

# Renovation Roundup

*With one eye on economics and the other on quality improvements, many Met Area courses have undergone major changes*

**BY THOMAS DUNNE**

**Fresh Meadow Country Club,**  
Lake Success, N.Y.

Though not the Fresh Meadow where Gene Sarazen won the 1932 U.S. Open—that Tillinghast course in Flushing, Queens, was lost to housing decades ago—the club has plenty of history to burnish and protect. After World War II, Fresh Meadow purchased the former Lakeville Club in Lake Success and moved onto a Colt & Alison course with dramatic flash-faced bunkers. This well-known stop on the Met Area’s competitive circuit (2006 Ike Championship, 1971 & ’38 Met Opens) completed a renovation effort, directed by architect Keith Foster, in April of 2010. The Kentucky-based Foster rebuilt three greens and all of the greenside and fairway bunkers, bringing a new visual “pop” to these distinctive hazards. Hundreds of trees were removed, and Foster also

worked on adding interesting recovery options around the greens, as at the ninth and 18th holes, which now feature a shared collection area (*below*). “We didn’t want to change the golf course,” says former club president Morty Howard, “We just wanted to revitalize it.”

**Southampton Golf Club,**  
Southampton, N.Y.

Like many older area layouts, a 1960s-era “modernization” effort saw Southampton, a 1925 Seth Raynor design, stray from its roots. According to green committee chairman Dave Greene: “Silver maples were planted on our back nine that was at one time a farm field. We never lost our original green pads, but we did lose most of our Raynor-style bunkers.” New Hampshire-based architect Brian Silva led the charge on the club’s restoration, which was com-

pleted at the end of 2010. Among many changes, Silva restored width to the playing corridors, created a dramatic Punchbowl at the 16th (*below*), and restored a strategic fairway bunker at the short par-four fifth—the Knoll hole. Now, Greene says, “We have a course that Seth Raynor would recognize.”

**The Patterson Club,**  
Fairfield, Conn.

Though the first thing visitors will notice about the Patterson Club is its stunning new clubhouse, there is also a substantially overhauled Robert Trent Jones Sr. golf course to tackle. Rees Jones was engaged to update the course in his father’s style. All 18 greens—old push-up complexes that superintendent John Garcia likened to “flower pots without holes in the bottom”—have been resodded and now feature modern drainage.



Fresh Meadow



Southampton

RIGHT: EVAN SCHILLER; FAR RIGHT: JOE WAGNER

Greg Muirhead of Rees Jones, Inc., noted that many bunkers were separated from the greens by mounds, and the team worked to better tie the features together. Also, a number of middle and forward tees have been added to improve playability. The par-three 14th, which had played blindly over a water hazard from the middle tee, is one hole where tee reconstruction led to considerable improvement.

**Quaker Ridge Golf Club,**  
Scarsdale, N.Y.

Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner have been focused on moving the course closer to its Tillinghast roots, undoing some of the changes of a previous renovation made for the 1997 Walker Cup. Tillinghast bunkers tend to be cut into the greens, but in the 1990s the backs of the greens were built up and the bunkers altered in both scale and style. At the par-three ninth, Hanse and Wagner brought back a bunker short of the green that, while seldom visited, was a key piece of the overall visual equation. “Tillinghast used it to bring the foreground closer,” said Hanse. “It’s an amazing bunker in terms of depth perception.” This year will see continued efforts at tree removal—Hanse hopes a thinning of the herd will allow the course’s many beautiful specimens to shine all the more brightly.

**Dellwood Country Club,**  
New City, N.Y.

Jim Urbina, Tom Doak’s longtime right-hand man, will soon begin his first solo project—a thorough revamping of A.W. Tillinghast’s Dellwood in Rockland County. Historical detective work by Urbina, Tillie biographer Philip Young,

and others is at the heart of the project. The course was built on an estate owned by Paramount Pictures chieftain Adolf Zukor and spent its first decade as a retreat for the Hollywood set called Mountain View. Zukor and his studio, however, fell on hard times after the Crash of ’29, and so did the golf course. A 1940 aerial photo shows Dellwood with fewer than forty bunkers, but Urbina believes there were many more. The team has been studying the ground for signs of these lost hazards, and superintendent Brian Chapin has already unearthed some sandy deposits—proof of their former existence.

**Municipal Courses,**  
Essex County, N.J.

One of the nation’s most venerable park systems (designed by the famed Olmsted Brothers firm) has an estimable golf architecture heritage, with two of its three courses designed by Charles Banks. The county committed some \$7 million to the revitalization of Francis Byrne, Hendricks Field and Weequahic Golf Courses. Stephen Kay and Doug Smith were brought in to lead the design project, which was managed in the field by Ed Brockner. Brockner, who also aided in the transformation of the Bronx’s Mosholu Golf Course into The First Tee of Metropolitan New York’s flagship facility, said, “About 80 percent of the money spent was on stuff you don’t see—improving drainage and irrigation.” This made for a dramatic improvement while still leaving funds for things that can be seen. At Francis Byrne, every bunker was rebuilt, and options were restored at the par-four tenth after Brockner discovered a long-abandoned tee in the woods.

**Liberty National Golf Club,**  
Jersey City, N.J.

Architects Tom Kite and Bob Cupp have returned to Liberty National to oversee the evolution of the course as it enters its second half-decade. Based on feedback from the membership and Tour players following the 2009 Barclays, fourteen holes are being renovated to varying degrees. Five greens are being rebuilt, including that of the par-four third, which had featured a severe back-to-front slope that prompted the club, in the interest of consistency, to slow down all of the greens for the Tour event. The 18th green has been shifted closer to the clubhouse to better accommodate galleries. The work is expected to be completed this spring.

**Somerset Hills Country Club,**  
Bernardsville, N.J.

Before agreeing to any kind of consulting role Tom Doak and his design associate Brian Slawnik asked the club to devise a mission statement for their golf course. The club established as its imperative the goal of remaining faithful to A.W. Tillinghast’s design. Slawnik uncovered course aerials from 1940 and 1995 and extracted each hole at the same scale, allowing him to see where greens had shrunk over time. The club also recovered some of the old fairway cut lines, regaining some six acres of fairway. And superintendent Ryan Tuxhorn located areas of fescue that had been mowed down. This is the most immediately noticeable difference to the course presentation at Somerset Hills, which will host the 2011 Ike Championship. ■

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FAR LEFT: COURTESY OF REES JONES INC.; LEFT: ED BROCKNER