

## **BIG DAY AT CCA**

**Country Club of Asheville (CCA) celebrated the grand reopening of its Donald Ross-designed golf course May 4-6. Along with completely renovated golf course overseen by Pinehurst architect Richard Mandell, CCA has expanded its practice facilities and modernized its clubhouse.**

**ASHEVILLE, N.C. (May 2017)** — The Country Club of Asheville celebrated a grand reopening of its renovated golf course May 4-6 with the unveiling of a new practice facility. With the addition of a larger practice tee that offers more space for players to work on their game and a newly added short game area to fine-tune chipping, pitching and bunker play, the club will offer not only a new course but a more modern practice area for all to enjoy.

Last month, the Country Club of Asheville, the oldest private club in North Carolina with its origin dating back to 1894, unveiled its newly renovated golf course to the membership for the first time. The Donald Ross-designed golf course was closed for 348 days and redesigned under the guidance of Richard Mandell. The Pinehurst-based architect was in charge of reshaping and reconstructing all 18 greens to the original 1928 Ross design. After nearly a year of construction and a few battles with Mother Nature, the course reopened on April 14 with more than 180 members seeing the changes for the first time.

The member's re-opening weekend turned out to be a big hit. Long-time Country Club of Asheville member Clay Emerik, a fixture of the course prior to reconstruction, struck the inaugural tee shot.

Keeping in the spirit of what Donald Ross was known for — Pinehurst No. 2 being one of his more famous designs — the greens were re-shaped with plenty of slope and undulations designed to present a fair but challenging test on the putting surface. Numerous club members, some of more than 30 years, were astonished at how outstanding their golf course had become. CCA member Rick Arpin said, "I would kiss the architect if he were standing here right now... this place is beautiful."

“Country Club of Asheville members have a golf course and private club of which to be very proud,” said CCA Head Golf Professional Matt Stewart. “The positive reviews of the course were overwhelming.”

After enjoying three rounds during opening weekend CCA member (and Club Champion) Pat Thompson declared, “We are going to be as good as it gets when it comes to golf courses in Western North Carolina.”

In 2016 at Country Club of Asheville, McConnell Golf spent \$3.7 million on capital projects, of which \$3 million was devoted to the golf course renovation. That brought McConnell Golf’s total investment since purchasing the Country Club of Asheville in late 2014 to more than \$4.6 million.

### **GOLF COURSE RENOVATION DETAILS**

For much of 2016, Country Club of Asheville’s golf course was closed due to extensive restoration performed by Pinehurst-based golf course architect Richard Mandell, who oversaw numerous improvements such as new 007 Bentgrass on all 18 greens, a restored creek crossing on No. 10, a new practice facility and rerouted cart paths.

Mandell said the most exciting part of the project was discovering and returning the forgotten work Donald Ross had created in 1928.

“Working alongside [superintendent] Robby Watts and his crew, undergoing renovations at the Country Club of Asheville have been a very enjoyable experience for me,” Mandell said. “It was fun to incorporate my knowledge of Ross in creating new greens where possible and uncovering some of the original greens buried under a few existing ones.”

Using information from longtime CCA members, the Donald Ross Society and notes from the original construction, Mandell tried to mimic the original course layout as closely as possible. Every piece of data gathered would allow him to focus on his goal of preserving the original instead of making design changes.

“My early process walk-through with Les Stradley, who was the golf pro there in the 1970s, was an eye-opener as to the changes to the greens in the 60s from Ross's work,” says Mandell.

“I am most proud of the finished work to the features and shaping of the putting surfaces, which was done by NMP Golf Construction and my shaper, Marc Burger, respectively,” says Mandell. “I hope the greens are as fun to putt [on] as they were to design. Mr. McConnell wanted a set of very interesting, challenging putting surfaces, which is what we delivered. I believe they are the soul of the course now.”

Besides the changes to the greens, another adaptation required moving the first tee. The results: A better view of the fairway for the golfer’s drive and the creation of space for a new 10,000-square-foot practice putting green next to the clubhouse.

The reconstruction efforts, particularly the new drainage and turf, will also help provide outstanding course conditions year round. Strategically chosen for Asheville’s unique climate, the 007 Bentgrass greens will perform very well in the cool weather along with the rest of the course. The fairways are also Bentgrass, while the roughs are a blend called Midnight Kentucky Bluegrass.

To reduce excessive mowing, Mandell used Meyer Zoysia on the sand bunker faces, just as he did at Raleigh Country Club in 2006. Although Zoysia is a slow-growth, warm-season grass used all over the Southeast, it is new to the Asheville area.

“The work here at CCA is some of my best,” says Mandell. “The green complexes and the bunkering are a testament to Ross's practical approach to design, yet we seized the opportunity to create a bit more variety from hole to hole. It was an honor to work on No. 16, as it has always been one of my favorites, as depicted in one of my favorite books on golf architecture, *George Thomas's Golf Architecture in America*.”

## **CLUBHOUSE RENOVATION DETAILS**

Work on the golf course is not nearly all that has been done at Country Club of Asheville since McConnell Golf took over operations. The

clubhouse was completed renovated including a new porte-cochere entrance adding character and volume upon approach. McConnell Golf renovated the men's and women's locker rooms and bathroom areas, while a men's steam room was also installed. Outside the clubhouse has received fresh landscaping, as well.

The new back patio terrace with modern, chic furniture and panoramic mountain views creates an ideal gathering place. New awnings wrapped around the entire backside of the clubhouse, while a total overhaul to the Fitness Center included flooring, enclosed fitness studio, TVs, a personal training assessment area and select equipment.

Country Club of Asheville also received a newly created Cardinal Game Room (Tween Room) for children to play in, as well as adults for game nights and holiday gatherings. McConnell Golf performed a total resurfacing of the pool, updated and renovated the pool cabana to include paint and flooring and installed a new sound system.

In 2017, McConnell Golf has more scheduled improvements at Country Club of Asheville including a new pool fence, a total overhaul of the outdoor Tennis Shop, select upholstery throughout the clubhouse, new banquet chairs for the special events, a new digital keypad allowing 24-hour Fitness Center access, and a new HVAC digital control system and unit replacement.

Since its inception in 2003, McConnell Golf has bolstered its burgeoning reputation in the golf industry by investing significantly in improvements and upgrades at its clubs. McConnell Golf is currently overseeing renovation and restoration work totaling approximately \$7.3 million at four of its clubs around the Carolinas and Tennessee. With the 2016 additions of Providence Country Club in Charlotte, N.C., and Holston Hills Country Club in Knoxville, Tenn., McConnell Golf now owns a dozen 18-hole, private golf courses plus one nine-hole course around the southeast.

Meanwhile, McConnell Golf has added two new national memberships to its attractive menu of affordable, cutting-edge offerings. "McConnell Golf is focused on building clubs of the future," said McConnell Golf Chief Operating Officer Christian Anastasiadis. "There is one reason we are in

business — members. Attracting members through a quality and value experience, and retaining members via a sustainable product that they always want to be part of.”

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#### **ABOUT MCCONNELL GOLF**

McConnell Golf (McConnellGolf.com) memberships include privileges at a dozen 18-hole, private golf courses plus one nine-hole course throughout the Carolinas and Tennessee. McConnell Golf’s stable of prestigious clubs includes Raleigh Country Club and TPC Wakefield Plantation in Raleigh, NC, Sedgefield Country Club Ross Course and Dye Course in Greensboro, NC, Providence Country Club in Charlotte, NC, Old North State Club in New London, NC, Treyburn Country Club in Durham, NC, Brook Valley Country Club in Greenville, NC, Country Club of Asheville (NC), The Reserve Golf Club in Pawleys Island, SC, Musgrove Mill Golf Club in Clinton, SC and Holston Hills Country Club in Knoxville, TN. McConnell Golf also operates the 27-hole public Raleigh Golf Association and manages the Grande Dunes Members Club and Ocean Club in Myrtle Beach for LStar Development.

#### **Media contacts**

Martin Armes (919) 608-7260, martinarmes@nc.rr.com

Brad King (336) 306-9219, king@bradkingcommunications.com