



Drone shot of the RBC Canadian Open staging at Hamilton G&CC. Photo provided by HGCC.

Preparing for the RBC Canadian Open

AFTER A HISTORIC RENOVATION

By Corey Young, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent, Hamilton Golf & Country Club.

Hamilton Golf and Country Club hosted the RBC Canadian Open for the seventh time in the club's history from May 28-June 2, 2024. This comes on the heels of a monumental full-course renovation, that started in 2019 and concluded in 2022. Its scope was immense, involving the reconstruction of all 27 green sites, building 101 new bunkers, installing a state-of-the-art irrigation system, multiple new tees, adjusted fairway lines, and extensive drainage improvements. It has been a busy five years and 2024 will be no different. This may be a lot to some, but it is just another day in the office for our team.

After embarking on the renovation project led by Martin Ebert of Mackenzie Ebert International Golf Course Architects in the fall of 2019, HGCC proudly opened the first of its three nine-hole courses on July 26, 2021. This was an incredibly exciting milestone for the Club, membership, and the Course & Grounds team. The renovated golf course presented and played differently than the previous one.

The past two growing seasons have required the Course and Grounds team to learn on the fly, adapt, and accept that there will be, at times,

some trial and error. We were managing a new golf course. One example of learning by trial has been our new bunkers. Martin Ebert's flashy, rugged bunker style is very different from the previous bunker style. We worked hard to thin the fescue on the faces to achieve a wispy look and have evolved our raking style over the past two seasons. We now rake in what we like to call a modified "Aussie-style". This is the raking style we used during the RBC Canadian Open this spring.



Jordan Kitchen, Golf Course Superintendent, Hamilton Golf & Country Club.

When going through all these changes and achieving the result, we recognized the importance of team buy-in. Led by Golf Course Superintendent Jordan Kitchen, the Course and Grounds team bought into the new ideas and programs to ensure success for years to come. Team buy-in is a pivotal part of the success of any renovation. Explaining the "why" and taking the time to teach our



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THAT OCCURRED:

- The old bent/poa push-up greens were replaced with a USGA sand-based green California construction style with increased pinnable area and were seeded to modern bentgrass.
- The renovated golf course now featured bentgrass roll-offs around all greens. The course went from having four to ten acres of approaches and roll-offs. This new feature provides players of all skill levels with increased shot options.
- Bunkers were rebuilt and repositioned with a more rugged links-style look with fescue on the faces and bluegrass on the bottom edges. The new bunkers were built using the Better Billy Bunker system.
- A state-of-the-art Toro irrigation system was installed, which included full upgrades to all green sites, tees, and a three-row system on all fairways.

team members also helps build purpose for how necessary each change is to our operation.

The spring of 2024 was mild, which allowed us to bring team members back early to begin the onboarding and training process that would be required to get everyone caught up on how we operate at Hamilton. The opportunity of a lifetime was the message we were sending to all our staff, to work at a club that hosts a PGA tour event is a rarity, and to do so in a country that only hosts one presents a special opportunity. With the golf tournament being hosted two weeks earlier than usual, that meant we had to train our team members quickly!

Most of our full-time employees started in the third and fourth week of March, this consisted of our full-time seasonal employees and our large equipment operators. Our university students, however, did not join the team until late April, or early May, which gives us 3 weeks to train as many students to walk mow, and perform as many tasks as possible while learning our property. Patience and a strong message helped get our team into the position they needed to be in to perform during the week of the tournament.

Even with all the planning and training, nothing can prepare you for when the ropes go up on the Wednesday morning of Advanced week. Hamilton Golf and Country Club went from being a golf course to a sporting venue in one day. The 250,000 square feet of hospitality space is daunting, but the golf course changes once the ropes go up. Our staff and terrific volunteers navigated the new challenges well, thankful that we had an additional 50-plus volunteers to lend their services over the two weeks. Events like this cannot happen without the great help and terrific pride that our volunteers bring throughout the week. It truly makes you proud to be a part of such a terrific industry.

Tournament week got off to an interesting start. From Sunday

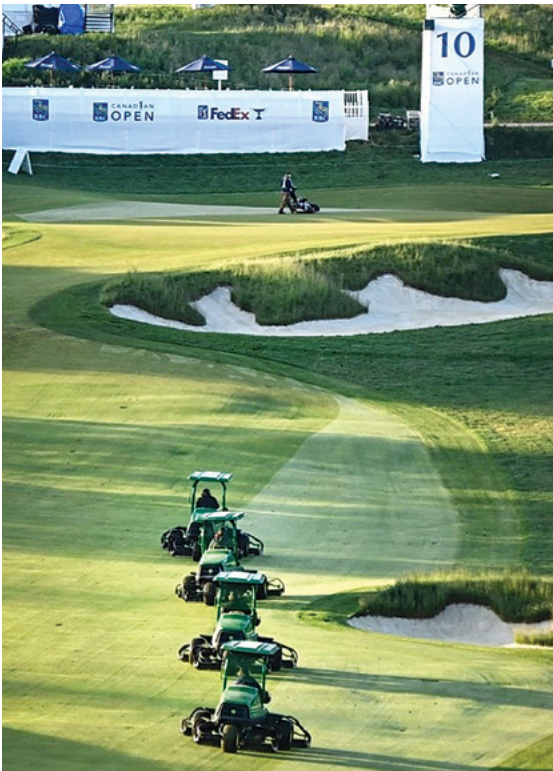


Figure 1 - Photo Credits Jordan Kitchen.

night to Tuesday morning, we were met with 1.5" of rain that soaked the golf course, daily morning squidging was required on the holes that have the Ancaster creek running through them. Generations of drainage have been installed into these holes, but if the creek level rises, the drain tiles will backfill and flood the fairways. Thankfully by Wednesday afternoon, all the standing water on the property had soaked in and we were met with dry weather for the remainder of the week.

By Sunday the golf course was in peak form, and a worthy champion was crowned in Robert MacIntyre. Something very special that the Course and Grounds team learned on Sunday was that Robert's father is a proud greenskeeper back in Scotland.

Dougie works at Glencruitten Golf Course in Oban, Scotland. During the ceremony, we asked Dougie if he wanted to be included in our team picture; we could not think of a more fitting person to be included. This certainly was an amazing moment to cap off such an incredible week.

1820 days is the number of days between the 2019 and 2024 Canadian Open at Hamilton Golf and Country Club. During that time, a 27-hole renovation was executed and matured to host our national championship. A long road that was met with a triumphant conclusion that the entire Course and Grounds team at Hamilton should be very proud of. ■



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A cross-section of POLYON® 41-0-0 prill with polymer coating adhered to urea substrate



Figure 2 - Photo Credits Chad Oberle.



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