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Old course gets a new look



Pebble Creek Golf Club has just been renovated sporting newly redesigned holes on the front nine with improved bunkers and greens. This is hole number one's new green and sand trap area.

When Ace Golf Club owner Bill Place bought the Pebble Creek Golf Club in 2005, he didn't realize the disrepair to the club and the course.

Hurricane damage from 2004 created landscaping problems throughout the course. The 40-year-old club's restaurant and banquet areas were showing their age with rotting wood and dingy interiors.

Place invested more than \$1.5-million, and longtime patrons of the course and club have noticed the difference.

New Bermuda grass upgraded the greens, along with new tees on each hole. The sand traps are being completely rebuilt, with the front nine finished and the back nine expected to be completed by the end of the year.

New cart paths have been added, with GPS systems on the carts. Drainage and irrigation is also being upgraded.

As a result, Place says the course has had its best first quarter in club history.

"Increased spending has helped drive our rounds up," Place said. "We've gone from 29,000 and will exceed 40,000 rounds this year." Overall, he is pleased with the success he has made of the country club, and so are area golfers such as Ed Gonzales of West Meadows.

"The greens are in much better shape and even the course has changed a lot," said Gonzales, 41. "It has a lot of doglegs and it's been extended and makes it more enjoyable to play."



Above: the approach to hole number one.

Place rebuilt the pro shop and banquet area, which now accommodates about 125 people. A 1,200-square-foot veranda also was built off the old restaurant, which was renovated and renamed Mulligans to reflect an Irish golf theme with hardwood floors and a wrap-around bar.

The new menu includes popular Irish favorites such as fish and chips and shepherd's pie. Business has quadrupled, with non-golf traffic from its location just off Bruce B. Downs Boulevard. Membership is up to about 100; not the 300 it was seven or eight years ago, but an improvement from recent years.

"We play throughout Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee counties, and we've come back here three or four times in the last six weeks," said George Klebingot, 66, who travels here from Odessa to golf.

"The course is in better shape than a lot of the private clubs, and Mulligans is tremendously different from what they had before."

By JOEL POILEY, Times Correspondent

Below: The exterior of the new Mulligan's Restaurant.

