

NIBLICK COMPLETES RENOVATION OF ONE OF NORWAY'S FINEST

One of Europe's leading golf course design practices has completed work on an extensive renovation project at one of the oldest golf courses in Norway. Niblick Golf Design finished the five-year project at Stavanger Golf Club earlier this year without closing the course at any point during the build.

The aim of the far-reaching redevelopment, which included rebuilding 16 greens, remodelling three fairways and completing extensive rebunkering throughout, was to breathe life back into the 53-year-old course which was originally laid out by Fred Smith in 1956. Forming part of a NOK 40 million (US\$6.7 million) investment plan, the new course includes a drainage system capable of dealing with the damp conditions that typify the eastern fringes of Norway (nearly 200mm of rain fell this year in July alone).

As one of the directors at Niblick Golf Design explained, the renovation project was needed to return the course to its former glory – Stavanger has played host to a number of top tournaments including the Norwegian Championships in 2006.

“It's a very well respected course, but it had flat, soil greens that had little if any positive fall away from the playing surfaces,” said Brian Phillips. “In an area that gets nearly one and a half metres of rain a year, it is inevitable that greens will suffer through compaction. When we started, there were no catchment basins at all which is typical on an old course, but when the club needs to get visitors and members out on the course as soon as possible after a downpour, they're absolutely essential.”

As well as contouring greens and reshaping bunkers to promote runoff, Niblick Golf Design also installed thousands of metres of new drainage and laid a top layer of sand over effected areas. According to Steinar Fløisvik, Stavanger's general manager, the measures produced a remarkable course that proved its worth during the specially arranged opening-day tournament.

“For the last 20 years, we've been struggling with our drainage especially after heavy rain when it took days before the course returned to its normal playing conditions,” said Fløisvik. “Now it doesn't get wet at all. During the official opening tournament, we had terrible weather but after hours of heavy rain, we were still putting on dry greens.”

As important was safeguarding the integrity of one of Norway's most respected golf courses while modernizing the holes and providing a sterner test of golf. It's a point not lost on Phillips: “Stavanger Golf club is hugely important to Norwegian golf,” he said. “They've always been active in junior development and have produced some great golfers. To be approached by a club like Stavanger was a great honour. We're very proud to be associated with such an old club and one so respected in Scandinavia.”

Perhaps some of the greatest compliments came from Stavanger's members who supported the project throughout its duration. “For the last two years I've been waiting for someone to criticise the work,” said Fløisvik, “but it's the first project I've been involved in where no-one has said anything negative about it at all. It's amazing.”

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Note to editors

1) Niblick Golf Design is a design-and-build practice created in 2004 when Graeme Webster and Brian Phillips joined forces to create an architectural firm with over 40 years of experience.

2) Stavanger Golf Club was founded in 1956 and is Norway's second oldest 18-hole golf course. The 18-hole course is situated 6 km from the town centre, and lies in quiet surroundings near the lake Store Stokkavann. The club currently has about 1,900 members.

3) The renovated course at Stavanger Golf Club was officially opened on Saturday 15 August, 2009.

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