

THE INTERVIEW

Drew Rogers

An alumni of the nearby University of Kentucky, Drew Rogers was delighted to be appointed to lead a renovation of the Arthur Hills-designed course at Champion Trace GC in Lexington, Kentucky. With the project coming to a close, the architect spoke to Sean Dudley about the work



I understand Champion Trace is a course close to your heart. Can you tell me a little about your memories of it?
I drove out to the site every day after classes at the University of Kentucky while the course was under construction, and I remember sitting on a horse-farm fence and watching the whole thing unfold. I walked around, keeping my distance, just trying to see as much as I could. I found it all mesmerising, the way the holes gradually came to life.

How does it feel to return to Champion Trace to work on the course?

The owners there value my perspective because they know how much I love the course and care about its evolution. In my opinion, it is honestly one of the finest tracks in the US mid-south. I know what it meant to Arthur Hills and to the original developer Tom Heilbron. That plays into how I think about the course today. But still, it's a course that is evolving, as all courses do. For all these reasons, I'm glad to be the guy helping this club follow the proper path forward.

What has your recent work involved?

The regrassing of the greens was already in motion, along with some other adjustments. They seemed to be going about it alone. So I made an inquiry about the details of what they were doing, because the quality of that course mattered so much to me. When they agreed to bring me on, we just walked the course and talked. That led to discussing some other things and marking out some lines on the ground – things like tree removal, fairway alignments, tee alignments, bunkers, and the introduction of short-grass extensions around some of the greens. All of those aspects are to be considered within the context of what Arthur Hills originally designed and built. I guess what I had to say had some merit, because they got right to work, following my direction.

What do you think golfers will benefit most from once the course reopens in late April?

I think they'll see much the same course that they are accustomed to, but the green surfaces will obviously be improved and pure. A few annoyances will be gone. There will be some enhancements that will hopefully be welcome, and new elements that will make the course more enjoyable, particularly around the greens. The course should be more visually appealing as well. We've also addressed a number of maintenance issues, probably things few folks other than the superintendent would ever notice.

