



## Jones fashions new look for Tuxedo

Rees Jones has completed a renovation project at the historic Tuxedo Club close to New York City.

The club was founded in 1886 and, legend has it, gave its name to the jacket in the same year, after member James Potter visited England and found the style to be de rigueur for a dinner with the Prince of Wales. On Potter's return to America with new tailoring that was soon adopted across the club, the members' jackets became eponymous as 'tuxedos'.

Tuxedo hosted America's first interclub match in 1894, with Shinnecock Hills, and another later in the same year where teams from The Country Club and St Andrew's also competed. More recently it was the proving ground for David Fay and Jay Mottola, both of whom served as caddies and on the grounds crew and would go on, in their time as executive directors of the USGA

and Metropolitan Golf Association respectively, to be instrumental in bringing the US Open to New York's publicly owned Bethpage Black.

Tuxedo's present golf course opened in 1957, laid out by Robert Trent Jones after construction of the New York Thruway forced a move from the previous site close to the main clubhouse. "It was a very exciting project for my father because it was such a high-end established club and he was able to select this wonderful, pristine piece of property within this natural area, where you really feel like you are away from the travails of life in the city, while also being so close to a major population base," said Rees Jones.

Set between mountains, Trent Jones's routing on the valley floor, and his green complexes, have survived to this day. The hazards, though, needed attention. Casey Klossner, the club's director of agronomy, said: "The

bunkers were very old, they hadn't been touched in at least 25 years in some cases. That was affecting conditions, aesthetics and playability, so we really felt like it was time to reinvest in the property."

Jones was hired by the club – "the connection between him and his father with our property is definitely very important to our membership," said Klossner – and, with his design associate Bryce Swanson, analysed every bunker for its effectiveness, playability and accessibility.

A plan was devised to improve the performance of the hazards and in some cases adjust their size and placement to make them relevant to the modern game; "not just for the strong player, but for everybody," noted Swanson.

The most significant changes to bunker placement come at the par fives. "From my father's time to my



*Short grass now wraps all the way around the front bunker of the par-three fifteenth*

time the par fives have really become par fours, so they have to be adapted to today's play a bit more" said Jones. "In particular we wanted to make the second shot more thought-provoking and place more demand on the drive, so it wasn't just an automatic bomb."

Throughout the course, sand is now flashed lower on bunker faces, with the upper part grassed to restore the bunkers to the original style. The sand line is somewhat jagged, with Jones noting that many of his father's courses began that way but become more oval-shaped over time. There are now fewer downhill slopes on the bunker floors, so they are more playable and accessible for members.

The new design, combined with improved drainage infrastructure, makes a significant difference for Klossner and his crew. "I can recall times as recently as last fall, before the project, we'd have torrential rain events and it would take us an entire day just to repair the greenside bunkers, and at least half the following

day for the fairway bunkers," said Klossner. "Now, we've had rain events of four inches and come out in the morning and they've all drained properly. It's what the place deserves."

Fairway lines have been adjusted too. "The fairways had narrowed a lot and bunkers were surrounded by rough, so shots that were heading towards a bunker would often get caught in the long grass," said Jones. "We spent a lot of time looking at the fairway lines to tie them back into both bunkers and the green complexes," added Swanson. The team has also introduced more greenside chipping areas, to provide options for recovery shots.

Another major driving force for the project was the desire to improve practice facilities. Jones and Swanson have completely redesigned the ninth hole, with new tees, bunkers and green, to accommodate a new short-game area in the location of the original ninth green, close to the golf clubhouse.

The new ninth is almost as long as before, the designers having

identified space to push the teeing area back. "The length of the hole has only changed by about 17 yards," said Klossner. "We've made the right changes within the fairway landing area and the new green complex is very unique and protects the hole very well."

"We drew off the old green contours as a guide, and just changed the bunker orientation to make it fit," said Swanson. "The end result is a new ninth hole that looks and feels just like the rest of the golf course."

Work had originally been scheduled to take place over two winters, but favourable weather conditions allowed the team to complete the project in one, ahead of the 2022 season. Members, many of whom spend the winter in Florida, are returning to a revitalised Tuxedo. "The membership excitement has been tremendous," said Klossner. "As I drive around the property people flag me down – they are just blown away by the changes we've made."