

# St. George's Golf and Country Club rolls out new greens

For Immediate Release

June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

TORONTO, ON – With today's re-opening of the greens at St. George's Golf and Country Club the spellbinding topography that first inspired Stanley Thompson more than 85 years ago will far better reflect the master's original intent than was the case a little more than a year ago.

While members are ready to close the book on the most important project that the club ever embarked upon and finally play some golf, the greens reconstruction project and other course changes have laid a new foundation for Canada's No. 1 golf course moving forward.

"The major concern on retaining the heritage of the greens was not lost on the architect team of Ian Andrew and Tom Doak," says Property Superintendent Keith Bartlett. "During the excavation of the old greens, the existing clay tile confirmed that many of the original greens have now been restored closer to the original size and shape than they were previously and we have completely remodelled No. 3 to take it back to its original roots."

However, much more went on beyond the greens to further accentuate the course's natural beauty. These improvements have included moving cart paths out of sightlines on holes No. 2 and No. 5, No. 10 or removing cart paths all together such as right side of No. 9 green and the 12<sup>th</sup> tee. Moving these paths created space to plant more new trees that will become the next generation of trees in 20 or 30 years.

"Wow, that's earlier than I expected – good for Keith," architect Ian Andrew said upon hearing the good news of the early opening. "Members will be able to putt

some greens from memory, but they will have to re-learn a lot of other greens and pin locations before they will begin to feel comfortable. I think members may be a little perplexed initially, but once they have enough experience with the new greens they will be very pleased that they undertook this project.”

In 2014, the course opened on April 30th, with 12 temporary putting surfaces. After assessing the damage, members voted in person or via proxy on June 3, 2014 at a meeting attended by Doak, Andrew and David Oatis of the USGA, with 95 percent approval, to move forward with the project that started on July 8.

A team that included Andrew, Doak and his two on-site supervisors Eric Iverson and Brian Schneider, golf course construction experts Evans Golf, Atkinson Irrigation and Zander Sod all pulled together with the St. George’s Greens Department, which was led by Bartlett, Tom Kinsman, Ben Daly, Michael Shoemaker and Paul Torunski. Work commenced on July 8th and concluded on September 30th. For a six-week period, crews worked from daylight to sunset, six days a week to move the project along, making personal sacrifices that most people, save for their family members, will ever know about.

“Having never worked on a Stanley Thompson course before, it was a highlight to start with one of his finest, and to work with Ian Andrew and Keith Bartlett who know so much about its history,” Doak says. “Restoring the third hole in all its glory was something I couldn't and didn't envision until we got out in the dirt and started trying to make it all fit the ground.”

In a first for the Club, the new bentgrass greens were rebuilt to USGA standard. The process was completed in pods, with the greens seeded in the following groupings: August 1st (Nos. 4, 7, 12, 13 and 14); August 12th (Nos. 3, 8 and 15); August 23rd (Nos. 2, 6, 5, 9 and 16); August 30th (Nos. 1, 10, 11, 17 and 18); and finally the putting green on September 6th.

The project wrapped up in 51 days. Seeding of the greens finished six days ahead of schedule. Improvements to the fairways on Nos. 5 and 9 went as planned, while sodding finished two weeks ahead of schedule.

“We have always felt our course layout was world-class. Now we can take pride in having world-class greens to match,” says David Imrie, Chair of the Board at St. George’s, who teed off in the first group in the pouring rain at 8 am with 200-plus member scheduled to follow in his footsteps onto the new greens throughout the day.

“It has been an amazing process to be part of and well worth the wait. Many of the improvements throughout the course are very subtle, while the change on No. 3 is dramatic. Throughout, we had a great team that always concentrated on putting the focus back on Stanley Thompson’s original work when it came to the greens and the overall experience and that will hopefully be the legacy of this project when we look back at it 10 years from now.”

Other changes have included; creating a turfgrass nursery between Nos. 5 & 7 that can be used for junior camps and a leaf storage compound. Fairway expansions were a key focus for Doak during his visits and his suggestions have been recorded and will return the fairways to their original 1929 widths.

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