

The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch goes long ... real long

OCM's short course debuts at Australia's Kingston Heath; Ron Prichard to revive the Donald Ross features at Pennsylvania's Tumblebrook

BY THE FIRST CALL STAFF

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The Hankins course at The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch will become the longest in Pacific Northwest after an additional 925 yards are added. The course will play to around 8,000 yards from the Goat Tees. (Photo: Silvies Valley Ranch)

The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch has transformed its 18-hole Hankins course into a bulked-up version of its former self.

Located in rural Seneca, Oregon, 220 miles west of Boise, Idaho, and 320 miles

southeast of Portland, Oregon, The Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch offers one of the most diverse collections of golf experiences anywhere. Now there is length to accompany the depth.

A new set of tee boxes, called the Goat Tees will lengthen the Hankins course by 925 yards, making it the longest course in the Pacific Northwest. The addition of the Goat Tees will increase Hankins' total distance to 8,000 yards, including the 680-yard, par-5 third hole.

The project reunited three native Oregonians: original course designer [Dan Hixson](#), Silvies owner Scott Campbell and golf course superintendent Torin Foster, and further enhanced the acclaimed portfolio at Silvies. The Hankins course is a reversible layout that alternates every other day with its sibling, the Craddock.

"With our high elevation and dry desert air, the ball flies further at Silvies," Campbell says. "Pair that with our wide, links-style fairways and golfers will now have a new and different challenge like no other in the Northwest to take on."

Players will follow the same cart path routing on both courses. Rates will be the same on each course, no matter which tee box a guest chooses to play. Both the Craddock and Hankins courses were named among the top four best new golf courses to open in 2018 by *Golf Digest* and have been named the Best in Oregon (after Bandon Dunes) ever since.

"Silvies has been a part of my life for more than a decade," Hixson says. "To have the chance to come back and help add to our initial vision is remarkable. This is one of those properties where you really have to come out in person and then you'll understand what makes this place a unique experience. Once you make that initial journey, you're going to want to keep coming back and the addition of these new tee boxes will be one of the many examples why."

Last summer, Silvies debuted another Hixson brainchild, Claire's Course, the first 18-hole reversible putting course in the world.

Silvies, a 150,000-acre cattle ranch and 46-room eco-resort, features six award-winning golf experiences, including a seven-hole Ridge course and a mountain meadow 9-hole

par-3 course, plus a spa, horse trails, pistol shooting and ATV tours. Actual goat caddies are available to carry golf clubs, extra balls, tees, refreshments and peanuts for players' rounds on the McVeigh's Gauntlet and Chief Egan courses.

KINGSTON HEATH ADDS TO PAR-3 FUN

World top-30 course Kingston Heath Golf Club in suburban Melbourne, Australia, offers perhaps the best collection of par 3s without water in the world, claimed Greg Norman. A new nine-hole short course called The Furrows will add to the par-3 fun at the club.

OCM, the Australian design firm composed of [Geoff Ogilvy](#), [Mike Cocking](#) and [Ashley Mead](#) has draped the new course on a 20-acre tract adjacent to the club's 18-hole, Alister MacKenzie-designed championship layout that boasts some of the most impressive bunkers in golf.

"Since the mid-1990s, the club has had the foresight of purchasing land surrounding the course, as a means of protecting the boundaries," [Cocking told GolfCourseArchitecture.net](#). "This included land along the eastern side of the course, and alongside the 12th hole, which is known as the 'Madden Land.' Used as a market garden for the best part of the last century, the club have looked at a variety of uses for this land, starting around 20 years ago when a 19th hole was first built."

The brainchild of Kingston Heath's club captain Matthew McKenna, the course emerged after a variety of options were explored. Among those ideas were courses of greater than or less than nine holes, a course that had options to play at least one hole as a par 4 and other possibilities.

Ultimately, the architects and the club agreed on a nine-hole routing, with the individual designs inspired by holes on the club's championship layout, such as at the par-4 third and the par-3 10th and also by holes that existed elsewhere. "Beyond 'the Heath' there were other great short holes we were keen to use as inspiration, certainly locally around the [Melbourne] Sandbelt, such as the third and fourth at the nearby Woodlands, the third on the West course at Royal Melbourne, and further afield, the second, 12th and 18th at St. Andrews," said Cocking. "These holes are some of the most enjoyable and thought-provoking in the game, so we figured with nine of them, why couldn't a short course like this hold the same interest as something a little longer?"

Construction on The Furrows began in late 2021 with the final green seeded midway through 2022. "Aside from the [wet] weather, one of the challenges during construction was managing a very inconsistent sand profile," said Cocking. "In some places, the sand went down a mere meter, but then in other areas there was just a few centimeters before we hit clay. Despite what many think of the Sandbelt, there are not just meters and meters of beautiful gray sand below the surface."

The greens at The Furrows are carpeted in Pure Distinction bentgrass. Native grasses and 50,000 indigenous plants and shrubs of the heathland variety also dot the course to provide a similar look and feel as the championship course.

GOING BACK TO ALLENTOWN

Tumblebrook Golf Course, a municipal layout near Allentown, Pennsylvania, has answered its wakeup call. Closed since the end of 2019, the 92-year-old nine-holer is coming out of hibernation.

Designed by [Donald Ross](#) and built by his top lieutenant, J.B. McGovern, Tumblebrook is being revived by a group of Donald Ross enthusiasts, including Vaughn Halyard, who have enlisted Ross expert [Ron Prichard](#) to restore not only the layout that existed for more than nine decades, but who will also incorporate several of Ross' original design concepts that were never actually built.

"Ron will base the plan on Ross' original design of the Tumblebrook course," Halyard says. "The golf writer Michael Bamberger played and wrote about the course in 2019 and said he didn't see a lot of Ross there. The reason for that appears to be that Ross' design was never properly built. Josh [Woodward — another partner in the process] was able to obtain the original drawings of the course from the township's archives, and Ron is going to use those to guide his work."

Prichard, a local, has signed on not just as an architect, but as a partner as well. Architects [Jeff Mingay](#) and [Christine Fraser](#) will assist in the endeavor. "Christine's work on the early concept was invaluable, in putting on paper what only existed in our heads," Woodward said. "We wouldn't be where we are today without her and Jeff's contributions."

"What's really exciting about this is that although the course was designed by Ross and

built by his key associate, his design was never fully executed," Prichard said. "Effectively, this will be the first time Ross's finishing touches have ever been built at Tumblebrook."

Brad Becken, president of the Donald Ross Society and author of the recently published book, "The Architecture of Donald Ross," added, "There have been more than 120 Ross restorations over the last 30 years, and most of them have been excellent. What's really exciting about this project is that it will see the realization of Ross's vision for the golf course. Ross built a lot of courses in the Philadelphia area, but very few of them are open to the public. Saving Tumblebrook will be an important contribution to his legacy."

Halyard added another exciting flourish to the project by announcing there would be a new bonus nine on the property as well. "Included in the project are 90 acres of additional land alongside the course, and we plan to use that for a second nine-hole course to be designed by a world-class golf course architect. The extra land will also support a range and learning facility. These are critical in support of our plans for a golf-forward community environment. We are resolved to deliver the kind of golf that should keep kids active outdoors for hours. We are in the early days of our project as our current plans are dependent on a number of factors such as zoning and other approvals."

The expectation for now is that Prichard will begin work on the Ross course in conjunction with building the practice range. The new nine holes will begin to take shape when the Ross course has re-opened.

"The future of public and junior golf in this part of Pennsylvania is very bright," Woodward said. "Our golf campus concept — to use golf as an educational and recreational tool — will provide programming in scholastic, youth caddie, community and township parks and recreation areas. It will be part school and playground for golfers, part teaching facility about the business of golf, and part STEM and STEAM lab. All parties involved are very excited, and we cannot wait to get started."