



Golf Course Restoration Guidelines And Mission Statement

I. MISSION STATEMENT

One of the missions of the Penobscot Valley Country Club is to preserve and protect the legacy and character of its Donald Ross designed golf course. All Ross originals, like PVCC, contain highly identifiable and enduring characteristics that have survived the test of time and equipment enhancements. Many of those features are reflected within the 18 holes at Penobscot Valley Country Club. Penobscot Valley is committed to maintaining these distinctive architectural characteristics for the enjoyment of present and future generations of members.

See here the basic prospects of golf course care and maintenance which Penobscot Valley intends to follow in order to preserve the Ross features and the overall vintage personality of the course:

1. Minimal reconfiguration or restructuring of hole designs and only on a very exceptional basis.
2. Design enhancements or reconditioning dominated by ground structures (mounds, bunkers, contour), not trees that were a minimal part of the original Ross course layout.
3. Fairways landing areas wide enough and firm enough to preserve the vintage play characteristics envisioned by the original designer.
4. Green approaches maintained to retain the options of run-up shots and modern flight patterns.
5. Existing bunkering retained, particularly with the respect to the open landing areas in front of most greens. Some variety in bunker surface and depth characteristics is desirable and will also be retained.
6. Greens will be firm and fast, a characteristic of classic course conditioning. Typical Ross greens have many undulations and contours that repel a poor approach and provide subtle breaks, which are enhanced by firm turf and the speed of the greens.
7. Penalty areas will reflect natural hazards (grasses, brooks, fescue, mounds), but will not be placed so as to eliminate lower risk strategic options for the play of each hole, a strategy typical of Ross designs.

The expected result of the proposed maintenance guidelines is a more natural course that offers greater seasonal variety of shot-making because conditioning will more closely reflect the characteristics of the weather pattern: soft and green during the spring, firm with some brown spots during the summer, and green and firm during the fall. Little effort will be made to artificially maintain playing characteristics throughout the season.

The overall objectives are to maintain Penobscot Valley so that the course will be fair, playable, and enjoyable for golfers of all skill levels, and to ensure the Ross design characteristics endure for the enjoyment of future generations.



RESTORATION GUIDELINES

The following report is part of the golf course master plan for the Penobscot Valley Country Club, a semi-private club with an 18-hole, Donald Ross designed golf course.

This master plan will focus on all of the golf related facilities of the club, and will make specific recommendations for the improvement and restoration of those facilities. Wherever possible, it will be the recommendation of this plan to follow the concepts, principles, and designs of Donald Ross in making any changes to the course.

This portion of the golf course master plan will be a discussion of the general design features of the golf course, focusing on the underlying philosophies that will guide us for making our specific recommendations.

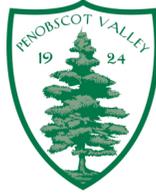
GENERAL FEATURES

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY – As mentioned above, the name of Donald Ross is going to play a major role in our discussion of the golf facilities at Penobscot Valley Country Club. In the pantheon of golden age golf course architects, Donald Ross clearly stands above all others. The planning and refining of courses at the Pinehurst golf complex brought Ross national fame. His services as a golf architect were soon in demand across North America until his death in 1948.

Ross's design style incorporated naturalness and a "links touch", deriving from his Dornoch, Scotland background and his studies at St. Andrews with Old Tom Morris. Although he always sculpted his greens, he always tried to utilize existing contours with only minor modifications.

Some of his finest designs include Pinehurst #2, Seminole, and Oakland Hills. Some great Ross courses can also be found in New England including Wannamoisett and Newport in Rhode Island and in Massachusetts at Salem, Essex, Charles River, Longmeadow, The Orchards, Oyster Harbors, Winchester and Brae Burn.

COURSE LAYOUT – The routing or layout of the Penobscot Valley Country Club golf course is perhaps the strongest feature of the design. The golf course perfectly traverses the rolling terrain, and the diversity of the layout is inherent in each shot played. Ross utilized the natural ground to create the shot values. He also identified the landforms that would lend themselves to fine holes and shot values. The relationships between these



natural features account for the lasting impressions of the golf at Penobscot Valley. Penobscot Valley Country Club is doubly blessed in the fact that the club possesses a beautiful piece of ground, and a golf course that takes every advantage of the natural terrain.

Another important feature inherent to the layout of any fine golf course is the design balance of the routing. Design balance can be summed up as having variety in the length, angle, and makeup of golf holes. While length is a great way to promote variety and design balance, it is not the only way. Green size and bunker placement also plays a large role in the overall design balance. Ross provided great variety in these areas. There are some very small greens at PVCC, some larger ones. In the original design, the bunkering was strong and varied in its location, an aspect of the golf course that the master plan will clearly embrace. One of the final elements of design balance can be summed up in the angles of play. Do all of the holes dogleg in the same direction? Is out of bounds always on the same side of the hole? The answer is definitively “no” when it comes to the layout at Penobscot Valley, where variety is a key component of the design.

GREENS – While a good routing is the backbone of any golf course, its greens are a path to greatness. Penobscot Valley Country Club has outstanding greens! They possess all the bold undulations and imagination that mark Ross putting surfaces. As with many courses of this vintage, the greens are the true defense of par at Penobscot Valley. The slopes in these greens are severe by modern maintenance standards; however, they are not so severe as to warrant making major changes to their contours. Part of the golf experience at Penobscot Valley is the fear of being in the wrong position on these greens. Very often that position is above the pin staring at a sharp downhill putt; players need to pay attention to the location of their approach shot, their “leave”. This level of accuracy helps to battle the notion that a golf course like PVCC is “too short” for the modern game. Try leaving a putt “too short” from above the hole on these greens.

We must do everything we can to preserve and protect the slope in these putting greens. In large part, the only changes we propose is to expand and extend all of these greens back out to their original perimeters. Over time, large cupping areas and several strategic slopes have been removed from the strategy of the golf course. Most of the greens will benefit greatly from the planned expansions: more cupping areas, providing more variety and less wear on specific portions of the putting surface. The expansion of the greens will help soften some of these strong slopes, create interesting hole locations, and allow for more reasonable recovery shots. In particular the ability to land the ball short of the steep slopes, and still be on the putting surface, will have a great impact on the green complexes. One other area of attention: the fronts of most greens, where a top dressing “lip” has developed. This lip forms when, over the course of years, the topdressing is swept off the front of the green and begins to build up just off the front or side of the green. This lip makes the front of the green steeper and adversely affects the ground



game option on approach shots. Removing this lip will greatly improve the ability to run the ball onto the front of the green.

We have heard the argument that smaller greens make a tougher golf course, that reclaiming green would make the course easier. On the contrary, we feel strongly that reclaimed greens will pose as much, if not more challenge. This effort will create some wonderfully challenging “edge” pin positions, the most difficult pins to access. Due to sharper angles and a closer proximity to bunkers, these pins call for more accuracy, distance control and trajectory control. By reclaiming the greens we will resurrect these pin positions, thereby restoring a key element of the original design of the golf course.

BUNKERS – While greens are arguably the most important design feature, it is clear that bunkers are the most important visual feature on most golf courses. Perhaps it is the contrast between green grass and sand, or the shadows created by the bunkers in early morning or late evening light. For whatever reason, proper bunkering adds dramatically to the overall beauty, character and playability of any golf course.

In studying the original plans and aerial photos of the Penobscot Valley Country Club, it is quite clear that Ross did not intend to let this boldness stop on the greens. However, one of the main weaknesses at Penobscot Valley is its lack of effective fairway bunkering. Why? Because, for whatever reason, many of the fairway bunkers on the original course were removed over a period of years. It is our recommendation that many of these bunkers be restored to the course — placed in the same random fashion Ross spelled out, but in locations appropriate for the modern game.

The locations of these restored bunker complexes will respond to the natural landscapes and the challenges inherent to each hole at Penobscot Valley. Their random placement will provide options and create varied angles of attack that are appropriate to the green complexes that serve them. The location of these bunkers will also serve to challenge the longer hitter as they will be placed in spots that will be in line with the prodigious lengths golfers hit the ball today. There will also be several random bunkers on the golf course that are purely visual in nature and may have little impact on good golfers. However, they are still very much a part of the golf course. They need to be restored for all these reasons, to honor the entire vision that Donald Ross had for PVCC.

The look and feel of the bunkers is another issue, and confronting it may provide the greatest change to the golf course during our restoration. Ross was very consistent in the look and feel of his bunkers. They included sand faces and grass faces that made the bunkers very visually appealing. The current bunkers have been edged out of shape over a long period of time, which is typical of a course of this age. The style of the new bunkers will feature bolder shapes, yet they will not be completely foreign to the current look of the bunkers. The scale of the bunkers will be consistent with the original intent,



and the grass faces will be pulled a bit lower on the face to compensate for the edging that has occurred. However, there will still be plenty of sand in view from all angles.

FAIRWAYS – With respect to the “contouring” of fairways, we refer to the shapes of the fairways (as opposed to the topographical contours of the holes). The contours of PVCC fairways are vital to the visual and strategic appeal of the golf course. We are firm believers that fairways should be wider; they should have long flowing lines, as opposed to wiggly lines that jump all over the property. Wide fairways are an established characteristic of vintage courses. Unfortunately most of these courses have narrowed their fairways due to the encroachment of the maturing tree lines. When these courses were conceived, the trees were not mature enough to encroach on the fairways (if the trees existed at all); the fairways were mowed with wide gang mowers. The result was wider fairways, an ideal we definitely embrace.

Period aerial photograph shows the fairways were all very simply shaped. They relied on long flowing curves as opposed to sharp angles and turns. Fairway contours should accentuate the topography of the golf course as well as help to define the fairway hazards on the hole. They should never call attention to themselves, but rather act as an underlying layer of the tapestry that makes up a golf course. Good fairway contouring should go relatively unnoticed, whereas poor fairway contouring is often blatant in calling attention to itself while detracting from the more prominent features of the golf course and the property.

TEES – The teeing grounds at Penobscot Valley Country Club are all in relatively good repair, and for the most part they are exactly in a position where Ross set them. As with most every classic golf course, it is the back tees and the forward tees that need the most attention. Golf clubs are definitely run by the majority of members, and the majority of golfers play from the middle tees. As a result, these tees are very often in the best shape and the best location. It is our firm belief that the back and forward tees are every bit as important as the middle tees; they should receive equal treatment in the evaluation and maintenance of any golf course. All should have equal right to play the golf course from their markers as the majority does from the middle. As a result the majority of tee recommendations center on adding length where available (to accommodate recent changes in technology), and positioning forward tees so the hole will play properly with respect to the angle of play.

We do not believe that a 7,000-yard golf course is a pre-requisite to greatness. In fact, just the opposite is true in our opinion. To reach 7,000 yards, most of your short par 4 holes and short par 3 holes have to be abandoned or perverted. The resultant lack of variety and character detracts greatly from any standard of greatness that we recognize. We believe the character of the topography, and the devilish nature of the greens makes this course play with a great deal of variety, challenge and character. Attempting to



lengthen the course to reach some arbitrary number should not be a major goal of this golf course master plan.

ROUGH – We believe that rough is meant to be part of a golf course, and it should serve to act as some form of penalty for missing a green or fairway. If a player is most often not penalized for being in the rough, then why maintain fairway at all? If there is no advantage gained by being in the fairway over the rough, then the strategy of the game suffers dramatically.

The master plan also calls for the creation of native rough or fescue areas where a reasonable golf shot should not venture. It is not the intention of these areas to be a key part of play. Rather they are to offer a contrast in texture and color to the rest of the golf course. These areas will be meticulously prepared so as to offer a true version of native rough/fescue. Most clubs allow the existing grass to simply grow longer and then call it fescue. This results in a matted, thick mess because the grass species are usually not conducive to this type of maintenance. Our plan will kill off all of the existing grass and plant with fine fescue and native species in a seeding rate that is lighter than recommended for the soil types at Penobscot Valley. This will produce areas of grass that will be thin and wispy, where a player can go in and find a ball and advance it with an iron. The look of these areas will add greatly to the character of the course and further establish the traditional look and feel of the golf course.

CART PATHS – While we frankly hate to see cart paths on the golf course, we reluctantly accept the fact that they are part of the Americanized version of golf, and that we must make adequate provisions for their use. For the most part, Penobscot Valley Country Club has preserved the golf course and resisted the temptation to scar it with asphalt. We are hoping to remove some of the excess cart paths from the course. In areas where we feel we can remove cart paths and still preserve cart flow, we will strive to do so. These are paths of convenience; we feel it's already a convenience for most golfers to be riding in a cart. Accordingly, it will not create any harm by making them ride a bit farther.

DRAINAGE - All golf courses rely on proper infrastructure. Otherwise, they cannot be maintained properly. Whether it is drainage, or irrigation, these infrastructures are necessary to keep the course alive and playable. However, these are not parts of the master plan that members reflect on, or if done properly, notice. The drainage infrastructure at Penobscot Valley is in need of overhaul. We will be installing smaller drain lines in low-lying areas, as well as curtain drains along some of the hillsides. This installation of drainage, while not one of the more sexy items in the golf course master plan, will be very helpful in keeping the course in good shape (and open for play) during the wet periods of the year.



TREES – Trees are without question, the most controversial aspect to be discussed during the formation of any golf course master plan. They are an emotional and somewhat romantic topic, and members seldom view them in an objective or practical manner. Unfortunately for golf course architects and operators, in order to do our job properly, we have to view them in a practical manner. This often leads to making unpopular recommendations when it comes to tree removal. However, we do have to make these recommendations. They may spark some short-term controversy; in the long run the golf course greatly benefits from these recommendations.

It is our job during the preparation of a golf course master plan to review the trees that have grown, or been planted on the golf course and to evaluate them based on five criteria: history, safety, playability, aesthetics, and agronomics. We must judge each individual tree and its contribution to these five criteria, and make an assessment as to whether each tree contributes in a positive or negative fashion to the golf course. The first criterion is history, or what were the origins of the tree planting on the property? When Donald Ross first visited the property it was primarily open ground. The major tree planting efforts came long after Ross had completed his masterpiece. We should be respectful of the course history without attempting to completely replicate it, which would not be practical.

Safety is a common explanation for why a tree has been placed in a certain location. While trees can act as important screens when used in the proper context, they are not always a safer option than the overall absence of trees. This is certainly true when a tree blocks the view of an adjoining golf hole. In this instance, it is quite easy for an unsuspecting golfer to be hit by an errant shot from a player who cannot see them. It is certainly safer to have a line of vision on a golf shot and its potential landing area, no matter how wayward, than to hit blindly over a row of trees. Safety on a golf course impacts all golfers, applying also to the golfer who has played the shot. Danger to one can occur from shots that ricochet off of trees and come back and hit a golfer, or a playing partner. Every golfer who reads this master plan has been in a position where they think they can squeeze a shot through an opening in the trees, only to fall back on the swing because they are afraid that the ball will come back and hit them in the face. These are just two examples of the negative safety impacts that trees can have on a golf course. Trees used in the right context can have a positive impact on the safety of a golf course; negative impacts can arise particularly in regard to reduced visibility.

The playability question is another argument for trees. “The hole plays too easily, we need to tighten it up.” These tightening committees have taken the role of architect into their own hands, and have more often than not undone some aspect of the original architect’s vision. When an architect like Ross stepped on to a piece of property, he had a set of strategies, guidelines, and options in mind while laying out the golf course. Through the positioning of bunkers, the angling of greens, the use of existing trees, the slope of the fairway, or the positioning of tees, the architect laid out the golf course to be



a series of options and challenges built around these features. What occurs over the years is that well-intentioned committees plant trees; the trees grow up and slowly encroach upon these features; they eventually take away the options that the original architect had intended. These committees take holes that have countless ways to play them, and they constrict them so that only one option remains: hit the ball in the fairway, or be forced to play a shot from behind a tree. That style of play is not at all strategic but, rather, it is penal. This tightening of the golf course also takes away so many wonderful opportunities for recovery.

While opening up the golf course will increase enjoyment and playability, we do feel that there are several key trees on the golf course that lend a positive influence. These trees have been noted in the hole-by-hole diagrams, and they should be preserved and protected. More often than not, trees are planted on a hole to cover up what is perceived as a weakness in the design of the hole. At too many courses, the holes have been designed poorly, and the members feel as if they must hide the flaws by solving (or obscuring them) with trees. At Penobscot Valley Country Club, just the opposite is true. Your golf course is so well designed and so carefully laid out, the removal of trees will only sharpen a focus on the design of the golf course. In so doing, all of the strategies, options, and punishments that already exist in the layout will be more clearly revealed.

The aesthetic question is a subjective one. Someone will find beauty in even the most gnarled and diseased tree. However, we believe that most people will find that large, mature trees are more aesthetically pleasing than smaller, more immature trees. At Penobscot Valley Country Club, most of the mature specimen trees have become lost in the clutter of the many new trees planted on the golf course. This clutter detracts from the mature trees, and it is our belief the mature trees should be highlighted rather than hidden. If trees are to be planted on the golf course in the future, they should be planted in a random manner, as opposed to a structured appearance. Trees naturally grow in clumps or groves, as opposed to picket-fence lines. They should be set back from all features of the golf course, so that when they are mature, they do not infringe on the play of the hole, or block a line of play to the hole. Tree planting on a golf course needs to be done with the future in mind, and it is difficult to be patient enough (or prescient enough) to forecast how a tree will impact play 15-20 years from now. If common sense, patience, and a feel for the natural arrangement of trees are followed, then tree plantings on a golf course can add to the beauty of the course instead of detracting from it.

By planting trees heavily on a golf course, the natural vistas that were part of the original design of the golf course are crowded out and covered up. You are blessed with one of the most spectacular vistas in all of golf. As a result, we must look to the original design to try and bring back the views that originally existed throughout the golf course. Penobscot Valley Country Club is blessed with a beautiful piece of ground. We should use trees to embellish, frame, and direct views through the golf course, rather than block them.



The final and easiest argument to make against trees on the golf course comes from an agronomic standpoint. Simply put, trees have no agronomic benefit to the turfgrass on the golf course. They create shade, steal moisture, and out-compete turfgrass for vital nutrients. Members of a club of this stature will necessarily demand that golf course conditions be maintained at a certain standard. Achieving this standard will only be aided by the removal of trees, while the failure to do so has been the downfall of conditions at a great many wooded golf clubs. This game is played on grass, and we must make every effort to maintain this turf properly, even at the risk of losing trees.

Based on these observations, we will be recommending that trees be removed from the golf course, in order to provide a benefit to each of these categories. There will be difficult decisions. We hope the membership can understand these decisions are based on an objective assessment of history, aesthetics, safety and agronomy.