

Plum Hollow CC Revisits Past With Renovation

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Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield, Mich. (Image: Eric Seals/ Detroit Free Press)

The Southfield, Mich. course hired Drew Rogers, based out of Toledo, Ohio, to create a new design. After walking the grounds, Rogers decided in order to move the game forward at Plum Hollow, the course needed to go back. “Drew looked at the original designs, we have the papers in the back at how things were and looked when Alison designed it,” Club President Joseph Maiorano says. “The goal was to bring it back to that.”

Renovation work began two years ago on the 100-year-old Plum Hollow Country Club, a private golf club in Southfield, Mich. the Detroit Free Press reported.

“The idea was to modernize the course by bringing it back to its roots,” said board member Ivan Meltzer. “It wasn’t about modernizing it in a new age way, but using what we can do today to bring it back to that original idea.”

Truth be told, the club didn’t have any active plans for renovations until Oakland County reached out in 2015 with a request, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Part of the county’s drain system runs through the back nine holes — which goes across the 100-year flood plain.

The county road commission wanted to do a project that would require Plum Hollow to grant them 50 more feet, the Detroit Free Press reported. The club agreed to the necessary work, on the condition the road commission would pay for the club to bring in an architect to fix things up.

“We didn’t want the road commission deciding what kind of grass we would put in,” joked club president Joseph Maiorano.

An agreement was reached.

Oakland County would chip in just more than \$1 million to compensate the course for time and the construction costs, the Detroit Free Press reported.

But Plum Hollow’s leaders didn’t want to stop there.

The club’s board overwhelmingly approved renovations that would cost the course an additional \$3 million, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Once underway, Maiorano knew right where to begin.

“We started on (hole No.) 13,” he said. “We hired engineers and expanded the river by 10 yards to give relief because essentially sometimes 13 you could float a boat on it. There were times for two days where 13 would be floatable, not golfable. We removed the dam so water could flow through the property better, then we moved right into course construction.”

For the course design, Plum Hollow hired Drew Rogers, based out of Toledo, Ohio, the Detroit Free Press reported.

A highly regarded architect, Rogers spent 19 years as a senior designer and partner of one of golf's most noted architects, Arthur Hills.

He has done work on courses like Old Elm Club in Chicago, Oitavos Dunes in Portugal (included in Golf Magazine's Top 100 courses in the world) and The Country Club of North Carolina, the Detroit Free Press reported.

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"Drew looked at the original designs, we have the papers in the back at how things were and looked when Alison designed it," Maiorano said. "The goal was to bring it back to that. The modernization was in how the bunkers were built, back to the original Colt and Alison design: deeper, higher faces. Fairways were broadened like they would have been, then. So that's what Drew did, he brought it back to the original intent."

No stone was left unturned in the renovation that was focused on tee boxes and bunkers, the Detroit Free Press reported. Plum Hollow purchased the sand for its bunkers that Oakland Hills, widely known as the top golf course in the state, uses on its South Course.

Removing the trees not only would be better functionally for the course, but it opened up sight lines — like from the No. 11 tee box, where almost all 18 holes are visible, the Detroit Free Press reported.

But of all the changes made, one stood above the rest.

"Drew's vision in his design was to give players options," Meltzer said. "You can putt off the green, chip, bump and run, just about every hole out here you have different options on how to play it especially around the greens."

Plum Hollow has a rich history.

It was home to the Ryder Cup exhibition matches in 1943. It hosted the PGA Championship in 1947, the Detroit Free Press reported.

And it was the site of the Western Open in 1957 and there remains a placard commemorating the time Sam Snead recorded the only competitive 10 of his career on hole No. 4 to lose the tournament by one shot.

Most recently, it was the site of the Michigan Amateur in 2015 and the hope is, more are coming.

The course doesn't have the length to host a PGA Tour event — from the tips on the new tee boxes, it plays around 6,900 yards.

But even without the length, water hazards or grown-out rough, it's a true golf test, the Detroit Free Press reported.

"It's not a long course, but still a very, very challenging golf course because you have to put the ball in the right place," Meltzer said. "There's not a lot of danger, we don't have a lot of water, not a lot of blind shots, the course feels like it's right out there in front of you."

Shots must be shaped both left and right in order to have solid approach angles, the Detroit Free Press reported. Elevation changes on most every hole and with the extraction of dozens if not hundreds of trees, the wind can swirl.

And don't even think about hitting it above the hole at most pins, especially 18, or you're looking at a near guaranteed three-putt. As much was true before the design, but it's only heightened now, the Detroit Free Press reported.

"He wasn't an architect as much as an artist," said incoming president Zachary Savas of Rogers design. "You totally forget you're in Southfield."