



The Road Ahead: **Preserving a California Dream at San Luis Obispo CC**

“The Road Ahead” video series from Club + Resort Business highlights how clubs are moving forward to create successful new programs, events and amenities and enhance the member experience.

In this episode, General Manager David Stocke, CCM, and Golf Course Superintendent Paul Barr join Todd Eckenrode of Origins Golf Design to provide a first-hand look and describe the process and details of a comprehensive, \$10 million course renovation that was completed at San Luis Obispo (Calif.) Country Club (SLOCC) as 2021 drew to a close.

SLOCC was founded in 1957, on a property on California’s Central Coast that provides scenic views in all directions of surrounding farms, ranches, vineyards and mountains. The setting only enhances the appeal of the club’s pristine golf course, which also hosts a unique annual tournament, the Straight Down Fall Classic, that pairs top amateurs with some of the world’s best professional golfers in a uniquely relaxed, low-key format that allows fans to walk the fairways with the players.

But even a top-flight golf course in such an inspiring setting has the need for ongoing and renewed attention, and planning began in 2016 for what Stocke describes as an “epic” renovation that “addressed every aspect” of the course. Even with the curveballs thrown at the project by the pandemic, the club only had to push the timeline out six months to complete the wide-ranging renovation and deliver new features and improvements that include:

- a new irrigation system;
- overall improvements of drainage and turf;
- creation of over 60 new bunkers and barrancas;
- expansion of the well-telemetry system for the on-course lake that serves as an irrigation reservoir;
- a new short-game area;
- cart-path removal to help widen playable areas;
- enhancement through tree management of what were already spectacular views from multiple vantage points on the course

The design goals of the renovation included delivering “more width, playability and interesting options” for golfers, says Eckenrode, and the barrancas, in particular, were a “lot of fun” to create. “The concept with them is to take functional drainage areas that have no real aesthetic or strategic value and make them a hazard that’s actually an interesting feature of the golf hole, instead of off to the side and forgotten,” he says.

The renovation has already helped SLOCC’s course maintenance staff realize many new efficiencies “right out of the gate,” says Barr. Where two or three crew members were previously needed to spot-water fairways, he reports, the improved drainage and more uniform turf now only requires regular and more precise watering from the new irrigation system. Drainage has improved so well, he adds, that the club was able to have play resume quickly after a three-inch rainstorm that hit the property shortly after the course’s grand reopening.

After taking a pause in 2022 from the project, Stocke says, SLOCC will then turn to exploring a potential clubhouse renovation as the next step in continuing to improve the appeal and enjoyment of the property and club for its membership.