



## **Donald Ross Society's Featured Club – Sara Bay**

### **Golf course architect Kris Spence has completed a restoration of the Donald Ross-designed course at Sara Bay Country Club in Sarasota, Florida**

“The project was focused on the restoration of the 1926 Donald Ross-designed greens and bunkers using his original drawings for the course,” said Spence. “Previous renovations had eliminated or altered the course to the point where the putting surfaces were one dimensional, repetitive and severely crowned, eliminating all but the center sections useable for hole locations.

“A trademark of Ross greens is his wide variety of surface contours making each hole unique. His greens should have multiple hole locations in close proximity to the edges, in corner sections and near where the greens fall away into bunkers and down fill pad edges. This critical aspect of his green surfaces has been restored. Construction on greens involved removing 12 inches of excess rootzone and organic build-up, then contouring the underlying rootzone to the features shown on the Ross drawings.

“The greenside bunkers were cut much closer and tighter to green edges,” said Spence. “Fairway bunkers were elevated throughout the course with raised faces as shown on the Ross drawings. The fairway bunkers are again prominent to the golfer’s eye, revealing the strategic edges, angles and side-to-side movement of the holes as Ross envisioned. Bunker construction included all subsurface drainage, Capillary Concrete liner system, and Golf Agronomics’ G-Angle bunker sand for enhanced performance and prolonged bunker life.

“The newly restored and widely diverse green complexes will be some of, if not the most authentic Ross greens in Florida. It was my goal to show a great deal of respect to Ross’s design work and creativity at Sara Bay by restoring his legacy to the property,” said Spence.

Construction started in late-April 2018, greens were sprigged during the summer, bunkers were completed in September and the course officially reopened on October 6, 2018.

“It’s hard to pick stand out holes as they all have such unique character, but the seventh with its eight bunkers stepping down each side of the hole; the three raised cross bunkers short of the eleventh green; or the dramatic six-string of pearl bunkers around the par-three sixteenth certainly will catch the eye of any player,” said Spence. “Greens two, four, nine, twelve, thirteen, sixteen and seventeen have well-defined plateaus, swales, rolls and spines making them stand out a bit more than others.

“Our biggest challenge was the careful removal of the organic build-up and excess rootzone from the green tops. Almost every green was lowered 12-to-14 inches in the center section to reduce the crowning and excessive slope radiating outward. Managing the rootzone depth beneath this operation was time critical in order to leave an adequate and somewhat consistent rootzone depth for the new greens.”

Spence worked alongside his design associate and shaper Jim Harbin and project manager Steve Coe. Sara Bay’s golf course superintendent Bob Gwodz and his staff handled the turf establishment responsibilities and Paul Barone, general manager at Sara Bay, “helped to keep things on budget and on time,” said Spence.

“The timing of the Sara Bay project with other things going on with our schedule in North Carolina allowed me to be very hands on with the shaping of the putting surfaces in particular,” said Spence. “I rarely get to spend this much time on the equipment handcrafting the greens, this one will be near and dear to my heart for that reason!”

Since the course opened for play on October 6<sup>th</sup>, our members have been enthusiastically praising the enhanced aesthetics and playability of the course, said Dennis Budny, Director of Membership. He also commented that new memberships have resulted after prospects played the course for the first time.

**ABOUT SARA BAY** - Sara Bay Country Club is a private, member-owned golf club located just north of downtown Sarasota, Florida’s cultural capital, and a short drive from the Gulf Coast Keys of Longboat, Lido, St. Armands, Bird, and Siesta, as well as Lakewood Ranch.

The Club maintains a low membership roster which ensures tee time availability and a comfortable pace of play, whether walking or riding. Our professional golf staff is at your service for instructional guidance and to accurately fit your swing with appropriate equipment...while the golf shop displays the latest in golf equipment fashionable apparel.

In addition to an outstanding golfing experience, Sara Bay Country Club indulges members with exceptional clubhouse facilities. The tasteful décor of the old Florida-styled clubhouse creates a warm ambiance, while it exudes an understated elegance that can only come with time and tradition. Members can enjoy after-golf socializing in the Donald Ross Grill Room and in the evening, renowned fine dining in the Palm Room. Festive seasonal events feature live entertainment, dancing and gourmet meals. Full service locker rooms for both men and women, including private card rooms, further enhance the traditional atmosphere of the club.