



Golf Course Designers & Golf Development Advisors

Craddockstown Golf Club Redesign & Upgrade

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Case Study - Redesign, Remodelling and Upgrade Project Craddockstown Golf Club, Naas, Co. Kildare, Ireland

In 1999 Roger Jones Golf Design was appointed to review the existing 18-hole member-owned parkland golf course.

Craddockstown GC was first constructed in the early 1990s, funded by the original members, with a limited budget. The maturing members - maturing in golf terms that is - had come to recognise that there were deficiencies in their golf course and wanted to do something about it.



View of 5th green before start of upgrade works
A typical problem of old bunkers is evident

Project Brief

The 'brief' that was given to Roger Jones comprised the following. The 13th hole was highlighted as being 'uninteresting and unnecessary long', other holes were described as 'featureless', the par 3's were described as too long and too similar in character, the course had no fairway bunkers, the ponds did not really come into play, there were drainage problems in a number of areas and a gravel layer that had been put into the greenside bunkers when they were first constructed was now coming to the surface and causing damage to maintenance machinery and members golf equipment. After those primary issues Roger Jones was given a free hand, within reason, to come up with other ideas that could add to the strategy, playability and overall enjoyment of the golf course.

Consultation and Deliberation

After a number of design proposals and variations, some arising out of new problems emerging, and variations because of cost implications, the scheme agreed included some new greens, new tees, extensions to existing lakes and some new ones, new fairway bunkers, fairway mounding, the reshaping and reconstruction of all greenside bunkers, reshaping of an existing open drain and hundreds of metres of new pipe drainage. By now it was 2002.



Aerial photo showing extension to lake at holes 1 & 2
Shaped subgrade for new 2nd green, and 'finger' in lake for new 3rd tees.



In January 2003 the construction contract was awarded to Contour Golf Ltd at prices that were competitive and very acceptable to the Club.

Construction

The Club were always adamant about their need to be able to continue playing the golf course and repeatedly expressed their apprehensions about disruption and damage. Craddockstown Golf Club has a large active playing membership, a full competition diary and a full diary of golf societies and corporate days. Understandably the revenue and reputation gained from these was too important to lose. In spite of the meticulous planning that had gone into the construction programme, reassurances by Roger Jones that disruption would be minimal were rarely sufficient to appease. Only time and the actualities of the construction programme were going to prove it, or not, as the case may be.

The detailed planning and regular inspection by Roger Jones, and the careful but highly productive approach taken by Contour Golf, ensured that major disruption did not happen. The members and the fee paying visitors continued to play the golf course on a daily basis. At no time did the club have to endure more than 2 temporary greens in the entire 18 holes and when work in any area was completed, play to the permanent green was resumed.

Bringing each feature of the course back into play in the earliest possible timeframe was always a consideration. The reshaping and reconstruction of existing greenside bunkers, with the addition of some new ones, was carried out very efficiently. The excavation and shaping was immediately followed by turfing the bunker surrounds. During the work the temporary greens created by the Club were put into use. Immediately upon completion (usually within the same day) the flag was replaced in the permanent green, and the bunkers roped off as 'ground under repair' for play purposes. The next golfers



View into 8th green with new and rebuilt greenside bunkers



View into 10th green with new fairway bunker and new lake



to that green were confronted by a different aspect to the hole than they had previously been used to.

Communication

Communication played a vital role in ensuring that the needs of all parties were met and that progress was smooth and without duress. Lines of communication were established between Roger Jones, the contractor's site manager, the golf course superintendent and the Club's General Manager. The Club Captain also played a pivotal role in this. He was at the club most days and as well as being a keen golfer found on the course at every opportunity, ensured that the contractors were aware of events happening on the course, and conversely finding out where work was being carried out in the forthcoming days and what temporary variations to the course were needed, if any, for the club's next competition or visiting group. This approach, a very good lesson in relationship management, paid dividends for all concerned.

The Benefits

At the early stages of any project the golf course architect can visualise the finished product and the composite elements of it. For a client this is much more difficult and in some cases impossible to appreciate until after completion. The club knew that they didn't want elements of what they had, but they weren't necessarily able to visualise what they would have. The benefits are now fully apparent to them - namely some new greens that offer different challenges to what they were used to, new tees that lengthen some



View into 10th green with new fairway bunker and new lake

holes and offer a different aspect to others, fairway bunkers that add new character and strategy to holes, reshaped and reconstructed greenside bunkers that are completely different than the existing. Probably the greatest impact came from the way in which the new lakes were brought into play. Not only do they look good and change the character of the respective holes immeasurably but in some areas they are a major factor in the improved drainage in that area. New pathways and bridges tie in a lot of these new elements. When completed, the golf course was vastly differently. It is now a golf course that is more challenging and more rewarding - a golf course that can compete with the best of its neighbours in the region - a golf course that is more sought after and desirable than previously.



By the end of the project the club invested in excess of half a million euro, not a huge amount but also not small for a members club that is not entirely 'commercial'. Their return on investment will be significant and the investment will undoubtedly be repaid in a very short space of time.

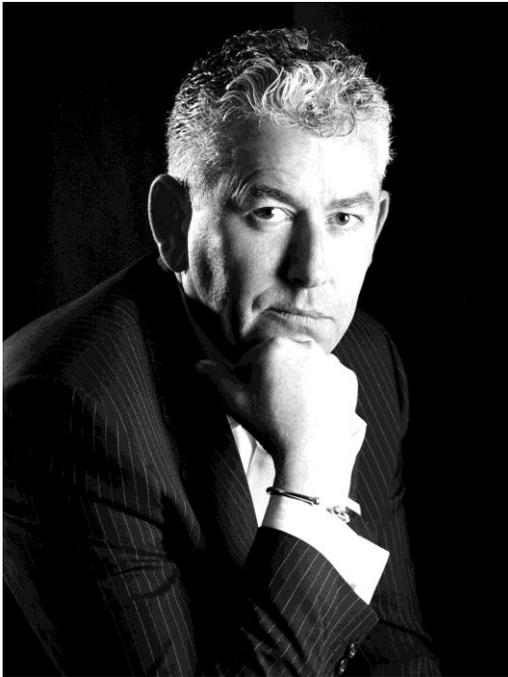
The club already had a long waiting list for membership and entrance fees have increased. Green fee rates have increased more than would otherwise have been the case because the 'product' offered by the club is now of a much higher standard. The reputation of the club is further enhanced which in turn will generate higher levels of business.

Lessons to be Learnt

Other clubs around the golfing world considering similar upgrade projects can learn a lot from the Craddockstown example. First and foremost the importance of hiring a professional golf course architect like Roger Jones Golf Design, secondly contracting the works to a specialist golf course contractor, especially one that has a good reputation for the standard of their finishing work and one that has proven they can carry out such works without damaging an existing course. Next is planning, planning every element in fine detail to avoid disruption and last but certainly not least communication, making sure the lines of communication are transparent and get used properly. Day to day communication between the parties directly involved is much more important than a whole series of after dark meetings and written reports.

Other clubs about thinking about, or about to embark on similar project should take note, and take reassurance from the fact that it is perfectly possible to undertake such a project without disruption to the daily run of play on the course and without damage to other areas of it.





ROGER JONES - ROGER JONES GOLF DESIGN

Roger Jones was born in Shropshire, UK in February 1963 and has spent his entire working career involved in the golf and leisure industry.

Having begun playing golf aged 10, Roger turned professional in 1981 but after four enjoyable years it was evident that he was not going to reach the level required to be a successful tournament playing professional. So RJ Golf Consultancy was established in the UK, specialising in the marketing and management of corporate golf events. Clients included local companies to blue chip plc's, and events included a national golf championship for The Caravan Club, and an annual programme of golf holidays for Touchstone Holidays. Other contracts included the establishment of a new golf facility near Paris, France and as a consultant to Petron Golf Equipment, specialists in the manufacture and marketing of tailor-made golf equipment.

In 1989 he first became involved in golf course design and development consultancy. In 1991 a contract for the design of an executive golf course at Gap of Dunloe, near Killarney in Co. Kerry took Roger to Ireland. Since then Roger Jones has been involved in the design and establishment of golf courses in Ireland, UK, USA and around Europe.

In 2001 Roger was contracted to design Garnant Park GC in Wales, an 18 hole golf course built on the site of an open-cast coal mine for Carmarthenshire County Council. The construction was completed in 2002 after which Roger advised the local authority on the first management contract for the course. The club was awarded the honour of 'Best New Golf Club in Wales 2003'.

During 2007/2008 RJGD carried out a renovation and upgrade for Balcarrick GC in North Co. Dublin. The course was successfully re-launched in June 2008, and in February 2009 Balcarrick GC was awarded an International Finalist place in the Renovation of the Year 2008, a global competition promoted by Golf Inc magazine in the US.

Associates & Consultants

Roger Jones works alongside experienced professionals from the many and varied disciplines required to bring together a successful golf development project. These associates are contracted on a project by project basis as required and include agronomists, architects, ecologists, landscape architects, planning consultants, civil and structural engineers, hydrologists, surveyors and quantity surveyors.

RJGD can provide all of the services necessary for any type of development project, but will also work with a client's own preferred consultants.

