On Course

with Tripp Davis and Associates

Winter 2004/2005

Tripp's Perspective

How our Historical Restoration/Renovation makes us better Golf Architects

In any creative endeavor, sources of inspiration are vital to the process. Even though the creators may impart their own character and personality on what inspired them, inspirations are the starting point to being able to visualize what it is you are creating. The more you understand these inspirations – having a grasp of not just the *what*, but the *why* – and the more exposed you are to a variety of things that are inspiring, the more you are capable to be self confident in the work and therefore be more creative.

The first place to draw inspiration as a golf architect is to study other golf courses. You can start this by reading books and looking at photos, but in order to really grasp the substance of a golf course, you have to see it first hand. At some point, you also have to study the golf architect of these courses to best understand the *why* behind the *what*. As a golf architect, you must also be able to study these courses and these architects from both the perspective of a player – to understand the strategic variety, and the perspective of an architect – to grasp how the land was used and style conveyed. I grew up around some great classic golf courses and I have since made the study of the best courses in the world a passion of mine. It is a passion I have passed on to the three people I am fortunate to have working with me – Michael Rhoads, Gary Brawley and Hattie Pavlechko, even though they all came to me with a pretty strong interest of their own. In studying other golf courses, especially those that we consider the "classics", we have the opportunity to learn and draw from how they used the land, how they developed strategic elements, and the myriad of styles they used in the process. It builds our knowledge of how to creatively address the new courses we are building and embrace other restorations/renovations efforts.

As valuable as seeing golf courses, studying them, and studying the golf architects can be, there is no substitute for the ability to work on great golf courses in restoration/renovation projects. For one, the research involved to get prepared for the work exposes you to a more indepth perspective. You can spend the time to get more involved with *why* things were done the way they were and the repetitive study exposes you to more of the subtle traits that make such courses great. You also then get the valuable experience of actually performing in the recreation of a style and substance that has stood the test of time. We have been fortunate to have the opportunity to work with great golf courses originally designed by the giants of golf architecture's past. Perry Maxwell, Donald Ross, Herbert Strong, Seth Raynor, C.B. Macdonald, Dick Wilson, Colt and Allison, Charles Banks, and A.W. Tillinghast all originally designed courses we have worked on. While each of these golf architects had similar sources of inspiration, they each carried out their own work in their own way and they each had the creative ability to use their inspirations to vary their own strategy and style. This is a lesson that has not been lost on us.

Tripp's Excellent Adventure

After an exciting 2003, that included being Medalist at the US Mid Amateur, Tripp saw a couple of new venues in 2004 even though his schedule was more limited due to work commitments and an injured wrist toward the end of the year. However, it was again Tripp's opportunity to see some great golf courses under the focus of tournament play, see and meet great friends, and get a little break from a usually hectic schedule.

The first tournament of the year was the US Mid Am Preview Four Ball at Sea Island with partner Bill Jackson in February. The two paired well enough to finish 2nd in a strong field of the best Mid Amateur players in the country. Unfortunately, an injured wrist would keep him from playing in the Mid Am later in the year.

Followed was an 11th place finish at the Azalea Amateur, (played on the Raynor designed C.C. of Charleston,) a playoff loss to Danny Green and eventual champion Robert Gerwin at the Inverness Invitational in May, and a top 15 showing at the Sunnehanna Amateur while battling a balky putter in early June. Next, in late June, was Tripp's first trip to the Northeast Amateur and Donald Ross' design at Wannamoisset Country Club near Providence, Rhode Island. This is a great track that took a little figuring out. Tripp shot rounds of 73-71-67-69 to crack the top 20 in probably the best field in amateur golf. Best of all, it was a great opportunity to see a fascinating layout.

Tripp's last individual tournament of the year was his annual trip to the Porter Cup in Niagara Falls, New York in late July. His first round 64 was his best competitive round ever and tied him for the lead with US Open Low Amateur Spencer Levin – three shots clear of the rest of the field. However, the winds picked up and following rounds of 73-72-71 put him in 9th place. Unfortunately, a wrist injury made this his last tournament until playing in the Ray Floyd Four Ball with partner James Reid at Indian Creek in Miami Beach, FL in November. While Tripp and James did not play well, it was good to see William Flynn's great design again.

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Raven Nest Golf Club – Where It Belongs

A venture between the City of Huntsville, Texas (just north of Houston) and Sam Houston State University, Raven Nest Golf Club serves as the home of both the Huntsville High and Sam Houston Golf Teams. With an unusually good site to work with, the City and the University had Golf Course Architects from all over the country knocking their door down. "We received over thirty responses to our Request for Qualifications. We narrowed that to five and conducted interviews with these. Tripp Davis and Associates clearly stood out in their enthusiasm for the project, their organized approach, their passion for their work, and their knowledge of the game," stated Tom Weger, Assistant City Engineer.

Design work started in 2001 and centered around using a rolling, mostly sandy, site that had two creeks, some beautiful old deciduous trees and majestic Pines. "It was a site where trying to do too much would have been a mistake. We spent a great deal of time working to route the course so that the natural attributes would enhance the course, often looking for one of the great Pines, Oaks or panoramic views to serve as the backdrop for greens. In all, we moved only 150,000 cubic yards of dirt. A good bit of which was to build the driving range," stated Tripp. "We knew it was a course that would need to challenge the best high school and college players, while at the same time being an enjoyable source of recreation for people in and near Huntsville. We did this by providing generous room to play, but making the angles into the greens, the green surrounds and the greens themselves full of subtle character that makes it difficult to get approach shots really close and requires a lot of imagination on and around the greens." The course started construction in September of 2001 and was grassed in July of 2002.

Then the rains came. From July 1st to November 1st of 2002, the course had over forty inches of rain. Most of the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003 was spent trying to repair wash outs and get the course ready for an early summer opening. While the wash outs in the turf areas were repaired and came in reasonably well, soil washing into bunkers, where sod had not completely knitted together before the unusually heavy rains, contaminated the sand, sealed the drainage and destroyed many of the edges of the bunkers. After trying to go through the 2003 season by keeping the bunkers as dry as possible, the City and the University decided to go back in and rebuild all of the bunkers in 2004. Under the direction of Golf Course Superintendent Eric Gubser and Tom Weger, along with our guidance, Burnside Golf Construction (a golf course renovation specialist from Houston) did a great job rebuilding the bunkers to their original style. "It was a shame to see the record rain do what it did to Tripp's 'great work of art'. By getting the bunkers back in shape, Raven Nest is now what we hoped it would be all along – one of the best public golf courses in the country," said a proud Tom Weger.

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Restoration/Renovation Work

Engineers Country Club

Tripp, rarely without a paintgun in hand on a job site, discusses the bunkers on #5 with Jason Goldberg of Eagle View Golf.

Working at a club where Bobby Jones once played a U.S. Amateur has held a unique significance for me. I grew up in Atlanta and Mr. Jones was my first and still is, my hero. He lost in the Semi-Finals on this Herbert Strong layout that when opened in 1917, was considered one of the best three or four courses in the country. We have been working at Engineers since 2000, but this year we undertook the largest project yet. While most of the work centered around bunker restoration and renovation, we have added a good many tees to both add strategic interest and make the course more playable for the women, seniors and juniors. We also added drainage to correct certain spots, we expanded fairways to bring back options off the tee, and we restored the 2nd green to add variety in pin locations and the way slopes can be used to get balls around on the green. The bunker work centered around bringing back the clustered fairway bunkers that were originally prominent and we built them to have a ragged native edge as originally found. This is the first of two phases at Engineers and when complete, this historic golf course will be both more enjoyable for the members and serve as a better reflection of its glorious past. Eagle View Golf of Houston, Texas was the golf course builder and they shared our passion in a way that was more than we could have hoped for. We could not have made the project the success it is without Don Szymkowicz, Golf Course Superintendent. He worked right with us and Eagle View on a daily basis and made sure everything would work after we were done. Last, but by no means least, Troy David, Greens Chairman, drove the project through club approval and took obvious pride in every minute detail, giving us a perspective that balanced the club's past with its future - thanks Troy!

The newly restored #4

Whippoorwill Golf Club

Following bunker restoration this spring, we spent the fall at Whippoorwill renovating the tees on #6, #7 and #15, renovating the #7 fairway to improve poor drainage, and we restored bunkers on the 15th hole in the Charles Banks style to give this hole improved strategy. The tee work on the 7th opened up views down the hole that past tee expansion blocked and we added a new back tee to return more to the play off the tee. Once again it was great to work with Sam Dipasquale, Golf Course Builder, and his crew. They are truly artistic with a great attention to detail. As always Chuck Martineau, Golf Course Superintendent, was great to work with and his input was invaluable. Gerry Klingman, Club President, helped make it all possible. He also made the process fun and, along with everyone at the club, made us feel like a part of the Whippoorwill family.

The newly restored bunkers on #15

Fresh Meadow Country Club

It was a great experience to work at the Colt/Allison designed Fresh Meadow. The styling Colt/Allison developed accentuates the site in a very beautiful way and we were protective of this in our work. We rebuilt the 14th green and greenside bunkers to return greater variety to the green that was lost from extreme slopes. We rebuilt the 18th green to address safety issues and in the process gave the green more strategic pin locations. We also rebuilt all of the greenside bunkers and added a new back right bunker. The Colt/Allison bunkers at Fresh Meadow are often deep with steep sand faces. In the work we used bunker liners and our method of stacking sod to create the edge so that contamination is all but eliminated. The next project will be to rebuild the course's 112 bunkers in this method. We would like to thank Course Crafters, of Gainesville, Georgia, for a job well done and their commitment to getting the subtle details right on. Our first time working with Golf Course Superintendent Bob Camp and his crew was rewarding. Bob is simple in his wants – he wants it right. Dr. Mark Gershwind, Greens Chairman, was a pleasure to work with and we look forward to our continuing relationship.

Tripp Davis and Associates will be attending the GSCAA in Orlando this coming February. We look forward to seeing all of you there.

TDA Field Trips

The Creek Club

What do golf architects do when they can't be on a jobsite due to inclement weather? They take the opportunity to visit some of the premiere courses that surround them. Three recent trips were inspiring. Gary Brawley and Tripp took time while in New York to visit Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw's recent work at Friar's Head on the east end of Long Island. It was a great use of possibly one of the best sites we have ever seen. Later in the fall, Hattie Pavlechko, Gary and Tripp, braved the wind and rain to tour one of MacDonald and Raynor's classics at The Creek, also on Long Island. During the same trip, Hattie and Tripp flew home through Charleston to see another Raynor design at the Country Club of Charleston, one of Tripp's favorites. With our recent Raynor work, it was great for Gary and Hattie to gain a broader perspective and our trip to Friar's Head certainly provided ideas.

TDA Familiar with Military Golf Course Work

Tripp Davis and Associates has just completed work on the Tinker Golf Course at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Oklahoma. Nineteen new greens and twenty-six new greenside bunkers were designed and built. The contractor, Chambers Golf Construction, started work in mid July with the final complex being completed in mid November.

Working with the military is not new to TDA. Senior Golf Architect, Michael Rhoads, was the lead architect (with Gary Panks and Associates) for the Falcon Dunes Golf Course at Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix, Arizona. This $4,500,000 project opened in fall of 1999 with a Championship Golf Course, that has been touted as one of the best courses in not only the Air Force, but the entire Military. "Having completed two very successful projects for the Air Force, we have a very clear understanding of the military's very detailed 30%, 60%, 90% design submittal process, the bidding phase, the construction administration phase, and why they are necessary. This will give us an advantage for future military projects," stated Michael Rhoads.

The 30,60,90 design process has its advantages. The design review committee reviews and comments at each submittal milestone. After the 90% submittal and review everyone is on the same page, and there are no surprises when the 100% bid set is released. The project is then advertised and awarded through the military's contracting office. During construction the Contracting Officer and the Project Inspector are onsite and are involved in every decision. Meetings with all parties involved are held weekly where the golf course contractor submits progress reports to the Contracting Officer. The Golf Architect is also required to submit site-visit reports after every visit, something TDA is accustomed to doing on every project. All activity, discussions, and decisions are documented in writing resulting in a project that proceeds smoothly and efficiently.

Tinker Air Force Base

With over 100 Air Force, Army, and Navy golf courses in the United States, Tripp Davis and Associates look forward to having the opportunity to work on many more military projects.