

Rees Jones walks down memory lane for Coral Ridge renovation



Rees Jones has completed a renovation at Coral Ridge Country Club in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The eighteen-hole layout was designed and built by Jones's father Robert Trent Jones Sr in 1954 and was owned by the family for many years.

"We used to stay in an apartment right behind the golf course, almost every winter," said Jones. "Coming out of World War II, everyone was starting over, and Dad was able to build it with his own construction team. But there was no drainage – he just built greens, tees and bunkers."

Over the years, Jones Sr would regularly tinker with the layout. "Like Donald Ross, who lived next door to Pinehurst No. 2 and changed it over the years, that's what Dad did," said Jones. "And we've restored that improved Robert Trent Jones golf course, rather than the original one."

"I am finishing what he would have done if he had today's technology at his disposal," says Jones, who had the benefit of experience of hundreds of rounds on the course, but also referenced old topographical maps, historic photos and aerial imagery of

the course from 1961 in developing plans for the renovation.

The main goal of the project was "to bring the course up to date," said Jones, with a particular emphasis on raising greens and fairways to better withstand storm events, using fill generated from the excavation of ponds. "We elevated and contoured fairways, rebuilt bunkers with modern technology and enlarged the greens back to their original sizes, or a little bit larger," said Jones. Greens have also been recontoured to suit today's speeds and the total course length has increased to 7,300 yards.



The par-three eighth hole has a large tier separating two distinct portions of the green. New bunkering at Coral Ridge, as also seen on the sixth hole, left, is reminiscent of Robert Trent Jones Sr's early work

Jones says that one of the highlights of his father's design at Coral Ridge is the variety: "It has as much variety as any Florida golf course, and that's hard to do when you have a flat piece of land."

Along with design associate Steve Weisser, the Jones team emphasised that variety: "Every hole really has a different twist – there's not one single green that really resembles another, nor are the contours within the greens similar," says Jones.

Of the par-three eighth, for example, he says: "I don't think there's another hole like it anywhere. It has a very

large front portion of the green, a sizeable slope up to the rear. It's really two holes in one – a distinctly different golf hole. Players can use the slope as a backstop when the pin is at the front but have to roll the ball up the tier when the pin is at the back portion."

"Eighteen is a phenomenal hole," adds Jones. "450 yards from the back, with water on the left and a Biarritz green. And one thing that has changed from Dad's course, because of the newly elevated greens, is that we have chipping areas around the greens with pronounced drops, including to the

right of eighteen. The average golfer can putt, the good player can choose different clubs."

The course's new bunkering was inspired by Jones Sr's early work. "These bunkers really have a look of the courses at Banff Springs and Jasper Park that my father marked out for Stanley Thompson. They have that sculpted look you would see in brochures at the start of his career," said Jones.

Coral Ridge reopened in late 2020 to widespread praise. Jones says: "One of the members said to me: 'Magnificent. That says it all'."