

Catawba Island Club Port Clinton, Ohio



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An Island Jewel

Location:	Port Clinton, Oh..
Type of project:	Renovation
Cost:	\$5 million plus
Construction started:	2003 – Phased Construction
Course opened:	May 2008
Architect:	Ken Williams, Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Assoc.
Builder:	Aspen Corporation
Course Superintendent:	Bobby Griffin
Owner Representatives:	Jim Stouffer and Steve May, CIC Development, LLC/Development, LLC

Catawba Island Club is one of the finest yachting clubs on the Great Lakes. "It's safe to say few people joined CIC for the golf experience," remarks Steve May, CFO for CIC. The existing 9-hole course was challenging and popular with the locals; it was also a nice additional feature for the boating set. But a championship style 18-hole course would launch CIC into a whole new realm of recreational possibilities.

"Build a course on a bed of solid rock," was the challenge handed to Aspen in this ambitious, four-year project. "And keep 9 holes in play at all times!"

PROJECT GOALS

- Transform an existing 9-hole course into an 18-hole course in four unique phases over four seasons using some of the existing golf corridors.
- Keep 9 holes in play while major re-building/reconstructing two of the existing nine holes and building an additional 16 holes occurred. The overall plan changed with each phase of construction to accommodate new property and development opportunities for the owner and developers.
- Create a real estate amenity to anchor a growing residential community.

PROJECT CHALLENGES/SOLUTIONS

- The four-phase, four-year nature of the project represented an extraordinary commitment to a long-term project. Aspen worked closely on a phased-in approach with owner Jim Stouffer, who had purchased the land and envisioned a golf course more than 20 years earlier. (In fact, golf course architect Arthur Hills first visit to the site was 20 years before Aspen actually broke ground!

The budget for this project was limited; and funding came in sporadically as residential property adjacent to the course was sold -- trust and communication were vital for a successful outcome. Catawba Island Club CFO Steve May said Aspen effectively understood the organization did not have unlimited resources, and went the extra mile to "value engineer" and "do more with less."

• The challenges were numerous, as the course was constructed on an island made primarily of hard rock; very little topsoil or clay was available and nearly all materials had to be trucked in from the mainland. The hard white rock found in parts of the island was so indestructible that it was sometimes necessary to incorporate it into the design.

Aspen's creative, innovative approach to construction transformed the course's biggest challenge -- the Catawba rock -- into its signature attribute, such as the natural rock outcropping that is the backdrop for hole # 9. The rock adds beauty, interest and challenge to the course -- no two holes look or play alike.

- Phasing was a huge challenge, in terms of irrigation, personnel, and materials (keeping continuity of greens mix, bunker sand, etc.) In addition, routing and golf hole numbers changed from phase to phase. And, because all the phases were not fully designed at the beginning of the project, the irrigation system had to be built essentially backwards.

Aspen used the phasing strategy to everyone's benefit by performing call back work on one phase while simultaneously working on another phase. Any call back work generally consisted of repairing minor problems caused by some work being performed in the abnormal/challenging environmental conditions found in the Lake Erie climate.

- Great care had to be taken to protect large, mature trees. In fact, for the oldest tree on the course, a large oak centrally located, the design was changed so that fairways go around either side of the tree; golfers can choose which side to play.

A pond at the start of the course had some beautiful cypress trees growing in it which could have been removed for shade issues, but were retained due to their unique character and their overall contribution to the landscape.

- Drainage grades were critical, as the property bordered Lake Erie. The property was very, very flat, making grade execution a critical point of the project. All grades were checked and controlled using laser technology. Drainage grades were constantly redirected and filtered throughout the four phases.

The area had more than one USGS base map survey that was used to develop the drainage pipe elevations and grades. As "busts" in the grades were discovered, significant adjustments had to be made in the field for drainage elevations, and locations along with grading adjustment.

After considerable research, it was discovered that there were, in fact, two USGS topographical maps of the area being used by the engineers. One had an incorrect bench mark elevation and unfortunately, that was the base map originally provided to Aspen for drainage. Aspen took the initiative to do the research, discover the problem, and then communicate with the architect and owner to fix it without additional cost to the project according to the correct map.

PROJECT RESULTS

- "Our members are on cloud nine," said Course Superintendent Bob Griffin. "They are bragging on their course wherever they go. We never dreamed it could happen, but veterans of the famous Inverness and Firestone courses are now coming to experience golf at CIC. And the architects are thrilled with the condition of the course."
- Membership has increased at CIC in the past six months, as golf becomes a premier attraction for the established resort.
- Project Manager Richard Hagy still stops in from time to time just to see how things are going. "The kind of relationship that developed between Aspen and CIC simply doesn't happen very often between contractors and clients," says Griffin. "The communication has been one-of-a-kind. In a word, Aspen was phenomenal."

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