind and uphill shots. It is reported that Annika Sorenstam categorized the par 4 eleventh as one of the worst holes that she had ever seen because of the blind water hazard at the bottom of one of the valley slopes.

Project Coordinator David Tierney, whom Forrest called a "visionary," chaired a Renovation Committee that interviewed 14 clubs across the country that had undergone similar renovations. The consistent message they offered was to minimize construction time while maximizing the extent of the renovation with a 30-year-forward project view, the club wrote in its summary report. Without exception, all clubs interviewed felt the pain was more than offset by the final gain.

Before turning a shovelful of dirt, AHSF and club officials spent significant time, energy, and frustration completing the required civil engineering, and working with government and regulatory agencies in order to secure the required permits. All told, the project necessitated 33 permits and

letters of certification issued through 11 different regulatory agencies at the local, state and national level.

The course closed and construction began July 17, 2006 with the following benefits in mind:

- * Reduce liability relative to the narrow practice area.
- * Lengthen the course to 6,800 yards.
- * Implement a five-tee system for golfers of all skill levels.
- * Eliminate a majority of the blind shots.
- * Reduce the number of uphill shots.
- * Eliminate the repetitive down/up nature of the routing.
- * Create a par-72 layout with four par-3s and four par-5s.
- * Bring water into direct play on several holes.
- * Create a more enjoyable practice experience.
- * Build an expanded short-game area in a more accessible location.
- * Alter the layout of holes so that the course is easier to walk.
- * Create a space for the relocation of the maintenance facilities.
- * Allow for better access to the maintenance facilities with fewer delivery disruptions.
- * Add 130 parking spaces.
- * Create a space for the development of future club amenities.

In accomplishing all these tasks, Forrest worked closely with builder Wadsworth Golf Construction Co., superintendent Tim Anderson and various club committees.

Anderson's input, noted Forrest, was particularly valuable on the course renovation portion of the project, which included creation and/or renovation of an enlarged driving range, new short-game area and practice green, 18 tee complexes, 18 green complexes, 60 bunkers, two lake expansions, elimination of one creek, installation of two miles of cart paths, overlay of all existing cart paths, transplant of 150 trees and removal of 330 trees.

Toledo, Ohio-based Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates is one of golf's most prolific and respected course architecture firms, with more than 185 original designs and 125 meticulous course renovations to its credit.

AHSF are expert in the complex staging of course renovations, which can be handled in a longer, ongoing fashion (where a portion of holes remain open throughout construction) or a shorter, concentrated fashion where the course shuts down entirely. AHSF and the Naperville membership opted for the latter, closing the course for the duration of the project, although the clubhouse facility remained open. Near-record rains delayed construction by 11 weeks with a particularly large storm on Oct. 2, 2006, but the course reopened on Sept. 6, 2007.

"The new golf course is a match of the vision we had all hoped for," Tierney said.

To say thanks for his efforts, the club made Forrest an honorary Naperville CC member and appointed him to a committee exploring future course improvements. "That was quite an honor," Forrest said, "and I look forward to continuing my association with the members at Naperville."

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[For more information on Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates, visit www.arthurhills.com, or call 419-841-8553.]

About Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates

Toledo, Ohio-based AHSF is one of golf's most active and cosmopolitan course design firms, with a portfolio including some 200 original designs and 130 renovations on four continents (www.arthurhills.com). In addition to its projects in the U.S. and Mexico, AHSF has flourished abroad with design projects currently underway in Sweden, Portugal, Norway, Morocco, Russia, Belize, Costa Rica, Canada and the Caribbean. This month, The Club at Olde Stone in Alvaton, Kentucky will host the PGA of America's Junior Ryder Cup Matches, while another AHSF design, The Journey at Pechanga in Temecula, California, will open for play in November beside the Pechanga Resort & Casino.

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