

Arthur Carter

AMSTERDAM MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE

Amsterdam, New York

Initial Golf Course Assessment/Recommendations

Robert Trent Jones II LLC – Golf Course Architects

October 7, 2014 Site Visit by Bruce Charlton – President/Chief Design Officer

On a fall day in October when the weather went from threatening to a beautiful sunny day, I had the wonderful opportunity to tour one of Robert Trent Jones Sr.'s initial golf course projects in his long and decorated career. Many golf historians and journalists refer to RTJ Sr. as the "Father of Modern Golf Course Architecture" in the USA. It is wonderful to see the way the spirit of this early work of RTJ Sr. is revered and such an important part of the story that you tell to the golfing public in your region. As protectors of the RTJ Legacy, our firm is always excited to assist those courses that bear the Jones name. We are enthusiastic about this opportunity to assess the Arthur Carter Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course. In addition, we are very thankful to the Mayor, Corporation Council, Common Council, Golf Commission, Golf Course Superintendent and Golf Pro for the generous use of time and the great hospitality that I enjoyed while absorbing as much as I could during a full day at the Golf Course.

As we discussed during my tour of the site and during lunch at the clubhouse, we have reviewed the site on a hole-by-hole basis and been informed of many of the nuances that have occurred as the course has matured through the years. With this very preliminary knowledge at hand, coupled with our initial impressions while touring the golf holes in the field, the following represents the "top 16" observations/recommendations, presented in the order of priority from most important to least important:

- 1.) Half of the game of golf is meant to be played on the green surfaces. Many of the green surfaces, although very nicely contoured from a shot strategy viewpoint, suffer from gentle grades near the edges of the green surface and collar that pocket water. In addition, the rather "tight soil" conditions of these "push up" green surfaces that were built with the native soils with a high percentage of clay, do not promote deep root growth for the grass plant that is constantly being mowed at a low height of cut. We recommend that the greens surfaces be rebuilt, preserving much of the existing contour concepts that relate to the golf shots, with the correct USGA specifications for greens construction. These artfully constructed new putting surfaces should be planted with new bentgrass varieties that have an aggressive growth pattern that reduces invasion of Poa Annua while exhibiting a high tolerance to shade. In addition to constructing just the green surfaces, the entire green

surrounds should be shaped to make sure that surface water does not pool on the greens during late fall and winter and then freeze during the winter. Special care should be made during the reconstruction of the green surfaces to recapture the original sizes and shapes of the greens as they appear to have shrunk in size and simplified in configuration.

- 2.) We would highly recommend that if Item #1 is considered, installing dual – “Back-to-back” irrigation heads around the perimeter of the Green surfaces should be done. The ability to control the amount of water that is applied to the green surfaces while the second sprinkler covers the green surrounds that have a totally different water requirement due to the use of native soil in these areas. NOTE: We strongly recommend that Priority Items #1 and #2 go hand in hand, and DO NOT suggest that you do one without doing the other simultaneously.
- 3.) Grass needs sunlight to grow. There are many places throughout this golf course where turfgrass growth is severely hindered, thus playing conditions compromised, by large trees casting shade on playing surfaces (especially on green and tee areas). We highly recommend that many trees be removed and aggressively pruned to allow much more sunlight onto these critical areas of play. Good examples of these conditions are on holes #7/#12/#16 and #17 green complexes.
- 4.) Grass also needs air movement to promote healthy growth. In addition to removal of trees, we highly recommend that areas of heavy underbrush be removed to allow more air movement throughout all portions of the property. Also, in many cases, the removal of this underbrush allows golfers to more readily see the golf holes ahead and allow the dramatic contours adjacent to some holes to be recognized. Good examples of where this underbrush clearing will be useful are holes #4/#7/#8/#12/#14/ and #15.
- 5.) In my personal experiences with RTJ Sr, he always quizzed me: “What is the first rule of great golf course architecture? Much like location, location, location is the rule in real estate, drainage, drainage and more drainage is critical to good golf holes. It is a factor called gravity. Watch where the water goes and the golf ball when rolling will follow!” There are many locations on this golf course where, when you follow the water it gets to areas where there is nowhere for the water to go. We believe that a great deal more drainage (underground pipes, catch basins on the perimeter of play, perforated drain tile with gravel and sand filled to finish grade as well as increasing the gradient in fairways to promote better surface flows) should be installed THROUGHOUT the golf course.
- 6.) In conjunction with Item #5 above, fairway irrigation coverage should be analyzed for effective coverage of fairways and green surrounds. A complete review of the irrigation piping network/sprinkler heads/installing a central control system and associated wiring as well as the pump station should be analyzed by an Irrigation Designer to provide a game plan for future irrigation improvements.

- 7.) Many tee surfaces are oriented incorrectly towards the intended target of play. RTJ Sr. invented the concept of the "runway tee" and we recommend that tee surfaces be modified in many locations to incorporate this design philosophy and provide a much clearer indication to players of the intended target line of the tee shots.
- 8.) Much like how the carpet of your home gets worn out over time, we recommend that strong consideration be given to killing existing turf on the tees and fairways and planting/sodding these areas with the newest turfgrasses that will adapt nicely to your growing conditions and microclimates. NOTE: new grass is recommended on green surfaces and collars in Priority Item #1. In addition, the smoothing out of these surfaces, with artful finish grading will produce much better playing surfaces while providing better definition of fairways when viewed from the tee and landing areas.
- 9.) Although fairways on this golf course are mostly generous, we see many areas where mowing patterns can be revised to be more in line with the shots, especially pinching down areas where the lowest handicap players hit their shots. In addition, the use of fairway as a defense should be considered around all green complexes. In some cases, the use of fairway may be a more effective greenside penalty for the better player than a bunker, while the remainder of us typical golfers love the variety of shots that we can use to get the ball close to the hole. A complete study of all fairway mowing patterns will yield a much better playing experience, in our opinion.
- 10.) In the spirit of the recommendations in Priority Item #5 above, many of the golf holes adjacent to hillsides will benefit greatly by the installation of a very small, but effective, "V" ditch on the hillside above the golf hole (in many cases can be hidden at the edge of the trees) to catch and redirect surface water before it reaches the golf hole below.
- 11.) WOW- there is a great deal of grass on this golf course that needs to be mowed. In areas around the tees and large areas around the perimeter of the golf course, we recommend that turfgrass not be mowed here and introduce "thin and wispy" fescue grasses that require little mowing and no water after establishment. This will reduce labor time spent on mowing, less fuel needed to mow turf and promote less use of fertilizers and other chemicals.
- 12.) Carefully review each bunker to make sure the edging of the sand/grass line on each bunker is at the correct height to allow the best vision of the sand when viewed from the distance by players. In addition, lower the front "lip" of many bunkers to enhance vision of the sand. Troubleshoot each bunker to ensure proper drainage in the subgrade and install better drainage if lacking in the bunker. Many of the bunkers also appear to have lost their original size and shape. As the green surfaces have shrunk somewhat, the distance between the greenside bunkers and the green surfaces is larger than the originally shaped greens and bunkers appear. Restore the closer relationship with green surface and original bunker shape to restore the design intent.

- 13.) Analyze the position of the forward tee on each hole. Many forward tees appear to be afterthoughts and could be located in a better position on a number of holes.
- 14.) Analyze the routing of golf cart paths on every hole. Many paths appear to be deteriorating and the location of the paths could be improved in many locations.
- 15.) In each fairway on every hole, including locations on par 3 holes, establish a "family tee" location. These tee locations can be a simple plaque in the fairway and should be played simply from the fairway. No need to construct a special teeing ground for this concept- just have family/beginner play directly on the fairway grades.
- 16.) Establish a turf nursery on the property that can be hooked into the irrigation system. The turf nursery should be between 30,000-45,000 square feet and contain mostly the species of grass that is grown on the greens (grown in a growth medium that is identical with the green surfaces on the course). The balance of the turf nursery should be planted with fairway grass and rough grass, giving the Golf Course Superintendent the great opportunity to utilize sod that is grown on site to immediately repair inevitable problem areas and get them back into play as soon as possible.

I hope the quick assessment and recommendations above are useful to all the decision makers at the Arthur Carter Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course. As discussed during our luncheon meeting, the next step would be for our design team to perform a detailed Golf Course Audit. This "golf course audit" document and sketches typically includes analysis of all facets of the golf course such as greens, tees, lakes and water features, bunkers, driving range and practice facilities, cart paths, tree removal and planting, and overall circulation issues on a hole-by-hole basis. Irrigation design is NOT typically included in this review, and we recommend that the City of Amsterdam enter a separate agreement for irrigation design services. We will then work collaboratively with you in reviewing the elements of the audit, integrating your thoughts and comments in order to proceed towards the preparation of a Golf Course Refinements Master Plan (The Road Map for the Future). Once a Master Plan is finalized and the city has decided upon a scope of work that is desired to construct, RTJ II will prepare construction working drawings, specifications and bid documents for bidding purposes. Please carefully review this document and feel free to get back to me with any thoughts and comments that you desire or may arise. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.



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