

2014 Renovation of the Year

This year's contestants faced floods, permit problems and other challenges. But that didn't stop these nine courses from becoming winners.

BY LAIRA MARTIN

Out with the old, in with the old. It's not the motto one expects when renovating, well anything, let alone a golf course. But today's architects — particularly some of this year's winners of Golf Inc.'s Renovation of the Year contest — are careful to pay homage to legendary course designers, focusing on retaining their visions and craftsmanship.

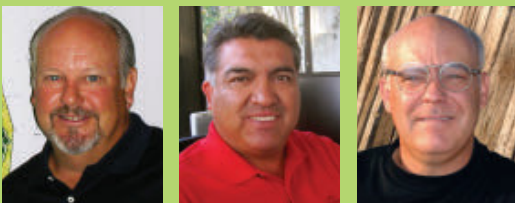
Forse Design restored the Country Club of Buffalo, a Donald Ross gem that opened in 1926. That firm's work so impressed our judges that the project won Best of Show.

Kenneth Moodie tackled the restoration of Moortown Golf Club, which Alister MacKenzie designed

in 1908. And Moodie did so rather frugally. His work won first place for projects costing under \$1 million.

But, as always, there were significant infrastructure feats when it came to the renovations in this year's crowded field. The work is not just about beautifying courses. Architect Jason Straka took on flooding challenges at Camelback Golf Club to win first place for public courses.

And Gil Hanse took on the Blue Monster, helping Donald Trump to achieve his goal of making the well-known course more challenging and returning it to its former glory. That renovation has received many honors, including one now from Golf Inc.

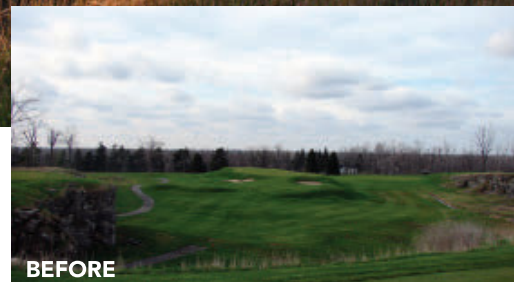


This year's expert panel of judges was comprised of past winners John C. Colligan, principal of Colligan Golf Design; Oscar Rodriguez, president of O&J Golf Construction, and Forrest Richardson of his namesake company Forrest Richardson & Associates.

Country Club of Buffalo



Private, more than \$1 million
FIRST PLACE (BEST OF SHOW)
The Country Club of Buffalo
Architect: Forse Design, Inc.
Contactor: Aspen Corporation
Budgeted Amount: \$1.91 million



The Country Club of Buffalo underwent a lot of changes back in the 1950s, when it hit its three-decade mark. But the current membership wanted the course — which sits on two former limestone quarries in upstate New York — to be restored with its celebrated roots in mind.

When approaching the renovation, Mark Bonner, chairman of CCB's Golf Course Long Range Planning, had two options: completely redo 83 bunkers or restore most of the 117 original Ross bunkers in addition to undertaking tee renovation, fairway relocation, green restoration, drainage, irrigation and tree work. He chose the latter.

Each hole was reviewed for historical accuracy by reading Ross' personal records, studying 1927 aerial photographs and conducting research at Cornell University.

"There are no two holes that are really alike," said course President Peter Hunt.

Bonner said the intent of the renovation was not to make the game harder than it already was.

"Our real goal was to increase playability for all golfers of all ages," he said. "Some

say it's harder now, but they're probably playing the wrong tee for their skill level."

The restoration is subtle to the inexperienced eye. But Golf Inc.'s Renovation of the Year judges saw the changes quite clearly.

"As the project illustrates, modern technology has done much to take us back in time," Colligan said. "The historic aerial photo[s] of 1927 has allowed this talented [team] to restore these great old examples of golf course history. Research and documentation of the work done by the best in the business allow players of today to enjoy the masterpieces of yesteryear all for a mere \$1.9 million."

That "mere \$1.9 million" is a number higher than team members had initially expected. The Country Club of Buffalo faced two primary problems during the 10-month renovation: working around the sometimes harsh New York weather and excavating very large rocks that surrounded several bunkers.

"We ran into the rock issue," Bonner

said. "Some of the bunkers were literally on the rock. They couldn't be moved without being rather expensive."

Removal of the rocks in the early holes cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000. Luckily, the team was able to avoid additional costs by utilizing the Donald Ross philosophy of working with the land rather than against it.

"[It turned out] the rock issue wasn't as significant as we thought. It just took some ingenuity and creativity to work around it," Bonner said. "In some cases the bottom of the bunker was rock and we just pounded holes in that rock in a few places, poured water to see where it was going and it drained itself quite easily."

The finished product has swayed even members who didn't want to spend money on the renovation.

"Members have been ecstatic," Bonner said. "It's not surprising to see a member riding a cart around the course just to show a friend because it is just so beautiful."