

Cutten Fields reopens following final phase of ‘historically sensitive’ renovation



By **Richard Humphreys**

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Cutten Fields in Guelph, Canada, has opened its golf course for the season having now completed a renovation by Jeff Mingay.

The private club was founded in 1931 and its course was originally designed by architect Stanley Thompson and

amateur champion Chick Evans.

In 2016, Mingay was commissioned to develop a renovation plan, a year after the club hired Bill Green as golf course superintendent. Green was previously an assistant at Toronto Golf Club, where he was involved in a renovation of its Harry Colt-designed course.

“Instinctually, I was inspired by Thompson’s connection to Cutten Fields,” said Mingay. “For a time during the late 1940s, he was part-owner of the club and lived adjacent to the course. So, I initially drafted a plan that I thought looked like something Thompson would do. When Bill saw it for the first time, he half-jokingly said, ‘This is all wrong. You’re showing small greens and big bunkers. We need big greens and small bunkers.’”

Green recognised that bunkers and tees needed work. He also conducted detailed analysis of each green and found that the original poa annua greens were susceptible to winter issues, such as turf loss, and would continue to not perform well if changes weren’t made.

Green helped Mingay to refine his plan, which focused on reconstructing and expanding greens as well as converting them to bentgrass. [Mingay’s Cutten Fields plan was approved in 2019.](#)

“Architecturally, Bill really pushed me to think differently about some things that I might otherwise not have,” said Mingay. “It’s been a remarkable collaboration and a great example of how golf architects and course superintendents should work together on the architecture of the course, specifically relative to turf health, future maintenance and overall sustainability.”

Construction work was scheduled to begin in September 2020, but the Covid pandemic derailed those plans. Instead, with assistance from experienced golf course builder and shaper Mark Hughes, Green and his staff worked on five greens and several bunkers over the following years. Through that process, Hughes and Green trained the in-house construction team, who subsequently rebuilt tees, bunkers, greens and cart paths without the assistance of a contractor. Greens now average 7,500 square feet, a 50 per cent increase in size.

The thirteenth and sixteenth holes were also relocated to resolve safety concerns relating to adjacent properties.

“This project definitely wasn’t restorative,” said Mingay. “It really couldn’t be, too many things have changed over the years. It was certainly historically sensitive, though. Cutten Fields has a remarkably valuable history and design pedigree. We were inspired by Thompson’s tried-and-true architectural philosophy and style.

“At the same time, we’ve also restored elements of the original design that are seemingly attributed to Evans’ admiration for the Chicago Golf Club. Some geometrically shaped greens and bunkers, for example, that you definitely won’t find on Stanley Thompson-designed courses. At other holes we were forced to address design issues in a more contemporary fashion.”

Green said: “It was refreshing working with Jeff. He was very respectful of agronomic concerns and truly had the long-term sustainability of the course in mind throughout the entire processes of design and construction. Jeff’s really good at finding creative solutions to fundamental problems. His vision is inspiring.”

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