

# Naples Beach Club reopening following renovation by John Sanford & Jack Nicklaus



The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club's historic course underwent a major facelift over the summer. Thursday, thanks to Mother Nature's cooperation, the renovation led by John Sanford and Jack Nicklaus will reopen to the public.

With construction ahead of schedule, the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club puts the final touches on its renovated course redesigned by John Sanford with Jack Nicklaus as a consultant on Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016. J. Scott Butherus

"We're ready to go," general manager Jason Parsons said. "The course is looking fantastic.

"We're super excited for the members. We're super excited for our guests. We have a lot of folks that come back for Thanksgiving that come back year after year after year."

While the course closed in early April, the project actually started months before that, with some of the grass being killed off to speed up the \$9 million renovation.

"I guess, in the beginning, it seemed to be a tough process just because you're going through the preparation of the land and the grass and everything while you're still trying to stay open," Parsons said. "Since we closed and moved forward, it seems like just yesterday that Jack was first here. Since then, it's just moved quickly. "

Parsons termed Thursday as more of a reopening, with plans still being finalized for a grand opening sometime early next year with Sanford and Nicklaus in attendance. He said brothers Michael and Henry Watkins of the Watkins family that's owned the course, built in 1929 originally, and the accompanying hotel since 1946 will "see it off" Thursday.

"We're just going right into business," Parsons said. "We'll do our own thing internally (as far as celebrating the reopening)."

The new, par-71 course features five tees, ranging from 4,800 yards to over 6,900 yards.

"John Sanford was just an exceptional project manager and architect with Nicklaus. The man was just on top of everything. When you're working with someone like that, that's great. He really kept us on point. He kept us ahead of schedule, ahead of schedule, ahead of schedule in case something happened."



Legendary golfer and top course designer Jack Nicklaus makes a site visit to The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club Monday in Naples. The course is undergoing complete renovation and should reopen in December of this year. (Luke Franke/Staff) *(Photo: Luke Franke/Naples Daily News)*

Originally, the new course was scheduled to reopen sometime around Christmas, but with no extremely heavy rains or other severe weather for almost the entire summer -- outside of the usual thunderstorms -- everything moved along seamlessly. The resort guests, members and general public won't see anything that's not finished or ready, as far as the golf course or its new and vastly improved driving range go. A maintenance building needs to be completed and the clubhouse's Broadwell's restaurant will unveil some upgrades early in 2017.

"That'll open just after the new year for the golfers for afternoon, lunch and evening service," Parsons said of the restaurant that's mostly been serving breakfast previously.

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1	5	2	5	3	4	5	43	5	5	4	6	5	5	4	5
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A scorecard of 11-year-old Jack Nicklaus from The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club in 1951 when Nicklaus broke 40 for nine holes for the first time. Nicklaus was on a family vacation when he played the Beach Club with his father, Charlie. Nicklaus shot a 37, just a year after starting to play. Courtesy of the Jack Nicklaus Museum (Photo: Courtesy of Jack Nicklaus Museum)

But the highlight obviously is the golf course, which has been completely redone, and rerouted with the old front nine essentially becoming the back nine, and also adding a pair of double greens. One of the challenges for Sanford and Nicklaus, who has a connection to the property because it's where he broke 40 for the first time ever as a 11-year-old in 1951,

"With the exception of one day, Mother Nature was extremely cooperative," Parsons said. "The week before (Hurricane) Matthew, when everyone was watching -- it was a Tuesday or a Monday night, this area got 3, 3 1/2 inches of rain in a very short period of time. It led to some washout. ... one bad washout for an entire renovation process is really exceptional.

"We really did something right to get blessed with the weather. ... There were a couple of little dry spells there were we got a little bit nervous."

Parsons also credited new superintendent Holden Jones, who took over during the project.

"Holden and his team have done an exceptional job," he said. "I really can't say enough how well he and his team have performed. He's extremely knowledgeable and hard working and was just relentless."

The driving range, just to the east of No. 1 fairway (formerly the 18th), will be open to hotel guests members and those playing at the course, but not as a public driving range facility.

"The driving range is awesome," Parsons said. "It'll be pre-setup and we'll have a person being the driving range attendant."

Perhaps the only downside to being ahead of schedule was having the new signage ready.

"All of our signage for the entire golf course arrived" two weeks ago, Parsons said. "But we're ready to go. It's a matter of opening and going for it."

As for the news last month that the Watkins family was exploring selling the resort, Parsons reiterated that "ownership is exploring their options."

## **Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club**

**Open to the public**

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