

GOLF

Once home to PGA Championship, Plum Hollow Country Club's restoration goes back in time



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Detroit Free Press

Published 6:04 a.m. ET July 20, 2022 | Updated 10:02 a.m. ET July 20, 2022

It just sort of happens, even when decisions on the layout of a golf course are made with the best of intentions.

Sometimes members plant trees as a memorial for loved ones who enjoyed the grounds, but that can cause too much canopy and prevent the grass from growing properly.

Other times, the upkeep of the fairways can be so involved — it's more expensive to maintain than the rough — the runoff areas along the side become slightly neglected.

So as the years go on, fairways narrow, bunkers lose their shape and the slopes on greens alter.

Essentially, the wear and tear of a course reaching 100 years old catches up.

Plum Hollow Country Club, a private golf club in Southfield founded in 1921 which rests on the corner of Nine Mile Road and Lahser, was no different.

That's why two years ago, a renovation began to bring the course back in time.

"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."

It started with Oakland County

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

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 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.

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.

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."

Bring in the architect

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

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.

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," 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. 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.

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.

"It makes you think on every shot."

Future is bright

Plum Hollow has a rich history.

It was home to the Ryder Cup exhibition matches in 1943. It hosted the PGA Championship in 1947.

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 intent was to hold high level amateur," Maiorano said. "Is there a possibility of an LPGA event, sometime? Yes."

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.

"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.

"You look at the scorecard, it doesn't look hard, but you finish up four-and-a-half hours later and see that it's a really good test of golf."

Shots must be shaped both left and right in order to have solid approach angles. 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.

"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."

Plum Hollow Country Club renovations unveil

25 PHOTOS

5:10 p.m. EDT July 19, 2022



A creek with waterfall features at the seventeenth green at the Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

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A creek with waterfall features at the seventeenth at the Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

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A rebuilt bridge for the par-3 fifth green near 9 Mile Road at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

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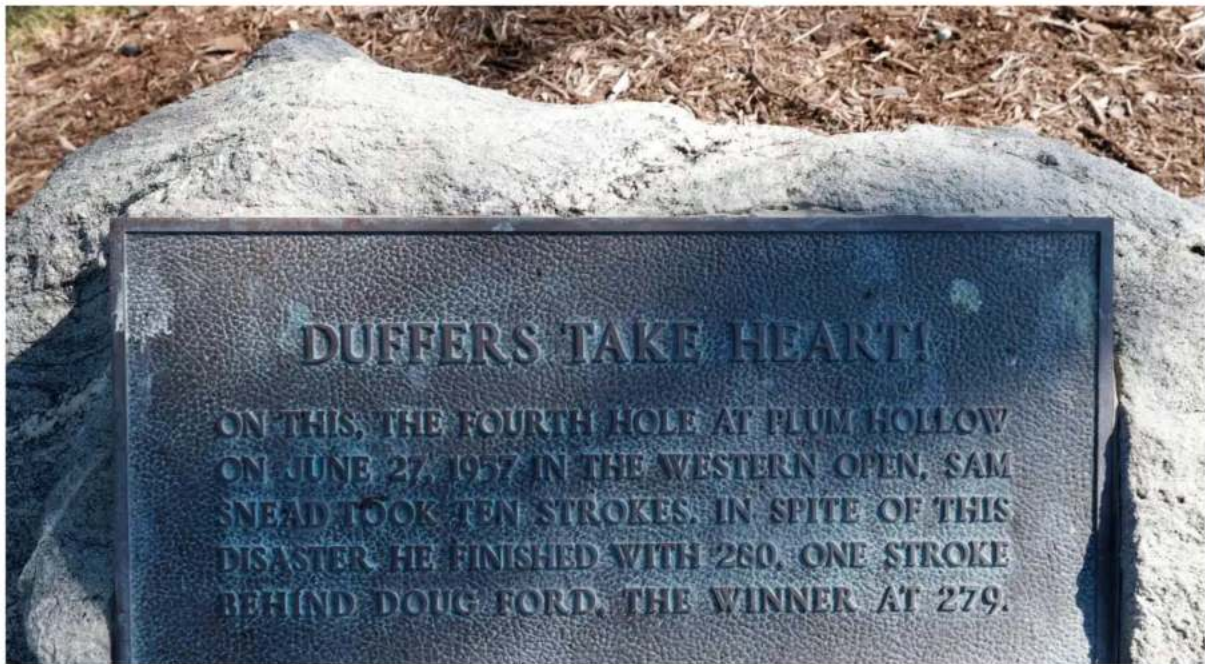
A newly rebuilt bridge going to the fourteenth tee at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

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The Plum Hollow Country Club clubhouse seen in the background at the ninth green of the private golf course in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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What's referred to as Snead Rock at the par-4 fourth tee at the Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. On June 27, 1957 in the Western Open, Hall of Fame golfer Sam Snead took 10 strokes at this hole and lost the tournament by one shot to Doug Ford.

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Marlowe Alter, an assistant sports editor at the Detroit Free Press, watches his birdie putt slide by the hole at the par-3 number two green at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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Ivan Meltzer, a member of the board at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield putts on the number two green on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The men's locker room at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The sitting area leading to the ladies locker room at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The Art Moran Pub near the men's locker room at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The pool area at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The newly remodeled bar area next to the mens locker room at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The bridge leading to the five green near 9 Mile Road at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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Heather grass grows on a hill at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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Golfers tee off at the par-4 fourth hole at the Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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Grounds crew work on the greens at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The presidents clock near the putting green at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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A golf cart goes over one of the rebuilt bridges at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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A fertilizer cart makes its way across the greens during groundskeeping work at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022.

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The 18th green during the 1947 PGA Championship at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield.

PLUM HOLLOW COUNTRY CLUB



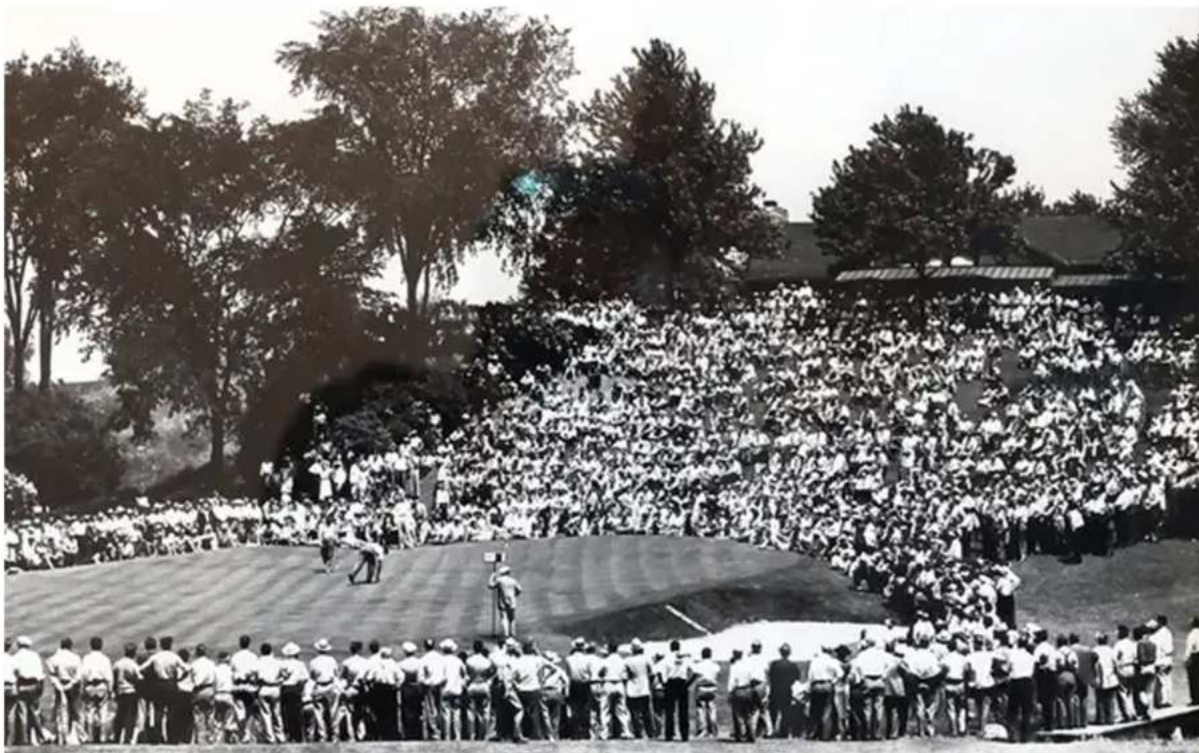
Golfers including Byron Nelson, Bing Crosby and Joe DiMaggio at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield during the 1943 Red Cross tournament.

PLUM HOLLOW COUNTRY CLUB



People gather around the scoreboard of the 1947 PGA Championship at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

PLUM HOLLOW COUNTRY CLUB



The 18th green during the 1947 PGA Championship at Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield on Tuesday, July 19, 2022. The private golf course that opened in 1921 went under a renovation recently. It held the PGA Championship in 1947 and an unofficial 1943 "Ryder Cup" exhibition during World War Two of some top American players.

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