



Turning the Page

Turner Hill Closes a Tumultuous Chapter in Its Brief History and Looks to the Future

BY DAVID DESMITH

Sometimes, even the best-laid plans wind up in the rough. But at Turner Hill in Ipswich, Massachusetts, what the members have found is that with a healthy dose of perseverance and a dash of Yankee stubbornness, the game can still go on. And go on in style.

After financial difficulties led to its sale last June, the club (now equity member-owned) is on a fast track to becoming one of the Boston area's most sought-after private clubs. Anyone who's ever seen the property or played the course will understand why.

George Goich, director of golf, looks back on the past nine months and is amazed at what the club has been able to accomplish in the time

since the sale. "We've added 50 new members, we've completed the building and paving of all the many roads on the property, we've secured financing for the renovations to the first floor of the mansion – renovations expected to be completed by the end of June. And we've mapped out a plan for the next several years. All with a debt load that's now lower than most of the old-line clubs in the area. We're going full speed ahead."

Turner Hill is a thoroughly modern club, but one with an old-world feel. At the heart of the 300-acre property is a 100-year old Edwardian mansion that's in the process of becoming one of the most elegant and stunning clubhouses in the region. The interior spaces, with their rich



THE 10TH AND 18TH HOLES AT TURNER HILL

wood paneling, fireplaces and parquet floors, are wonders to behold – and will become even more so as the club's dining and banquet areas, fitness center, kids club with bowling alley, board room and other spaces fully take shape.

Then there's the course. It took six years of permitting before the final routing was approved by state and local environmental control boards, but it was well worth the wait. With the design work of Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry, Turner Hill is the kind of course that is destined to be on everyone's must-play list. It sits on a hill that rises 270 feet above sea level, offering dramatic views of the state forest and parkland that abut the property. But the scenery is only the beginning.

Turner Hill is one of those rare courses that can provide the ultimate challenge for golfers of any ability. Great holes abound, including the signature par-3 10th, which plays downhill across a pond to a sloping green that sits

in the shadow of the mansion. Then there's the finishing hole, a par 3 reminiscent of the 12th at Augusta National; heaven help you if there's a big wager on the line when you come to that picturesque tee box.

The course is kept in uniformly superb condition by superintendent John Sadowski and his staff. If you like greens that are fast and firm, you'll find them here. They run at about 11 on the Stimpmeter and resound with a beautiful "thunk" when a well struck approach shot lands. Another thing that distinguishes the course is how well it drains. Other clubs in the area can be drowning in water while Turner Hill is perfectly playable – just one of the advantages of a thoroughly modern drainage system.

Goich points out that one of the other things its members like about the club is that it's a very open

one. "We're an eclectic club," he says. "We don't discriminate. We reflect the values that our mostly younger members are looking for in a club today. People are looking for a family-friendly environment and that's what we provide."

Bob Talbot, founding member and president of Turner Hill, echoes what Goich had to say and adds, "Golf and social members, throughout the year, participate in activities including family events, swing-band dance lessons, wine tasting



ELEGANT DINING IN THE TURNER HILL CLUBHOUSE

dinners, holiday parties and more. While golf members enjoy full golf privileges, social members also enjoy access to the nationally recognized course on a limited basis."

Other amenities that members will be able to enjoy include paddle tennis, a swimming pool, an indoor teaching studio headed by former PGA Tour professional Webb Heintzelmann and, in the near future, tennis, and possibly a day spa and lodging on the mansion's second and third floors.

And what many people don't appreciate is how close Turner Hill is to the downtown Boston area. It takes 35 minutes or less to get to Turner Hill from downtown. So people can get there quicker in many cases than they can get to many other clubs located geographically closer to the city center.

There's certainly no shortage of wonderful clubs in the greater Boston area. But if you're looking to join one with an outstanding course, a clear vision for the future, a location close to downtown – and perhaps most importantly, no waiting list – you owe it to yourself to visit Turner Hill. It's proof that doing things right hasn't gone out of style. ■