



Rogers serves up some Lemon aid

JDR Golf Design reimagines under-the-radar course in Florida to add variety and make it more memorable.

Lemon Bay Golf Club in southwest Florida has, in 35 years, gone somewhat under the radar.

This may be due in part to the sheer quantity of golf in the state, but also possibly because the course hadn't reached its full potential.

The club was established in 1989 by six founding members, including real estate developer Kim Honey, who purchased what was then the Lemon Bay Beach and Country Club course, designed by Jim Petrides in 1980.

Petrides laid out the course on a compact site among the mangroves and backwaters of Lemon Bay. Unlike the courses of the nearby Rotonda West community, Lemon Bay is core golf, with the few houses that do overlook its western boundary separated by water.

"Lemon Bay gradually developed a reputation for its great location, the very friendly and welcoming membership and an abundance of amazing wildlife," says Rogers. "However, the golf course

was noticeably underwhelming and out of balance with their stated mission: To offer an exceptional golf experience by promoting the love of the game; encouraging congeniality among members, staff and guests; as well as being responsible citizens of our community and dedicated stewards of our environment."

In 2020, club president Tom O'Shane approached Rogers and his JDR Golf Design team to propose major changes to the course. Rogers says the Lemon Bay taskforce and membership

nuance," says Rogers. "It possessed very few defined playing strategies or shot values."

Rogers' plan, approved in 2021, embraces the course's intimate setting and natural beauty, while providing more of a sense of identity, greater variety and memorability.

"Drew immediately grasped the vision here," says O'Shane. "It was never his intent to change Lemon Bay Golf Club, but he was determined to make it a better version of who we are and what we represent."

"The redesigned greens complexes are the star of the show, employing much needed diversity and character"

provided "the perfect framework for what I thought could become a really outstanding golf experience".

Rogers set about creating a new masterplan. "The course was mainly lacking in design personality and

In 2022, prior to construction, the winds exceeding 150mph of Hurricane Ian caused substantial damage. Most of the course's mature stands of native loblolly pines were destroyed, but will, over time, be reintroduced.



Construction on the renovation – which included a new irrigation system – was completed in 2023 by Leibold Irrigation. “Every aspect of the course was reimagined within the agreed context and then reconstructed using the identical hole corridors and sequencing that were for many decades is familiar to its members,” says Rogers.

“The redesigned greens complexes are the star of the show, employing much needed diversity and character. The new green contours are all complemented by the varied approach and recovery opportunities through the introduction of more defined angles of play and an abundance of short grass. The holes are now detailed by dramatically etched bunkering as well as some subtle but impacting ground movements – all with a more balanced scale of presentation.”

The new bunkers include Better Billy Bunker lining. Rogers has also revamped tee complexes, converted turf to Bimini bermuda, expanded short grass areas and removed invasive plants.



While embracing Lemon Bay’s intimate setting was key, Rogers was keen to give the course a better sense of identity

“Despite maintaining a consistent theme, each hole at Lemon Bay now bears its unique character and challenges, a testament to Drew’s unparalleled vision and execution,” says Lemon Bay’s superintendent Eli Rahz.

The club’s leadership have used the course renovation as a platform to rebrand and boost Lemon Bay’s identity. “Drew’s keen

understanding of the nuances of the site, combined with his creative vision, resulted in a course that not only met but completely exceeded our expectations,” said Lemon Bay’s general manager Damon Williams. “His ability to strike a balance between honouring the club’s heritage and infusing innovative design elements was truly remarkable.” **GCA**