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A DIFFERENT BAY HILL AWAITS TOUR PLAYERS

Instead of design tweaks, Championship Course undergoes changes under club's new Golf Course Superintendent, Chris Flynn

A very different Championship Course at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge is waiting to greet PGA TOUR players in the upcoming Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard. But instead of design tweaks being orchestrated under the guidance of tournament host and course architect Arnold Palmer, the changes that have been made are the product of aggressive and intelligent maintenance work overseen by Chris Flynn, who took over as Golf Course Superintendent at Bay Hill in July.

Flynn, 45, who came to Bay Hill after 10 years at nearby Marriott Grand Vista Resort and its 36-hole facility has, with Palmer's blessing, taken on three significant projects that will dramatically change the playability aspects of the Championship layout, both for daily play, and more significantly, for competitors in the 37th Arnold Palmer Invitational



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Presented by MasterCard scheduled for March 16-22 at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge in Orlando.

First and foremost has been an upgrade to the bunker sand. More than 1,700 tons of G-Angle sand – the sand preferred and approved by the PGA TOUR – has been spread over the 84 bunkers on the Championship Course. This equates to about three inches of new sand in every trap. The project was completed over a three-week period in January to give the sand time to pack. The G-Angle sand is a more angular sand that holds up the ball better and makes it more difficult for balls to bury in the bunkers.

Flynn added that the club planned to repeat this process every 2-3 years, which will only further improve the playing conditions in the bunkers.

“I think that’s the biggest thing we have done,” Palmer, 85, says. “It’s the kind of thing that is better for players of every level, and of course, I think players in our tournament will approve.”

Another change that is sure to be met with approval is five more acres of fairway. After consulting with Palmer and his team of architects at



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Arnold Palmer design, Flynn expanded the fairways to reflect the original course design intent. The approach areas and bail-out areas around the greens also were expanded.

“The fairways were very narrow. You can tell how the course was shaped and what was supposed to be fairway, but the rough had encroached into the fairways. They had lost their shape over the years,” Flynn said. “We went hole by hole and remarked where the fairways should be and mowed them to reflect how the course should play.”

This translates to more driving area, but in many instances, it also brings bunkers and water hazards more into play without a strip of rough between the fairway and the hazards. “It’s easier for the average player, but it also increases the chances for better players challenging the course to find a bunker or the water,” Flynn said.

Finally, Flynn’s third project, which he began his first week on the job, was an aggressive tree trimming program. Some trees have been removed, but mostly, Flynn says, the job has simply been about pruning back limbs that have grown into the line of play.



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“I am very pleased by what Chris has done, and I think the players are going to be pleased,” Palmer says. “I think the look of the golf course is better, and from a playing standpoint, it’s going to be better. I didn’t get around to doing some of the things I wanted to do with the golf course as far as the design goes, but these changes are meaningful and very good.”

“I believe the overall aesthetics and playability of the course have improved greatly, and the players will certainly notice the changes, particularly in the bunker work that we have done,” said Scott Wellington, the tournament’s executive director.

Matt Every is the defending champion of the Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard, which this year offers a purse of \$6.3 million. Every shot 13-under 275 and defeated Keegan Bradley by one stroke.

For tickets to the 2015 Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard, call the tournament ticket office at 407-876-7774 or visit www.arnoldpalmerinvitational.com. Tournament proceeds benefit Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children and Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women and Babies.

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