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Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

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RENOVATIONS On the Rise

New data shows practice range renovations
and enhancements are trending upwards



CHANGING TIMES:

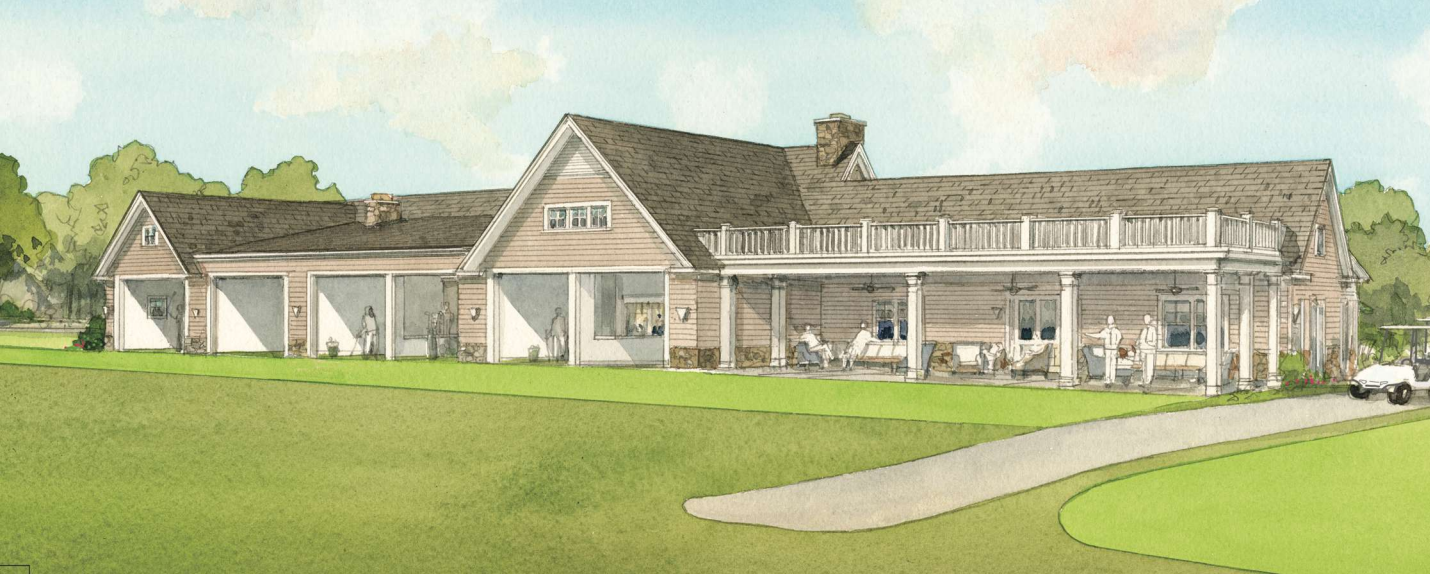
Repurposing golf course acreage for enhanced practice facilities

DuPont Country Club in Wilmington, Delaware, is in the process of constructing new practice facilities designed by Sanford Golf Design and Rogers McCagg Architects



The club originated in the early 1900s, when chemical giant DuPont Company developed a sports complex for its employees. By the 1960s DuPont Country Club had more than 10,000 members and expanded to 54 holes. The club's DuPont course, designed by Alfred Tull, hosted the LPGA Championship from 1987 to 2004.

By the late 2000s, however, the LPGA Tour had left and membership was in decline. In 2018, Ben du Pont – a member of prominent family – and business partner Don Wirth purchased the three-course club from DuPont Co., and began the process of revitalizing the membership. Part of their long-term vision was to create a unique golf practice complex that will help to grow the game.



Construction began in January and will be finalized late this summer.

“We see this as a unique opportunity to protect the legacy of the DuPont Country Club and continue the 98-year history of this important Delaware tradition and community asset,” says duPont. “Our plan is to build on the traditions of the club by creating a state-of-the-art, affordable and family-focused club for the Greater Wilmington community.”

One of the first steps of that plan is developing an enhanced practice facility, which indicates just how valuable ranges have become to the overall golf operation.

“The new owners were looking to keep the facility a community amenity,” says Rob Wirth, CEO of DuPont Country Club. “This practice facility is a part of a larger overhaul to the club.”

That larger overhaul comes with a planned investment of \$18 million. The existing practice range is at the far end of the Nemours course, and requires members to drive there. For the new facility, Sanford Golf Design's David Ferris has been working with the owners, staff, architects and engineers to repurpose 24 acres on the Monchanin course.

Contractor George E. Ley Company began construction in January 2019. The club is working with irrigation designer The Pignato Group and Rogers McCagg Architects, which has worked on

major renovation or turf care projects for facilities like Winged Foot, Shinnecock and National Golf Links. The project has also seen involvement from golf course superintendent John Klempa and engineering firm Duffield Associates.

“The new practice facility will be conveniently located adjacent to the clubhouse and will feature a large practice range, 50 hitting stalls, a short game area that will also be used as a five-hole short course, a practice putting green, a putting course and a second practice tee and putting green at the far end of the range for clinics and youth camps,” says Ferris. “The practice range is oriented on a slight incline, encompasses three of the old Monchanin golf holes, is over 15-acres in size and 250 yards wide. To bring a sense of scale and make it easier for golfers to visualize their shots, portions of the old hole corridors were preserved. There are also target greens that allow users to practice a variety of iron shots.

“The hub of the facility will be a new 10,000-square-foot learning center with indoor hitting stalls featuring TrackMan technology that allows golfers to practice virtually or open up the bay doors to hit shots out to the range,” adds Ferris. “In addition, there will be a bar, small restaurant and an outdoor patio area that adjoins to the putting green for patrons to socialize and enjoy views of the golf course.”

The club plans to open the new facilities in time for the AJGA's Imperial Headwear Junior Classic, which is being held on the DuPont Course Aug. 5-8.

“The immediate plan for the Monchanin Course is to create a nine-hole executive course and three practice holes by rerouting the remaining holes,” said Ferris. “While not finalized, the owners plan is to redevelop the Monchanin course into an 18-hole par-three course.” ■

This article was written by Richard Humphreys and first appeared Golf Course Architecture.

