



GOLF COURSE RENOVATION: A Case Study

By Jim Rodgers, Lohmann Golf Designs

Golf has reached a new level of popularity, with more people playing the game than ever before. Due to this high level of popularity, more is expected from golf courses, not only the private clubs, but also the public courses. For this reason, many older courses are initiating renovation programs to help meet modern expectations. A renovation project may consist of correcting unsafe conditions for the golfer, or alleviating drainage or maintenance problems on a course.

The first step in any renovation program is to establish the parameters within which the work will take place. This can be established through the development of a Master Plan for the entire golf course. A specific goal of the Master Plan is to show what the course will look like at the completion of the renovation. Also, use of the plan eliminates the redoing of already completed work because a different result is desired. Thirdly, overall costs can be reduced by completing the work in several areas at the same time.

For the purpose of illustration, we will look specifically at the renovation program currently underway at Randall Oaks Golf Club in West Dundee, Illinois. The Master Plan was completed in the Spring of 1986, and then we were ready to begin work.

The first phase of construction included excavation of a pond and the elevation of No. 17 fairway that drained poorly. The fairway elevation work would take up a major portion of the soil excavated, but we needed to determine what to do with the remainder. The Master Plan called for some mounding along the opposite side of the fairway and building a new tee. The adjacent 11th hole also required some mounding and two new tees. This project would complete the majority of work on these two holes.

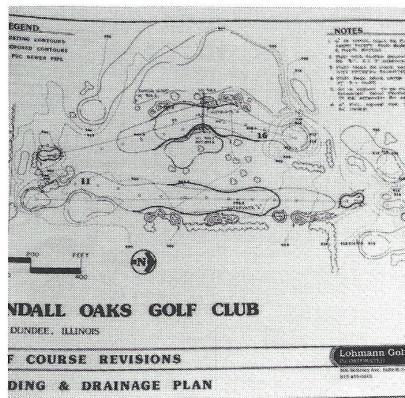
The next stage was to complete working drawings, prepare cost and quantity estimates, and plan exactly when the work would take place. A field



Sometimes outside contractors and equipment are needed for construction.



Pond excavation — from plans to the field.



Grading and drainage plan.

survey to find exact locations of sprinkler heads was combined with a topographic map to ensure accurate quantity estimates and field layout. We worked closely with the superintendent to establish what work could be contracted out and what could be completed by the club. Obviously, the more the club can complete, the lower the overall cost.

The size of the pond was dictated by the soil necessary to complete the other work. Therefore, we needed to determine size of mounds and how much to elevate the tees. This was a back-and-forth process between excavating the necessary soil and making the pond of adequate size and depth to be a positive addition to the golf hole.

The pond was positioned at the corner of a Par 4, slight dogleg right. It was out of range of the average golfer's tee shot and pinched the fairway at 220 yards. For the long hitter, a 240-yard carry over the back edge of the pond would leave a pitching wedge to the green.

A set of specifications was also prepared to ensure that the work was done properly. These specifications included the bid proposal and the bonding requirements of the contractor.

The bidding process is sometimes a difficult one, which proved to be true in this case. The bids were rejected because they exceeded the budget, so it was decided to work the project on a time-and-material basis.

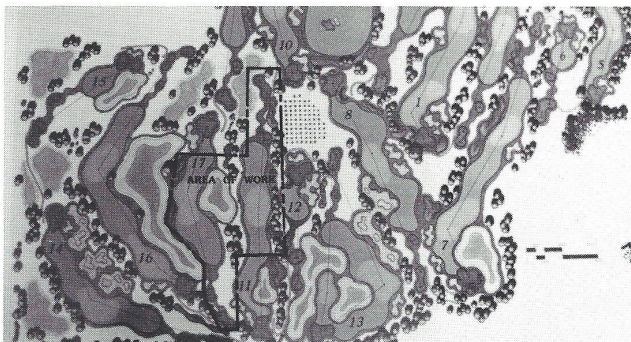
Once a contractor was selected, layout work could begin. We staked out the shapes of the features to be constructed and marked the finished elevations of the proposed grading.

Construction began on September 14. This date was chosen because the major portion of the golf season was over. And it would also allow us to complete seeding by the end of September. Everything went according to schedule the first few days, but then the heavy Fall rains set our schedule back by several weeks. Eventually, all the excavation and rough grading were completed, as well as most of the finish grading. A pipe connecting the pond with an existing pond was also installed to maintain a constant water level.

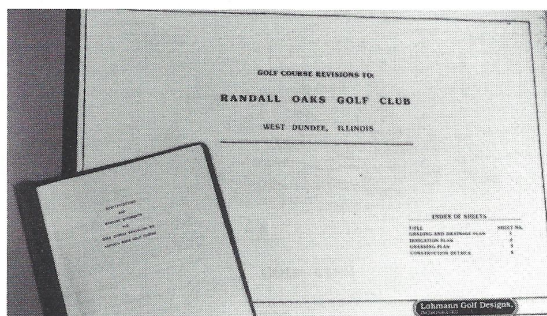
The soil mix was placed, and the No. 16 tee was sodded. Some finish grading is still required on the No. 11 tee. The fairway has been filled and finish graded. Work was stopped when the ground became frozen. However, a majority of the work had been completed. The remainder will be completed early this Spring. It's unfortunate, but little can be done about unexpected weather.

The success of this project was due to extensive planning, the fact that 18 holes were kept in play at all times, and that the golfers were well-informed before work began. The completed work looks great and has been well-received by all the regular golfers. They are anxious to play the revised golf holes and are excited about the future changes.

The thought of golf course renovation may sound intimidating and even terrifying to some members. But a well-planned project combined with thoroughly informed golfers will result in a successful renovation that produces exciting changes to an existing golf course.



Overall view of the course with the area of work well defined.



The Master Plan and specifications.

Article first appeared in, "The Grass Roots," the official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association. Volume XIV, No. 2: March/April, 1987.

Reprinted by Facility Ministry with permission of Bob Lohmann of Lohmann Golf Designs and "The Grass Roots."