

A Labor of Love

Vast improvements move Arrowhead into the elite

BY KEN MACLEOD

For Jim Ramsey, Arrowhead State Park Golf Course is a labor of love.

Put an emphasis on the labor.

For more than 20 years, Ramsey has given his all to help the 1966 Floyd Farley design become one of the premier courses in Oklahoma.

These days, with double and triple duty as not only the head professional, but also the manager of the entire state park, that may mean pulling weeds or planting trees at sunset after returning from a full day of managing events elsewhere in the park.

But with new Champion ultradwarf Bermuda greens, new bunkers by Tripp Davis on the front nine, a new double row irrigation system that brought water to the rough for the first time, plus soon a new clubhouse and a back-nine bunker renovation, Ramsey is seeing his dream take shape.

“Right now, there’s no finer golf course, public or private, in the southeast part of Oklahoma,” Ramsey says with pride. “I think we stack up pretty well with golf courses throughout the state.”

What Arrowhead has to offer is a great mix of golf holes Farley laid out on rolling terrain nestled alongside Lake Eufaula,

Oklahoma’s largest lake with 600 miles of shoreline. The best lake views are on the back nine, though the terrain is interesting throughout, boasting about every tree native to Oklahoma. Many of those in strategic areas Ramsey planted himself.

The place teems with wildlife, including deer that couldn’t be bothered by the sight of golfers, wild turkey and about anything else that goes on four legs or two wings in Oklahoma.

As they are at all state park facilities, the prices are friendly as well. Golfers can play 18 holes in a cart for \$32. A second 18 only costs the cart fee.

“You can play 36 holes and have drinks and food for under \$50,” Ramsey said. “That’s a pretty good deal.”

Ramsey grew up nearby in a modest house with no running water and he’s never been afraid of work. He spent the morning of our visit laying sod on the golf course, then dealt with parking lot issues at the marina before returning to the course.

“It has been a labor of love,” he said. “We have a really good course, a shot-maker’s course, and we’ve been trying to make it better for a long time. The new greens will really help. We were starting to lose the battle with the bent grass.”

Ramsey is glad he and superintendent

Rocky Murdaugh won’t have to teach another summer helper how to properly syringe bent grass greens without overwatering and creating more problems than they are solving.

The bunker renovation is a brilliant touch. Davis eliminated unnecessary bunkers while giving the course natural looking bunkers which fit its rugged character.

“We were trying to minimize maintenance while providing a style that gave the course more interest visually and strategically,” Davis said.

The new clubhouse is set to begin within 12 months. That plus completing the bunker work on the back nine will put Arrowhead on par with most public courses in the state and certainly above the pack when it comes to scenery.

“The rough is kept short so you can find your ball and play it, although there are areas all over where you won’t find your ball if you hit it there,” Ramsey said, indicating the deep wood borders. “But the course is friendly to high handicappers. However, there are some holes that require good placement and if you want to really score, you’ve got to keep it in the short grass.”

With no houses or roads visible from the course, it’s a peaceful environment. Ramsey likes to go out to the lake side on the back nine in the evening just to watch the moon rise over the lake.

“It’s a beautiful place,” he said. “You come play here in the evening and you won’t believe the wildlife you’ll see.”

Sounds like a good plan for adventurous Oklahoma golfers.



Jim Ramsey does it all.