

Renovation of the Year 2016

Classics

This year, a number of classic courses, including some long-ignored, got makeovers.

BY MIKE STETZ

Paying homage.

If there's one theme in this year's Golf Inc.'s Renovation of the Year contest, that's it.

Owners and operators of a number of older, tired golf courses sought to bring them back to glory. They had gold, and they knew it, even if years of tarnish had made it hard to see — and play through.

Take Bacon Park Golf Course in Savannah, Ga., as an example. A Donald Ross-designed course that opened in 1926, it had become a mess. Over the years, nine holes were added to the original 18, so Ross' course got jumbled in that odd addition.

As part of the renovation, the original Ross course was painstakingly restored in a move one of our judges called “the work of a genius team.”

Bacon Park tied for best of show and first place in our public course category with Keney Park Golf Course in Windsor, Conn. The deadlock is a first for our annual competition. Keney Park went through a similar labor of renovation love. Its course dates back to the 1920s as well, and the city of Hartford wanted to return it to its golden-age heyday.

Why the trend?

As one golfer at Bacon Park noted, “Like uncovering a masterpiece, Bacon Park is on the verge of being fully re-born. Donald Ross would be so pleased.”

Right. You don't paint over a Rembrandt.



MEET THE JUDGES:

Forest Richardson, owner of Forest Richardson & Associates - Golf Course Architects. He's a former winner of a Renovation of the Year project.

Frank Benzakour, general manager and operator of the Village Club of Sands Point in Sands Point, N.Y. He has more 20 years in the hospitality business.

Michelle F. Tanzer is an attorney at the Florida-based firm of Gray Robinson. She provides legal representation for clubs during their renovation processes.

Oscar Rodriguez is vice president of Heritage Links. He has a distinguished background in golf construction

AFTER



PUBLIC

First place (tie) – Best of Show

KENEY PARK GOLF COURSE

Windsor, Conn.

Owner: City of Hartford

Architect: Dusenberry Golf Course Design

Contractor: Stonehedge Landscaping Co.

Year course opened: 1927

Budgeted amount: \$5.7 million

BEFORE



Keney Park Golf Course was designed by the prolific golden-age architect Devereux Emmet, whom some argue was unfairly overshadowed by his contemporaries. The course was described by the entry as having “significant historical value.”

Renovators wanted to preserve it.

However, challenges were many. For one, the former operator had ignored the course for several years. After the operator was canned in 2014, virtually no maintenance was done for a year. No one had done major capital improvements for decades.

The city of Hartford considered the course too important to let the decay continue.

“The park and golf course have a long history of providing an active recreational

amenity to this economically depressed and minority dominated area of the city,” the entry noted.

The renovation architects found examples of Emmet’s design style, which motivated their work.

“This resulted in significant modification to the existing tees, bunkers and greens during the renovation. Locations, contour/slopes and strategy were improved while maintaining the 1920s design style, aesthetics and playability,” the entry stated.

Talk about a win, win, win...

“Combine the public investment in golf, the job creation and economic impacts, with the return to great architecture and golf experience ... all for low green fees, it’s a really great story for the ‘state of golf’ in

2016.”

Indeed, this course may have seen a different fate a decade ago.

Judges’ comments:

“So much great golf course design has been erased under the guise of renovation improvements.’ The work here is not only grounded in history, but it brings golfers face to face with an era of design that has all but vanished.”

— Forrest Richardson

“Excellent restoration and modernization of the infrastructure of this course. All while embracing the history of the site.”

— Oscar Rodriguez